PARLIAMENT OF TASMANIA

DEBATES OF THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

DAILY HANSARD

Tuesday 27 October 2626

Preliminary Transcript

DRAFT

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Tuesday 27 October 2026

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

RECOGNITION OF VISITORS

[11.12 a.m.]

Before I give the call to the honourable member for Mersey, I welcome the first group from Reconciliation Tasmania's Youth Speaks Out event. There will be several groups through the Chamber today and we welcome you to the Legislative Council. I know that all members here hope that you have an informative and enjoyable day in the Tasmanian parliament.

Members - Hear, hear.

QUESTIONS ON NOTICE - ANSWERS

No. 59 - Human Resources Transformation Project

[11.28 a.m.]

Ms RATTRAY (McIntyre - Leader for the Government in the Legislative Council) - Mr President, I seek leave to table the answers to question No. 66 and have the document tabled and incorporated into *Hansard*.

Leave granted; document tabled and incorporated.

See Appendix 1 (page 121).

No. 66 - Procurement for the Department of Health's Bluegum Digital Health Transformation Project

Ms RATTRAY (McIntyre - Leader for the Government in the Legislative Council) - Mr President, I seek leave to table the answers to question No. 59 and have the document tabled and incorporated into *Hansard*.

Leave granted; document tabled and incorporated.

See Appendix 2 (page 128).

DRAFT

No. 67 - TasTAFE Laboratory Course Subsidy Cuts

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

[11.31 a.m.]

In October 2025 the government confirmed TasTAFE had decided to discontinue delivery of its laboratory technology qualifications and would instead subsidise laboratory technology training delivered by privately owned, interstate-based registered training organisations (RTOs). Given the importance of these qualifications to Tasmania's education, health and scientific sectors,

(1) What were the reasons for TasTAFE's decision to discontinue delivery of its laboratory technology qualifications?

(2) What financial modelling was undertaken comparing:

(a) the cost of continuing delivery through TasTAFE; and

(b) the cost to the state government of subsidising laboratory technology qualifications through private RTOs?

(3) Did this modelling consider the value of existing TasTAFE facilities and equipment, local teaching expertise, industry relationships, work placements and graduate employment outcomes?

(4) For each private RTO currently subsidised to provide laboratory technology qualifications to Tasmanians:

(a) which qualifications are subsidised;

(b) through which funding program;

(c) what is the subsidy per student; and

(d) how much state government funding was provided to it in each of the past five years?

(5) For each of the past five years, for the Certificate IV in Laboratory Techniques and Diploma of Laboratory Technology delivered by TasTAFE:

(a) what was the total annual cost of delivery;

(b) how much of that cost was met through TasTAFE's deed funding;

(c) how much was met through student fees; and

(d) what was the student fee for each qualification?

DRAFT

(6) Why has a decision been made to subsidise students through private interstate-based RTOs when government previously provided no subsidy to students to receive the exact same training through TAFE for the Diploma IV course?

(7) What consultation occurred with laboratory managers, schools, pathology and health services, industry employers and professional associations before TasTAFE decided to discontinue these courses?

(8) The minister has advised that the decision followed a TasTAFE review undertaken in 2025. Will the government provide or table that review, including the enrolment, withdrawal, completion, cost and employment outcome data considered?

(9) What are the annual enrolment, commencement, completion and graduate employment figures for each TasTAFE laboratory technology qualification for each of the past 10 years?

(10) How many prospective students sought to enrol or expressed an interest in enrolling in the TasTAFE Certificate IV or Diploma for 2026 after the decision was made not to accept a new intake?

(11) What evidence supports Skills Tasmania's conclusion that the current private RTO arrangements will meet Tasmania's expected demand for laboratory technicians?

(12) Will the government provide or table the workforce analysis undertaken by Skills Tasmania in reaching that conclusion?

(13) What assessment has been undertaken of current and projected demand for laboratory technicians in:

(a) Tasmanian schools;

(b) pathology and health services;

(c) biosecurity;

(d) food production; and

(e) environmental and other scientific industries?

(14) What changes have been observed in DECYP's capacity to recruit laboratory technicians in northern Tasmania since local delivery of laboratory technology courses in the north ceased several years ago?

(15) Given the current private RTO model relies on online learning combined with workplace-based training and assessment, how will people who are not already employed in a laboratory obtain the practical experience necessary to enter the industry?

DRAFT

(16) Have any providers indicated an intention to offer a pre-employment laboratory technology training option? If so, which provider/s, when will it commence, where will it be delivered and how many places will be available?

(17) What does TasTAFE intend to do with:

(a) existing laboratory facilities and equipment; and

(b) staff currently employed to deliver laboratory technology qualifications?

(18) What is the estimated cost of decommissioning TasTAFE laboratory facilities?

(19) Did TasTAFE consider retaining laboratory technology delivery before deciding to redirect resources to other priority training areas and, if so, what factors led it to conclude those areas represented a higher priority?

(20) In light of Tasmania's ongoing need for laboratory technicians, will the government and TasTAFE reconsider continuing the delivery of laboratory technology qualifications if the private RTO model does not demonstrate sufficient enrolment, completion and employment outcomes?

ANSWER

Again, a number of questions have been asked by the honourable member for Elwick and the request has been made that they be read into *Hansard*. There are also some tables and supporting documentation that at the end I will ask for leave to have incorporated as well.

(1) In late 2025, TasTAFE conducted a review of qualifications being delivered. As part of this process a number of courses were identified as having low enrolment and completion rates over several years. Taking this into account, together with the availability of alternative delivery options through other training providers, it was determined that these qualifications would no longer be delivered by TasTAFE from 2026 onwards.

(2) (a) TasTAFE undertook financial modelling of the direct and indirect costs associated with delivering the Certificate IV in Laboratory Techniques and Diploma of Laboratory Technology. This included teaching salaries, materials, utilities and associated support costs. The modelling looked at how many fee-paying students would be needed to cover the cost of delivering the courses without funding through the Deed of Purchasing Agreement.

(b) Private registered training organisations have delivered subsidised laboratory technology qualifications in Tasmania since 2018, with historical funding and delivering information available to Skills Tasmania. As existing subsidised delivery arrangements were already established, separate financial modelling of private Registered Training Organisations (RTO) delivery costs was not undertaken.

(3) TasTAFE's financial modelling considered the direct and indirect costs of delivering these qualifications, including teaching salaries, materials, utilities and

support costs. The modelling focused on the financial viability of continuing delivery without funding through the Deed of Purchasing Agreement.

(4) Mr President, question (4) is a significant number of tables.

(5) (a) Costs are not directly tracked against individual courses, noting financial modelling undertaken indicates the cost of delivering each course sits between $910,000 and $1.1 million per annum that includes direct costs for teaching salaries, materials and indirect costs.

(b) The majority of the costs were met by the deed funding.

(c) Tasmanian student fees covered $25,000 to $30,000 per annum in costs for each course, with international fees covering approximately $140,000 over both courses combined.

(d) Mr President, the answer to (5)(d) is a table.

(6) Eligible students have been able to access subsidised training through TasTAFE's Deed of Purchasing Agreement, while private RTOs have also delivered government-subsidised laboratory training in Tasmania. Private RTOs have delivered the subsidised certificate IV since 2018, and the diploma since 2025.

(7) The decision followed a review of the financial viability of continuing to deliver the courses without funding through the Deed of Purchasing Agreement. This review focused on historical enrolments, delivery costs and whether there would be sufficient demand from fee-paying students to continue offering the courses on a commercial basis.

After meeting with the Department of Health and the Department for Education, Children and Young People, Skills Tasmania advises that the available training options continue to meet workforce needs. The government will continue monitoring enrolments, completions and industry feedback to ensure Tasmanian learners and employers retain access to appropriate training pathways.

(8) Mr President, again, see attachments 1 and 2.

(9) TasTAFE's annual enrolment, withdrawal and completion figures for Certificate IV in Laboratory Techniques and Diploma of Laboratory Technology are outlined in the tables below. TasTAFE does not hold graduate employment outcome data for these qualifications.

(10) TasTAFE is not aware of any prospective students who sought to enrol or expressed an interest in either the Certificate IV in Laboratory Techniques or Diploma of Laboratory Technology following the decision not to accept new enrolments for 2026.

(11) Private registered training organisations have been delivering subsidised laboratory qualifications in Tasmania since 2018. After meeting with the Department of Health and Department for Education, Children and Young People, Skills

Tasmania advises that the available training options can continue to meet workforce needs. The government will continue monitoring enrolments, completions and industry feedback to ensure Tasmanian learners and employers retain access to appropriate training pathways.

The Apprentice and Trainee Training Fund allows funding to respond to increased demand, while other contestable grant programs are available to support training for jobseekers and existing workers where needed.

(12) Skills Tasmania considered a range of factors when reviewing TasTAFE's proposed changes to the qualifications delivered under the Deed of Purchasing Agreement. These included enrolment demand, withdrawal and completion rates, the availability of other training providers and discussions with private RTOs about their capacity to accommodate additional students if required.

(13) Skills Tasmania has engaged with the Department for Education, Children and Young People regarding laboratory technician training needs in Tasmanian schools. TasTAFE does not undertake specific workforce demand forecasts for individual industries. Skills Tasmania considers available information about training demand and industry needs when determining funding priorities and training arrangements.

(14) TasTAFE and Skills Tasmania are advised that the Department for Education, Children and Young People is not aware of any current laboratory technician workforce shortages across our government schools and colleges.

(15) Practical experience is an important part of laboratory technician training, and the government recognises the need for pathways for people who are not already working in the industry. Private RTOs have established relationships with Tasmanian employers and can work with industry to explore opportunities for workplace-based training and practical experience. There are also government funding programs available to support training for jobseekers, including proposals for pre-employment training where there is an identified need.

(16) LabTech Training Victoria Pty Ltd is now funded to deliver Certificate IV in Laboratory Techniques and Diploma of Laboratory Technology for two existing workers under the Train Now Fund. At this stage, no commencement date, delivery location or number of training places has been confirmed.

(17) (a) TasTAFE's existing laboratory facilities and equipment will remain in place until the current students complete their training in December 2026. TasTAFE will assess the future use of these facilities and equipment in 2027, including whether decommissioning is required.

(b) Affected TasTAFE staff have been part of the TasTAFE consultation process in relation to the cessation of delivery and will become redundant at the end of teach-out phase.

(18) No decision has been made to decommission laboratory facilities, and detailed planning or costings have not been undertaken. Preliminary estimates suggest that decommissioning could cost between $60,000 and $120,000, should it be required.

(19) As part of its review in late 2025, TasTAFE considered whether to continue delivering laboratory technology qualifications alongside its broader training priorities. The review identified consistently low enrolment and completion rates over several years, along with the availability of alternative training options through other providers. Taking these factors into account, TasTAFE determined that its resources could be better directed towards priority training areas identified in the Tasmanian Skills Plan, where there is a greater demand for training to support Tasmanian workforce needs.

(20) The government's priority is to ensure Tasmanians continue to have access to laboratory training that meets the needs of industry and employers. Skills Tasmania will continue to consider training demand and the capacity of existing providers to meet Tasmania's workforce needs. Should circumstances change, the government will consider what further training arrangements maybe needed to ensure these skills remain available in Tasmania.

I seek leave to table the documents in response to question No. 67 and have them incorporated into *Hansard.*

Leave granted; document tabled and incorporated.

See Appendix 3 (page 176).

Ms RATTRAY - I've already outlined what those attachments were, Mr President.

RECOGNITION OF VISITORS

[11.42 a.m.]

Mr PRESIDENT - I'd like to welcome the second group from Reconciliation Tasmania Youth Speak Out event. Welcome to the Legislative Council. We're just going through the formal part of our day. Members here will make you welcome to the parliament and hope that you have an enjoyable and informative day in the people's place.

Members - Hear, hear.

TABLED PAPER

Public Accounts Committee Report - No. 56 of 2026 - Proposed Sale of Wilkinsons Point

[11.43 a.m.]

Ms FORREST (Murchison) - Mr President, I have the honour to present the report of the Parliamentary Standing Committee of Public Accounts (No. 56 of 2026) Proposed Sale of Wilkinsons Point. I move -

That the report be received and printed.

Report received and printed.

I move -

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

Motion agreed to.

MOTION

Joint Sessional Committee on Gender, Gender-based Violence and Equality - Inquiry into Government's Response to Recommendations of Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Commission's Yearly Report 2025

Ms FORREST (Murchison) - Mr President, I have the honour to inform the Council that the Joint Sessional Committee on Gender, Gender-based Violence and Equality has commenced an inquiry into the Tasmanian government's response to the recommendations of the Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Commission's Yearly Report 2025, initiated by the committee on its own motion.

TABLED PAPER

Motion No. 19 - Closure of Hobart Hospitality Businesses - Government Response

[11.44 a.m.]

Ms RATTRAY (McIntyre - Leader for the Government in the Legislative Council) (by leave) - Mr President, I table the government's response to the member for Pembroke's motion titled Closure of Hobart Hospitality Businesses.

STATEMENT BY THE PRESIDENT

Message from Buckingham Palace

[11.45 a.m.]

Mr PRESIDENT - Honourable members, I advise the Chamber that on Friday 15 September 2026, I received from Her Excellency the Governor the following message from His Majesty, King Charles III. It reads:

> As you mark the 200th anniversary of the first sitting of your Legislative Council, I extend my warmest congratulations to the people of Tasmania.
>
> For two centuries, the Council has existed as a keystone of Tasmanian government. Throughout its long history, the Council has adapted to times of opportunity and challenge alike, striving to serve the people of your state. In

a world of constant change, the Legislative Council continues to stand as a testament to the enduring strength of parliamentary democracy and the importance of holding the traditions of responsible government.

I remember fondly my many visits to Tasmania over the years, where I have always been touched by the warmth of your welcome, and by your optimism and strength. It is my fervent hope that you join me in this bicentenary year in reflecting with pride on the achievements of the past, and looking ahead to a harmonious future.

My wife and I send our heartfelt good wishes to all Tasmanians on this special anniversary.

His Majesty King Charles III

MESSAGES FROM THE GOVERNOR

Assent to Bills

[11.46 a.m.]

Mr PRESIDENT - Honourable members, I am in receipt of a message from Her Excellency the Governor advising assent to the following bills:

- Mt Lyell Acid Drainage Reduction (Repeal) Bill 2025 (No. 53)
- Residential Parks Bill 2026 (No. 2)
- Police Offences Amendment (Increased Penalties for Damage to Tasmanian War Memorials) Bill 2026 (No. 5)
- Occupational Licensing Amendment Bill 2026 (No. 6)
- Residential Tenancy Amendment (Safety Modifications) Bill 2025 (No. 59)
- Police Offences Amendment Bill 2025 (No. 50)

Having been presented to the Governor for the royal assent, she has, in the name of His Majesty the King, assented to the said bills.

Caroline Wells
Government House
Hobart
11 September 2026

DRAFT

Assent to Bills

Mr PRESIDENT - The final message from Government House:

- Statutory Holidays Amendment Bill 2026 (No. 14)
- Taxation and Related Legislation (Miscellaneous Amendments) Bill 2026 (No. 21)
- Charities and Associations Law (Miscellaneous) Amendment Bill 2025 (No. 65)
- Integrity Commission Amendment (Mandatory Notifications) Bill 2025 (No. 69)

Having been presented to the Governor for the royal assent, she has, in the name of His Majesty the King, assented to the said bills.

Caroline Wells
Government House
Hobart
9 October 2026

RECOGNITION OF VISITORS

Mr PRESIDENT - Honourable members, it's special interest time and I'd like to welcome two very, very patient people to our Chamber today who no doubt have much better knowledge of the operations of government than they did before they walked in, guests of the honourable member for Pembroke - who will be speaking first, which is good news for you: Rick Bennett and Brett Harris. They are involved with the Biggest Ever Blokes Lunch. It's a Prostate Cancer Foundation of Australia fundraiser and it's a method of promoting prostate health awareness.

SPECIAL INTEREST MATTERS

Biggest Ever Blokes Lunch - Prostrate Cancer Fundraiser

[11.49 a.m.]

Mr EDMUNDS (Pembroke) - Thank you, Mr President. Yes, thank you to our guests for their patience this morning. I rise to speak about the inaugural Biggest Ever Blokes Lunch in Hobart, taking place this Friday at Wrest Point, and what a beacon of the week that Friday lunch is. I acknowledge the important work being done to raise awareness of prostate cancer and support the Prostate Cancer Foundation of Australia.

The lunch brings together Tasmania's business community, sporting personalities, community leaders, and everyday Tasmanians for an afternoon of entertainment, fundraising, mateship, and most importantly, conversations about men's health. While the day promises plenty of laughs and entertainment, its underlying message is a serious one: prostate cancer affects thousands of Australian families, and greater awareness, early detection and access to support can save lives. While I certainly am excited to attend, have a meal, maybe a beer or

two, see a few friendly faces and have a laugh, this event is about much more than that. The Prostate Cancer Foundation of Australia plays a vital role in supporting research, raising awareness and helping men and their families navigate the challenges of diagnosis and treatment. Continued support for this work is essential.

Prostate cancer continues to have a significant impact on Australian families, including here in Tasmania. More than 500 Tasmanian men are diagnosed each year and almost 80 lose their lives to this disease. Behind every one of those numbers is a person, a family and a network of friends whose lives are changed forever. The evidence shows that far too often men put off visiting their doctor, avoid difficult conversations about their health or assume that prostate cancer is something that happens to somebody else.

We all need to change that attitude. We need to encourage men to understand their individual risk, speak with their GP and discuss whether PSA testing is appropriate for them. Early detection can make a real difference. While this is called the Biggest Ever Blokes Lunch, partners, families, friends and colleagues all have a role to play in encouraging men to take their health seriously.

Mr President, as you have, I'd like to acknowledge two plus one, three Tasmanian men who have brought this event to life: Rick Bennett, Paul Foreman and Brett Harris. Each has a personal connection to prostate cancer, and each has chosen to turn a difficult experience into an opportunity to assist others.

Rick Bennett, who's here in the Speaker's Reserve, was diagnosed in 2019 with prostate cancer at just 47 years old. Rick underwent a radical prostatectomy in 2022. His experience has made him a passionate advocate for early detection, encouraging men to have conversations with their doctors and take responsibility for their health.

Paul Foreman is a highly respected Tasmanian chef and hospitality identity who was diagnosed with prostate cancer in late 2023. His treatment journey strengthened his commitment to raising awareness and helping other men, and I believe he's had input into what we're going to be consuming on our plates on Friday.

And Brett Harris, who's also here with us in your Reserve, Mr President, also has personal experience with prostate cancer and is still continuing his treatment of his cancer diagnosis - I believe as recently as this morning, that's correct - and has joined Rick and Paul in establishing an event designed to make a genuine difference.

Rather than reflecting simply on their individual experiences, these three men in particular have decided to turn a difficult chapter in their lives into something positive for the wider community. Their shared goal is to encourage men to talk openly about prostate cancer, reduce stigma surrounding men's health and ensure that no Tasmanian man feels he must face a diagnosis alone.

Importantly, the event has been established through the voluntary efforts of a small organising committee supported by local businesses and community partners. The event's program includes Olympic gold medallist Steven Bradbury, comedian Lawrence Mooney, and Brendon Gale, CEO of the Tasmanian Devils, amongst others.

Mr President, I want to acknowledge the extraordinary efforts of Rick, Paul and Brett. Their work, together with the generosity of so many Tasmanian businesses, volunteers and supporters, is a wonderful example of community spirit. We need to encourage more men to have conversations about their health, understand their risks and not put off potentially life-saving medical advice. At the end of the day, if this event on Friday helps save just one life or prevents one family from experiencing the heartbreak of a late diagnosis then its impact will extend far beyond the walls of Wrest Point or indeed this parliament. I congratulate everybody involved in bringing the inaugural Biggest Ever Blokes Lunch to Hobart, look forward to joining them and wish them every success.

Members - Hear, hear.

Family and Sexual Violence - Playwright Gabrielle Adkins' *ENOUGH*

[11.54 a.m.]

Ms FORREST (Murchison) - Before I start, I just wish to issue a content warning. I'm talking about family and sexual violence, just so members are aware. Mr President, I wish to speak about a challenging matter and as I said, offer a content warning as this covers matters related to violence against women, family violence and sexual assault.

I want to begin with a truly powerful scene: a woman taking her last breath. That is where playwright Gabrielle Adkins tells us this work began. This was a full visual image, a visceral image and visceral impact in the Albert Hall in Launceston. It took her three years to write, and what she has given Tasmania is a play called *ENOUGH*, and I want to speak today about why it matters, who made it possible and what it demands of us.

Gabrielle wrote in the program:

> The moment *ENOUGH* arrived was completely unexpected. In 2023, I was standing in a foyer of an art gallery in Doha looking at an installation about the environment. I found myself thinking about violence against women, how it has endured across cultures, countries and centuries, changing its shape and its language, but never disappearing, and then, in an instant, the whole play arrived. I saw a woman taking her last breath, the last two minutes of her life. I felt all the things said and left unsaid.

Gabrielle added further:

> Looking back, coercive control can seem obvious. Living inside it is something else entirely. *ENOUGH* does not ask us why she didn't leave, but why couldn't she leave?

ENOUGH is the work of Mudlark Theatre, a company that this year marks 21 years as Tasmania's home for new Australian playwriting - and by way of full disclosure, my daughter Jane Forrest is the Chair of Mudlark. Mudlark was founded on a simple conviction, that this state should have a permanent professional place for original stories to be developed and staged, by Tasmanian artists for Tasmanian audiences with the ambition to travel further. Over two decades it has premiered more than 17 new plays and backed the work of Tasmanian

writers. It is a company that punches well above its size, and it does so on a funding base that, like so much of the arts sector, is far from secure.

ENOUGH tells the story of one family across 30 years, compressed theatrically into a single breath: Kate, in love with her husband, who is charming and volatile; her mother, Bess, urging her to act; her father pleading with her, and desperate for her safety; her daughter, Billie, absorbing the silence that shapes a household long before she had the words for what she was witnessing. It is at one level an intimate domestic drama; on another, it is Gabrielle Adkins' answer to a question she could not put down. Every week, in this country - in fact, more often of late, I understand - a woman is killed by a current or former partner. Her play does not ask why she didn't leave, it asks why she couldn't.

Director Bindy Stephens has staged this not as something to be watched from a safe distance, but it was something we actually sat inside. The audience were placed around the stage, close to the story, and witnessing each other witnessing it. These are not other people's stories, they belong to our communities, our streets, quite possibly our own families. I went to see this twice, as hard as that was. I sat in a different spot around the stage; I was deeply moved and saw different things on both occasions, as were all of the other members in the audience, seeing different things.

This is confronting theatre. It was also, though, deeply funny, deeply human, and achingly familiar. Adkins refused to reduce anyone to the worst thing that has happened to them, to those caught in those relationships. These are people who keep raising children, worrying about money, and finding moments of joy inside the cycle of abuse. That refusal is what makes this work land as hard as it did.

Work of this calibre - provocative, rigorous, capable of changing how community talks about something it would rather not talk about - doesn't happen by accident. It happens because a company like Mudlark can sustain artists, playwrights and directors over years, not funding cycles. It happens because a writer can be supported through, in this case, a three-year gestation. That requires stable funding.

Yes, laws matter, education matters, support services matter in this area, but so, unmistakably, do stories, because stories give us the language to recognise what we could not previously name, and recognition is often the first step towards change. If we are serious as a parliament and as a community about addressing family and domestic violence, then funding the artists who make an audience sit, stay, as hard as it was, and truly one to be part of is another way of addressing it.

Mudlark was built 21 years ago on the belief that Tasmania deserved a permanent home for its own stories. *ENOUGH* is proof of that belief, that if it's properly resourced, it can be produced. I thank Gabrielle and her remarkable work, and particularly the actors Jane Johnson, Scott Farrow, Ross Marsden and Imogen Kalisch, along with Gabrielle, to bring this work to life and accurately reflect the lived reality for far too many women and families living with us every day. Thank you to the whole team and to Mudlark for supporting and continuing to give real context and opportunity for Tasmanians to engage so meaningfully in what the arts is all about: teaching us, challenging us, inspiring us, and demanding of us so much more.

DRAFT

Expansion of Authority to Prescribe Medicines - Doctors' Concerns

[12.00 p.m.]

Mr GAFFNEY (Mersey) - Mr President, the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners (RACGP) highlighted with me some of their concerns. My Special Interest Matter today will reflect issues raised with me by that organisation.

Their primary concern is one of profound structural consequence to the safety of every person in Tasmania from the proposed expansion of autonomous pharmacists' prescribing and diagnostic authority. As our state looks at changes to who can diagnose illness and prescribe high-risk and clinical medicines, the RACGP believes that this parliament must unite behind one unshakable principle: patient safety must always come first. The RACGP contends that this is not a debate about individual professional capability, dedication or intentions of our hardworking community pharmacists; rather, it speaks directly to a cold systemic reality: the specific conditions required for the safe exercise of medical diagnostic authority, particularly in environments where clinical uncertainty is inherent and patient harm may only emerge long after initial consultation.

We should agree that expanding access to our care across Tasmania is an urgent priority, especially for our regional, rural and isolated communities; however, safe prescribing is never just a single transactional moment of care, nor is it simply about providing fast relief to symptoms. It relies entirely on structural systems that support continuity, oversight and deep accountability over time, not solely on the skill or goodwill of an individual practitioner working in isolation. The RACGP recognises that most health conditions are not straightforward. Symptoms are frequently unclear during an initial presentation, shared across a vast web of entirely different medical conditions, and change unpredictably over time. A correct, safe diagnosis often cannot be achieved in a single episodic visit. It only becomes clear through time, rigorous follow-up and ongoing connected care.

The RACGP believes that current pharmacy education, training pathways and business structures within retail pharmacies simply do not align with the complex clinical competencies required to safely manage these undifferentiated raw medical presentations. What initially appears to be a straightforward UTI or ear infection, skin condition or episode of reflux may be a symptom of a different or more serious underlying condition. The RACGP believes if we expand diagnosing and prescribing to episodic isolated retail settings without robust system-level safeguards, it fears that we might introduce severe predictable failure points into Tasmanian health care.

First, the RACGP believes care will become heavily fragmented. Safe medicine depends completely on continuity of care, and displacing these decisions into a transactional over-the-counter environment breaks the longitudinal patient-doctor relationship that keeps chronic and vulnerable patients alive.

Second, the RACGP contends important warning signs will be missed in complex care contexts. Clinical diagnosis is a process that evolves. Patient harm is frequently delayed, diffused or completely undetected during a brief first consultation. Without deeply connected information networks, universal access to shared patient histories and formal pathways to immediately refer or escalate care to a medical team, serious complications will slip through the cracks.

Third, the RACGP explained that antimicrobial stewardship may be severely threatened. Distributing prescribing authority for acute conditions like ear, skin or respiratory infections into retail settings runs completely counter to decades of public health advocacy. Splitting the health system increases the risk of inappropriate antibiotic use, directly accelerating the dangerous global threat of antimicrobial resistance.

Finally, the RACGP vocalised that clinical accountability will be eroded. When prescribing is decoupled from comprehensive diagnostic oversight, it becomes entirely unclear who is ultimately responsible for the long-term patient outcome. Tasmanians deserve a health system where clinical accountability is transparent, permanent and designed strictly around the patient.

Most concerningly, the RACGP states that the Tasmanian government's accelerated path towards unilateral pharmacy prescribing is entirely at odds with intergovernmental commitments made only a few weeks ago. At the national Health Ministers' Meeting on 4 September 2026, every federal, state and territory minister explicitly agreed to update the Australian Health Ministers' Advisory Council's guidance for national boards on scheduled medicines. They pledged to collectively develop a unified national decision-making framework to deliberately promote national consistency in prescribing scope of practice. For our state to forge ahead with isolated, fragmented changes right now directly violates that joint ministerial consensus and undermines the very national framework meant to protect patient safety.

The RACGP contends systems, not just individuals, keep patients safe. This principle is particularly vital for older Tasmanians and those with complex multilayered healthcare needs who are highly vulnerable to the dangers of polypharmacy. We must not permit convenience to be substituted for clinical safety, nor national agreements to be cast aside for political expediency. The RACGP implores the Tasmanian government and our state regulators to honour their September commitment. We must immediately halt any independent expansions and ensure that strong, system-level safety protections are legally locked in place through the agreed national decision-making framework before any prescribing roles are altered. The RACGP's closing comment to me was along the lines of, 'Let us choose a future for Tasmania that is safe, connected, accountable and designed entirely around the safety of the patient.'

Salmon Farming in the D'Entrecasteaux Channel

[12.06 p.m.]

Ms GLADE-WRIGHT (Huon) - Mr President, it's time to get salmon out of the Channel. Let me explain: 85 per cent of Tasmania's salmon farming is located in my electorate and there is a broad range of views, and so I try to take a balanced approach. On the one hand, the industry employs many Tasmanians, including people who might otherwise struggle to find employment, and they give back to their communities through initiatives such as literacy support programs. Salmon farming also provides a source of protein without depleting wild fish stocks - that's also a good thing. On the other hand, the rapid expansion of salmon farming has occurred without bringing local communities along for the ride.

When salmon farming began in Tasmania in the 1980s, it was a boutique industry, producing what was regarded as a gourmet product. Today, the scale of the industry is vastly different and warming waters means that fish have greater susceptibility to gill disease. This means the salmon have to be treated with antibiotics. The overuse of antibiotics contributes to

antimicrobial resistance, and we've just heard the member for Mersey talk about that. Put simply, antimicrobial resistance means the medicines we rely on to treat infections can become less effective and, in severe cases, not effective at all. This is a major concern for the World Health Organization. A few years ago, a Monash University study analysed supermarket salmon and beef and found antibiotic resistance in both samples. It is one of the reasons I personally now choose to only buy antibiotic-free meat at the supermarket and, despite enjoying Tasmanian salmon for many years, particularly at sushi restaurants, I no longer choose to eat it.

Another consequence of keeping fish in the warm waters of the Channel is that the fish have to have their gills cleaned regularly. This involves large well-boats that chug up and down the Channel to the pens, the fish being pumped up through pipes into the vessels, treated in fresh water and then pumped back down into their pens. These operations occur 24/7 over summer. At night, the vessels are brightly lit so the crews can safely operate the machinery. There is a constant thrum of the engines and the pumps and the large vessels operating in what is otherwise a remarkably quiet environment. People often tell me how the lights shine into their bedrooms at night, and the noise, well, you can see how that wrecks the serenity.

So, why don't we simply move salmon farming out of the Channel and somewhere where the water is cooler, fish can be healthier, potentially and the industry is less intrusive in people's lives? Well, the answer is fairly simple - it's because it costs more.

Yesterday I visited IMAS in Taroona - and this is the reason for my speech today - where researchers in partnership with Blue Economy CRC are trialling offshore salmon farming in a temporary research zone. There are challenges, of course: offshore farming is more expensive, and operating in the open ocean creates a much more demanding environment for workers and infrastructure. However, there are also significant benefits. The water is cooler, and the stronger ocean currents flush the pens better, creating healthier growing conditions. This may reduce disease and ultimately reduce the industry's reliance on antibiotics. Most importantly for communities in the Channel, it offers the prospect of moving an increasingly industrial activity away from people's homes and Tasmania's sheltered waterways.

What was so great to hear during my visit to IMAS yesterday was how successful the first trial has been. So far, the fish have not needed antibiotics. The next stage of the trial is to increase the density in the pens, and with each result comes the hope of making offshore operations safer, easier and more economically viable. I suspect it would also be surprisingly popular politically. Any major party prepared to seriously pursue the relocation of salmon farms out of the Channel might discover there are quite a few votes swimming in their direction. It is an idea I intend to keep raising until the politically impossible becomes that politically inevitable. I look forward to the day when I personally choose to eat Tasmanian salmon again, and when the people of the Channel can enjoy their beautiful waterways without the constant noise, lights and industrial activity of salmon farming on their doorstep. Healthy fish, happier people: it's time to get salmon out of the Channel.

Greater Hobart Small Business Excellence Awards 2026

[12.12 p.m.]

Ms THOMAS (Elwick) - I rise today to recognise the people behind Greater Hobart's small businesses, and to congratulate the winners and finalists of the 2026 Greater Hobart Small

Business Excellence Awards. Business Greater Hobart, formerly known as the Confederation of Greater Hobart Business, established and hosted the inaugural Greater Hobart Small Business Excellence Awards to celebrate the resilience, innovation and contribution of small businesses and entrepreneurs across the Greater Hobart region. The winners were announced in an awards evening at the RACV Hotel in Hobart on 15 August, where business owners, staff, community leaders and supporters from across the region came together to celebrate small business excellence. Business Greater Hobart received hundreds of nominations, with 21 finalists recognised across the award categories. That response says a great deal about the regard our community has for its small businesses.

A small business can be a place where someone gets their first job, learns a trade, or finds the confidence to try something new. It can be the familiar face that helps when a car breaks down, or the welcoming space that makes it easier to take the first step towards better health. These businesses provide the services that we rely on in our communities while building relationships that help our suburbs thrive.

I was very proud to sponsor the Customer Service Excellence Award, won this year by Personal Best Fitness in North Hobart. Personal Best Fitness was founded in 1998 and has operated from its purpose-designed facility in Letitia Street since 2005. For nearly three decades, the Personal Best Fitness team has worked to create a warm, welcoming environment, where people feel supported to make sustainable improvements to their health and wellbeing. This is a fitting example of excellence in customer service. People may arrive at a fitness centre with very different goals, levels of confidence and personal circumstances. Helping them feel comfortable, listening to what they need and supporting them over time takes care and commitment, and I congratulate everyone in the team at Personal Best Fitness on this very well-deserved award.

I was especially pleased to see a business from my electorate of Elwick recognised as a 2026 Greater Hobart Business Award winner too. Southern Automotive, based at 328 Main Road, Glenorchy, won the Trades and Construction Excellence Award. The Southern Automotive team provides services including vehicle servicing, diagnostics, repairs and inspections. For customers, access to skilled local automotive services matters enormously. For Glenorchy, it is wonderful to see the work of a local business acknowledged across Greater Hobart, and I congratulate the Southern Automotive team on this achievement.

I also congratulate the other award winners:

- Happy Larry Deli, which received the Emerging Small Business Award
- GDA Group, recognised for professional services
- Emerge Business Solutions, winner of the Innovation and ICT Award
- TEDx Hobart, recognised for inclusion, equity, and belonging
- Florage Tasmania, winner of the Leadership, Sustainability, and Community Impact Award
- Da Angelo Ristorante, winner of the Business of the Year Chairman's Award.

I'm sure many honourable members have experienced the wonderful food and service at Da Angelo in Battery Point.

The range of these categories reflects the many ways that small businesses contribute. Some bring a new idea to market; others develop specialist skills and create places where people belong or find ways to give back to local communities. Each deserves recognition for the work involved in building and sustaining an enterprise.

I thank Business Greater Hobart for establishing these awards and for its works as an independent voice for small businesses. I also thank everyone who nominated a business. I thank the judges, sponsors and everyone who helped make the awards possible.

Recognition like this is important because much of the effort behind a small business happens out of sight. Running a small business demands long hours, sound judgement and persistence. The people doing that work create jobs and opportunities. They serve their customers and contribute to the character of the places that we all call home.

To all 21 finalists and every nominee in the 2026 Greater Hobart Business Awards, congratulations. Whether or not you took home an award, your work has been noticed and appreciated. I hope that these awards encourage more of us to recognise and support the small businesses that support our communities every day.

MOTION

Establishment of Government Business Enterprise Scrutiny Committees

[12.17 p.m.]

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

(1) That two Government Businesses Scrutiny Committees be established to inquire into Government Businesses in accordance with the schedule detailed below and rules as set out in the Standing Orders at Part 22.

(2) That the Committees have leave to sit on Monday, 7 December and Tuesday, 8 December 2026 between the hours of 9.00 a.m. and 5.15 p.m. or such other time as varied by the Chair and as necessary for the purpose of relevant stakeholder and deliberative meetings.

(3) For 2026 Government Businesses are allocated to the Committees as follows -

Committee A
Monday, 7 December 2026
Aurora Energy Pty Ltd, Metro Tasmania Pty Ltd, Tasmanian Public Finance Corporation and Tasmanian Water and Sewerage Corporation

Committee B
Tuesday, 8 December 2026
Motor Accidents Insurance Board, Tasmanian Railways Pty Ltd, Tasmanian Irrigation Pty Ltd, Port Arthur Historic Site Management Authority and Tasracing Pty Ltd

And that -

Ms Forrest,
Ms Glade-Wright,
Ms Lovell,
Ms O'Connor, and
Ms Thomas
be of Committee A

and

Ms Armitage,
Mr Edmunds,
Mr Gaffney,
Mr Hiscutt, and
Ms Webb
be of Committee B.

(4) And that the Committees report on the Government Businesses by no later than 30 January 2026.

If the Legislative Council is not sitting when the Government Businesses Scrutiny Committees complete their reports, those reports may be presented to the President or if the President is unable to act, to the Deputy President or other Office holder and in that event -

(a) the reports shall be deemed to have been presented to the Council;

(b) the publication of the reports is authorised by this Resolution;

(c) the President, Deputy President or other Office holder, as the case may be, may give directions for the printing and circulation of the reports; and

(d) the President, Deputy President or other Office holder, as the case may be, shall direct the Clerk to lay the reports upon the Table at the next sitting of the Council.

Motion agreed to.

DRAFT

CONDOLENCE MOTION

Honourable Don Wing AM - Former Member for Launceston

[12.19 p.m.]

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

> That the Legislative Council expresses its deep regret at the passing on 1 October 2026 of the Honourable Donald George Wing AM, Member of the Legislative Council for Launceston and Paterson from 1982 to 2011 and President of the Legislative Council from 2002 to 2008, and places on record its appreciation of his service to this State, and further, that this House respectfully tenders to his family its sincere sympathy in their bereavement.

The honourable Don Wing AM lived an incredible life, and for Launceston this is the passing of a man whose name has been part of the civic life of the city for more than half a century. Although Don was born at Ulverstone, Launceston became the place with which his public life was most closely identified. He worked there as a lawyer, served on the council and later becoming its mayor, before going on to represent his community in this Chamber. He also continued to serve long after leaving elected office in the causes and organisations that mattered to the community. That's why his contribution is still felt in Launceston today.

Don entered local government in 1979, when he was elected an alderman of the Launceston City Council. He became deputy mayor and then, in 1983, mayor of the city, serving in that office until 1987 and remaining an alderman until 1991. During those years, Don was involved in work to improve public amenities and the appearance of the city, advocating for projects intended to strengthen Launceston and prepare it for the future. The City of Launceston itself has recognised the role he played in street beautification and the improvement of public amenities during his time as mayor.

His interest in the city's future was not confined to what could be seen above ground. Flooding has always been one of Launceston's great practical challenges. Don understood the seriousness of that issue and remained involved in flood mitigation planning well after his time in local government. In later years, he served in an advisory role with the Launceston Flood Authority and continued to be an active contributor. That sort of work goes easily unnoticed, because when it succeeds, people simply go about their lives, but planning for floods, improving public spaces and maintaining community infrastructure are precisely the kinds of decisions whose effects can be felt for generations.

Don's contribution to Launceston and northern Tasmania then naturally moved on to state politics. In May 1982, Don was elected to the Legislative Council as the Independent member for Launceston. He continued to serve after the 1999 redistribution as the member for Paterson before retiring in 2011, after almost 29 years. For six of those years, 2002-2008, he served as president of the Legislative Council, including with the current members for McIntyre, Murchison and Mersey. Those are impressive milestones, but I suspect Don himself would have placed greater importance on representing the community that placed their trust in him.

Don was certainly never far removed from community life. Across the years he was associated with service organisations, sporting and cultural groups, charities and local causes. His interests ranged from Meals on Wheels and Lions to the Launceston City Band, the Male

Choir, the YMCA and Tamar Yacht Club, as well as projects such as tram restoration. Don also loved his football, and I believe he rarely missed a Launceston Football Club home game or big final. Don was always prepared to give his time to established institutions and to the community organisations, large and small, that so often depend on people simply being willing to turn up and lend a hand. Even retiring from parliament did not bring that to an end. Don continued working with organisations supporting people with disability and disadvantage, continuing to contribute to causes that he believed could improve the lives of others. Don's willingness to continue serving says a great deal about him.

As the present member for Launceston, I'm especially conscious that we inherit more than an electorate name or a set of boundaries. Rather, we inherit a tradition of representation built by those who came before us. There are people across Launceston today who may never have met Don Wing, but who live in a city influenced by decisions he helped make, organisations he supported and civic causes to which he devoted his time. That is a meaningful legacy.

Following his passing, the City of Launceston acknowledged the enduring effect of his work, with Mayor Matthew Garwood remembering Don as a genuine advocate for Launceston and northern Tasmania who had given decades to the community he loved. Don's public life was not defined by one single achievement; rather, it was built through years of consistent contribution in local government, in this Chamber, through community organisations, and in the everyday work of advocating for our city. To Don's family, friends and former colleagues, and to the many people throughout Launceston who worked alongside him over the years, I offer my sincere sympathy.

Launceston has lost one of its long-standing civic figures, but the results of his service remain around us. Don's interest in the community was sincere, and a place for people to feel connected was a priority. It's a privilege to move this motion to place on the record the gratitude of this House for all that Don Wing gave to Launceston and to Tasmania. Vale, the honourable Don George Wing AM.

[12.26 p.m.]

Ms FORREST (Murchison) - Mr President, I thank the honourable member for Launceston for bringing this condolence motion on today, and I rise to support the motion and pay my respects to the former member for Launceston, the member for Paterson, as it was changed to in 1999 and then back to Launceston again, the honourable Donald George Wing AM, who passed away on 1 October at the age of 88.

Don was from the north-west coast. He was born in Ulverstone in 1938, and he grew up on the family farm at Preston. He studied law at the University of Tasmania and practised as a barrister before entering public life. Don retained ownership of the Preston farm his whole life, thus his enduring connection to north-west Tasmania.

I first met Don when I was elected to parliament in 2005, and in my experience, he was always immaculate in his appearance and had the air of a studious, committed, intelligent and serious barrister. His attire and hair were always immaculate and underneath there was a wonderful sense of humour and a deeply generous, genuine, caring and compassionate individual who cared deeply for those in need and for those he served. I'll say a little bit more about this shortly, but after he moved from the north-west, Launceston became his home and his life's work. He served as an alderman and then as mayor of Launceston from 1983 to 1987,

and he was first elected to this place on 22 May 1992. He represented Paterson, as I said, which was then renamed back to Launceston in 2008 - as it should have, according to Don. I note his election in 2005, the same year I was first elected, that Don was the only candidate nominated and was declared elected without a poll, in what we affectionately refer to as a 'skinner'. They're a little bit rarer these days, but we still sometimes, maybe occasionally, have them. Don served for almost 29 years until he retired in May 2011. He served as the chair of committees and then as president from 2002 to 2008.

I thought I'd just go back and have a read of Don's inaugural speech to get a sense of the newly elected member of this place. It seems, despite all declarations from the current member for Launceston, with regard to parochialism, it's something that's attached to the seat. Don said in his inaugural speech - I can't do it in his voice, unfortunately, because I won't do it justice, but I think if Kerry Finch was here, he'd probably give it a red-hot go. Anyway, he said he was very proud to represent the electorate of Launceston:

> I have felt that at times I have been guilty of parochialism. I was interested in the parochialism displayed in this Chamber in the good-natured rivalry between the honourable Deputy Leader and the honourable member for Pembroke in discussing the merits of expenditure by the Government on Bruny Island as compared with the Eastern Shore. But when I heard the suggestion by the honourable member for Tamar, in terms of parochialism, I felt a rank amateur.
>
> I feel that I can view the affairs of this State with some degree of objectivity. I was born at Ulverstone and educated at the primary level there; I received my secondary education in Launceston and my tertiary education in Hobart. Perhaps it is because I have spent the last 20 years living in Launceston that I have come to the realisation that Launceston does not receive a fair share of expenditure of government money in so many areas. That is not always the case in other areas of the State. I have consistently said that Launceston should not receive extra expenditure at the expense of other areas, but it should enjoy a fair and equitable distribution of government expenditure.
>
> Hobart and many centres on the north-west coast have very fine roads. Both areas deserve them; but my view is that Launceston does too. Yet it has missed out on expenditure of government money, on roads in particular, time and time again.
>
> In recent weeks I have heard misguided criticism about the per capita expenditure on Launceston roads compared with the per capita expenditure on Hobart roads. The comment I wish to make, Mr President, is that even if Launceston received disproportionately favourable per capita expenditure on roads for 20 years, that would hardly redress the imbalance that has existed for many years.

I just thought that was just too hard to go past, Mr President, I must say. Obviously, the then member did have a few more things to say, but I think I've captured his views on that point.

It was interesting he also argued in support of the reduction of the size of the parliament and for a more enhanced committee structure, so on some matters I think he may have had differing views as time went on, but he always spoke passionately about what he believed.

Don was president when I was first elected to this place. He was a very kind and generous person and always willing to assist the new member. Even though he may have appeared to doze off in the Chair, he was always well aware of what was going on. To assist this allusion, his colleagues bought him a pair of googly-eye glasses to wear after a run of late-night sittings in case they were needed, to have the appearance of always being widely awake.

He chose to step down as president for the last three years of his last term in office to enable him to directly contribute to debate and more directly represent his electorate on the floor of this Chamber. I remember him making that decision. Don was always very considered in his contributions and if he was here now, I'm sure he would find the pace of things challenging. Computers, while he did occasionally use one, were certainly not his thing.

Don's commitment to independence and the independence of this House is worth remembering and is noteworthy. He had been the state president of the Liberal Party, but he resigned that membership and always sat in this Council as an Independent. He highly valued and supported the independence of the upper House. He genuinely stepped away from any involvement in the Liberal Party and certainly did not always support the conservative government's decisions. He spoke openly about not wanting a career in party politics. He believed and continued to believe throughout his life that this House should be a place of independent review. He lived that belief. As I said, he stepped down from his role as president before retiring so he could actively participate in the debate.

Anyone who served with him will remember how he spoke slowly, thoughtfully, deliberately - some might say ponderously. When he disagreed, it was done very respectfully with words such as were referred to by his great-nephew at his memorial service: 'Mmm, that's an interesting point of view'. When he spoke, it was clear and easy to follow. He never rushed his words. In his view, anything worth saying was worth saying slowly and carefully.

He was in many ways a creature of habit. In the members' dining room, he loved a roast lunch with a good glass of red, preferably a Shiraz. He barely needed to place an order because it was such a routine for him. He ate very slowly, partly because he was always part of the conversation at the table, and Don never let a good meal get in the way of a good conversation.

He also had firm views on hotel furnishings. On one committee trip, I remember - I believe it was the road safety inquiry that he was chairing - we booked into a hotel with vertical drapes. Well, Don would not have a bar of that. He checked out and found himself a hotel room with proper curtains. That said, he was always deeply respectful to those with whom he worked and engaged when undertaking committee work as well as in the parliament.

I can't go past another one of those memorable events of which those newer members to the Chamber may have heard or may not have. It has been referred to as a bit of folklore around here. There was one event where the Shetland band Fiddlers' Bid was playing in Hobart and Don, as president, invited them back to parliament. After a late evening that ended with a performance of Fiddlers' Bid in this very Chamber, a number of members arrived the next morning somewhat the worse for wear, and a few in sunglasses. The Chamber assembled and then the Usher of the Black Rod announced, 'Honourable members, the Deputy President',

which was a surprise because no-one thought that Don was unwell or anything. He'd been in fine form the previous evening, so everyone wondered what had happened to our president. Don insisted there was a problem with the alarm in his hotel room and turned up a little bit late.

There is actually a postscript to this story that not everyone perhaps knows. Don and a then clerk, David Pearce, were at a conference in the UK, likely a Presiding Officers and Clerks conference. One of the evenings they were there, they walked into a pub and serving behind the bar was a member of Fiddlers' Bid, who recognised Don - he was recognisable and stately in his appearance. He did have that striking and memorable appearance, and in no time the member of Fiddlers' Bid had Don behind the bar pulling beers. Can you just imagine it?

Anyway, I would like to acknowledge the lovely memorial service for Don that I attended last week, and I know many of my colleagues here did also. This was expertly emceed by our former colleague Kerry Finch, and the messages conveyed at that memorial service were the same: a truly wonderful, generous man. Kerry did tell me that Don once told him that when he had a disgruntled voter or constituent in his office, the person said to him as he was showing the person to the door, 'And you won't be getting my vote', to which Don replied, 'If I needed your vote to get elected, I wouldn't stand'. It's about as harsh as it got, I reckon, from Don.

These are just some of the memories I have about his time here. There will be far more to his story even in this place here, but also his public service that went well beyond the parliament. Since the 1960s, Don has been involved with and supported countless organisations and charities. At the memorial, Kerry Finch said he had three sheets of organisations he'd supported. Particularly of note were Meals on Wheels and the Lions Club. He supported the restoration of Launceston's trams and the beautification of its streets. He backed many community groups including the Good Neighbour Council, the Launceston City Band, the Tamar Yacht Club, the Launceston Male Choir and the Launceston YMCA.

In the tributes since his death, the word used most often has been of 'a gentleman'. He was a strong supporter of the arts - a passion of my own - and provided practical as well as financial support to a number of arts organisations. He was a critical part of the establishment of the Earl Arts Centre.

He also had a very keen focus on education and supporting youth to gain a good education. I know from talking to members of the Scotch Oakburn community, he was a very generous supporter of Scotch Oakburn College, including when it was Scotch, before they combined. He personally paid for the tuition of some students in need without them knowing who their benefactor was. He has remained a generous supporter of Scotch Oakburn College and continued to visit and engage with staff and students until very recently. He was always very engaged with the students when he walked around. As the now principal said, 'Whenever he visited, a walk around this school took far longer than you would have allowed for'.

Don was very well known around town, in Launceston in particular. My husband Rob, as I have heard from many others, recalls walking down the street with him and it being an incredibly slow walk as he stopped to speak with and acknowledge all those who knew him, which was just about everybody in the street.

He's been renowned for his steady leadership and his genuine care for all Tasmanians. I know his health has been ailing in recent years and despite this, he continued to contribute and support his community as best he could. His family is, rightly so, very proud of his work,

his kindness and his generosity. Don gave more than four decades of service to his city and to this state, and he did it with a generous heart, with kindness, courtesy, integrity and independence. As I said, he was always the immaculate gentleman, with a strong sense of duty and a really good sense of humour.

On behalf of the people of Murchison, I extend my sincere sympathy to his family and friends. A true gentleman, may he rest in peace. Vale, the honourable Don Wing AM.

[12.40 p.m.]

Ms RATTRAY (McIntyre - Leader for the Government in the Legislative Council) - Mr President, I acknowledge the honourable member for Launceston and thank her for bringing forward this motion. I rise today, as others have, to pay tribute to the honourable Donald George Wing AM. As has already been stated, but I'm happy to state it again, he was a generous man who devoted an extraordinary portion of his life to serving his community and the people of Tasmania, a member of this Council for almost three decades, president for six, mayor of Launceston and a practising lawyer. I had the honour of being part of this Chamber for seven years while the honourable Don Wing was a part of this and six years as the president. As has already been stated, Don passed away on 1 October 2026 at the age of 88, and his passing marks an end of a remarkable life of public service, particularly to Launceston and northern Tasmania.

Don was born at Ulverstone on 27 April 1938, and he attended Ulverstone Primary School and later Scotch College in Launceston before studying law at the University of Tasmania. He was admitted to legal practice in 1962. Having served his articles and spent time as an associate to Justice Crawford, he went on to practise as a solicitor and later as a barrister, developing a reputation as a highly capable advocate, particularly in litigation.

Interestingly, law was not necessarily Don's first intended career. His father, Roy, as a farmer on the north-west coast, had hoped that his son might one day take over the family property. Don knew that farming was not for him for a time and considered becoming a teacher. Don later recalled that one of his teachers at Scotch College asked him whether teaching was really what he wanted to do for the rest of his life. When Don admitted that it was probably not, his teacher suggested that perhaps he ought to do something else.

Don began his political life through the Liberal Party, where he served as state president for the Tasmanian Liberal Party from 1973 until 1980. When the opportunity eventually arose for Don to run for the Legislative Council, he chose to do so as an independent, and the honourable member for Murchison talked about that as well. Don spoke openly about wanting the ability to exercise his own judgement without what he regarded as the restrictions of party politics. I think it's also important to recognise that Don's independence was grounded in his view of what this Council should be: a strong and considered house of review, where members bring the interests and experiences of their communities into this Chamber and scrutinise carefully the matters placed before them. That respect for independent judgement and for the role of this Council was something Don carried through his parliamentary life.

Don had already established a significant record of service to Launceston before entering parliament. He was elected into the Launceston City Council as an alderman in 1979, served as deputy mayor from 1982 to 1983 and as mayor from 1983 until 1987. He remained an alderman until 1991. As mayor, he was associated with work to improve public amenities and beautify the streets of Launceston. In later years, he also served in an advisory capacity with

the Launceston Flood Authority, continuing his involvement in important flood mitigation work for the city.

On 22 May 1982, Don was elected to the Legislative Council as an Independent member for Launceston. That amounted to almost 29 years of service in the Council, an extraordinary contribution by any measure. Across those years, Don saw governments come and go, witnessed significant changes to this parliament and to Tasmania, and earned the confidence of his electorate time and time again.

Perhaps one of the clearest indications of the type of representative Don intended to be can be found in his inaugural contribution in this Chamber in June 1982. He spoke proudly of Launceston and argued strongly that the city and northern Tasmania deserved a fair and equitable share of government infrastructure, particularly when it came to roads and infrastructure. Again, that's been mentioned by the honourable member for Murchison. Importantly, he made it clear that he was not arguing that Launceston should prosper at the expense of another part of Tasmania. Don wanted fairness for the community he had been elected to represent.

Those of us who have the privilege of representing regional Tasmania understand the importance of remaining connected to the communities we serve. Don was unmistakably a champion for Launceston and northern Tasmania. He understood that the strength of regional Tasmania comes from the people, businesses, volunteers and organisations that hold those communities together. This understanding was reflected through his life in public service.

Don's inaugural speech went well beyond the interest of his own electorate. He spoke about parliamentary standards, the importance of reform, the committee system, the role of the Legislative Council, and the need for parliament to retain the confidence and respect of the community.

In that first speech, Don praised this Council for the dignity, decorum and purposefulness with which it conducted its business. There is something particularly fitting about the fact that a new member who spoke with such respect for this institution would, two decades later, be chosen by his colleagues to preside over it. Don became president of the Legislative Council in 2002, and he was the president who welcomed me to this Chamber when I was first elected as the member for Apsley back in 2004. Again, he continued to serve in that role until 2008, when he stepped down, as also has been indicated by the member for Murchison.

Don remained a strong believer in the Legislative Council's important role as the house of review. Those who occupy the president's chair, of course, accept responsibilities and limitations that are not experienced by ordinary members. After deciding not to seek another term as president, Don reflected that there had been occasions when he had found it difficult not to participate directly in debate or vote on issues about which he and his community held strong views. He specifically recalled the debate relating to the proposed pulp mill as one such occasion. For somebody who had entered this place valuing his independence and the ability to exercise his own judgement, I suspect that there were times when the discipline required of the Chair was not always easy, and so perhaps it was unsurprising that as his presidency came to an end, Don said he was looking forward to being back on the Floor.

Don's commitment to community service extended far beyond parliament. Over many decades he supported an extraordinary range of organisations and causes. His involvement

included Meals on Wheels and Lions, and his support of organisations including the Good Neighbour Council, the Launceston City Band, Tamar Yacht Club, Launceston Male Choir and the Launceston YMCA. He was involved in projects ranging from tram restoration to the beautification of Launceston's streets.

Education was another longstanding interest. Don served on the councils of Scotch College and Scotch Oakburn College and was involved in the College of Advanced Education. He supported international students and refugees and sponsored children through World Vision. Even after leaving politics, he continued contributing to boards and organisations supporting people experiencing disadvantage and disability. In fact, retirement from parliament appears to have had relatively little impact on Don's willingness to serve. After leaving and retiring from the Legislative Council in 2001, Don made it clear that retirement from parliament did not mean retirement from community life. He said that he remained just as busy with organisations and community issues as he had been before.

In explaining why he continued to give so much of himself, Don offered a very simple description of his philosophy: 'My philosophy is to care and share.' There are many lengthy descriptions that could be offered of a life of public service, but perhaps those few words tell us as much about Don Wing as any list of positions ever could. Don received the recognition with humility by instead drawing attention to many other people throughout the community who were doing important work.

Following his retirement, he was granted the right to retain the title 'honourable' for life, and, Mr President, the tributes flowing from Don's passing have been remarkably consistent. He has been remembered as thoughtful and reflective, generous with his knowledge and experience, deeply committed to his community and repeatedly as a gentleman.

The current member for Launceston spoke of Don's steady leadership, his genuine care for the community and the lasting mark that he left upon the region. Importantly, Don's association with this Council did not simply cease when he walked out of this Chamber as a member for the final time. He remained supportive of members who followed him, and generously shared his time, knowledge and advice, and this is particularly fitting for somebody who had such respect for this institution and who had devoted such a substantial part of his life to it.

Don Wing's life reminds us that membership of this place is ultimately an opportunity to serve. For Don that service took many forms: as a lawyer and alderman and a mayor, as an Independent member of this Council, as I said, for almost 29 years, and as its president, and as a tireless contributor to community organisations and charitable causes. Throughout it all, there remained a strong and consistent commitment to Launceston and northern Tasmania, to independent judgement, to the institution of this Legislative Council and, most importantly, to people.

In the final words of his inaugural contribution to this Chamber in 1982, Don said that he had looked forward to:

> ... working with you in the interests of my constituents, in the interests of the people of Tasmania, in the interests of our fine State and in the interests of our great nation.

Mr President, when we reflect upon the life of Don Wing, I believe we can confidently say that he honoured that commitment.

Before I conclude this contribution, I'd like to take this opportunity to also acknowledge the memorial service held last Friday in Launceston, which I attended. There were a number of other members of parliament there, including former members and former clerks of this Council to pay tribute and recognise Don's considerable dedicated service. The large gathering, both in person and through live streaming, had the opportunity to learn about and walk through Don's life with the former colleague and dear friend Kerry Finch as our emcee taking us on that journey. What stood out to me most of all was his kindness that he had shown to many individuals and support to his beloved Launceston community.

Mr President, the two Seeker songs, sung beautifully by four Encore Theatre members, firstly, 'I'll Never Find Another You' and the closing song, 'The Carnival is Over', seem so fitting for a life well lived with no regrets.

Ms Forrest - It was very emotional. It was beautiful.

Ms RATTRAY - It was. In closing, on behalf of the government and personally, I extend my sincere condolences to Don's family, his friends, his former colleagues and the many people throughout Launceston and Tasmania who have had the privilege of knowing him. Mr President, those people extend right across the world, from what we heard last Friday.

His was a life of significant contribution. Don gave generously through the course of his life and Tasmania is richer for his service. Vale, the Honourable Donald George Wing AM.

[12.54 p.m.]

Ms PALMER (Rosevears - Minister for Education) - What an honour it is to stand here today on behalf of my electorate of Rosevears and add my words to those who have already spoken here.

Can I thank the member for Launceston for bringing this motion to the House, and can I also recognise and acknowledge the special friendship that she shared with Don and our beautiful contributions that we've already heard. I particularly love the member for Murchison's physical description of the honourable member. He was quite magnificent in so many ways.

We often hear the term 'gentleman' used, but I think in the case of the honourable Don Wing, I doubt there would be a person across my community who wouldn't agree with that most perfect description of him. I think the member for Launceston and other members have done a wonderful job in sharing his background and history, so I thought I would just add a few of my own personal reflections and indeed personal memories.

Like for hundreds and hundreds of other Launceston families, Don was our local member. I remember a time when my mum, Diane, reached out to him when a matter had become overwhelming and indeed common sense was not prevailing. It was actually an education issue, and it involved my brother, who was a year 12 student at Launceston College at the time. Don was incredible. He advocated relentlessly for Callum. He wasn't able to find a way through the enormous system that education can be, but he made sure that my mum knew, and my brother knew, that we were not fighting alone.

I think after hearing the news of Don's passing, it's been the most beautiful individual stories that we, as his community, have been able to share with one another. I'm not sure we'll ever know the full extent to which he stepped in, guided, changed outcomes, and walked alongside individuals and families throughout his public life. That was certainly incredibly evident at his memorial service held in Launceston last week, where speaker after speaker, including yourself, Mr President - and we do thank you for representing our Chamber - rose to their feet to share beautiful stories of how Don had impacted, and indeed changed, their lives.

One particular story that the member for Murchison referenced was actually shared through a video. The father of a young boy who was a boarder at Scotch Oakburn College had suddenly died and the reality was his mum was not able to pay the school fees. Don stepped in and quietly made a commitment to pay this young person's school fees. What makes this story so amazing is that Don was only 28 years old. His spirit of generosity and kindness was not something that developed over time. It was who he was at his very core - thoughtful right throughout his life.

In 2020, I announced that I was going to stand for the Legislative Council seat of Rosevears and again, Don was there with a few words of advice. He had a few questions for me, he had some comments for me, but he also gave me a wonderful explanation on what he thought a good local member should be. For Don, it was always about individuals, the families, the moments when people had reached the end of their tether and needed a person to sense check with or help with advocacy. He said it was never about headlines, nor was it about making a name for yourself. It was about those small, quiet moments that changed people's lives, no matter too big or too small. Even if you can't fix a problem or even when you disagree, just being there for people so they don't feel alone is one of the greatest things a local member can do.

Mr President, our community has lost someone and something very, very special with Don's passing. A gentleman has left us, and we are poorer for it. However, his legacy rests in the hundreds and perhaps even thousands of lives he quietly changed. I support the motion. Vale, Donald George Wing AM.

[12.59 p.m.]

Mr GAFFNEY (Mersey) - Thank you, Mr President. I'm just going to speak very briefly because all the other speakers have done a wonderful job. I first came into parliament - and sometimes when you come into parliament you want to have a look at who's in the Chamber and what's going to happen. Don was very statesmanlike and I really liked that about him. He was very reserved, rarely ruffled, as the member for Murchison said.

I can remember being on the tourism committee once and we had to go from Launceston to Strahan and over to Cradle Mountain. We stopped and visited it and he was the Chair of the committee. He was taking the conversation, and he just fell asleep and the two people were sitting there and I'm sitting here and Don closed his eyes and they're still talking. I just stepped in and said two questions, then about five minutes later Don woke up and continued without drawing breath. It was wonderful. He was highly regarded and loved the arts. In closing, it's nice to have a president who had a sense of humour.

[1.00 p.m.]

Ms O'CONNOR (Hobart) - Mr President, just a very brief contribution as someone -

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

QUESTIONS

Salmon Industry - Reforms

Ms GLADE-WRIGHT question to LEADER for the GOVERNMENT in the LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL, Ms RATTRAY

On behalf of Class 6 at the Tarremah school in Huntingfield, what is the government's policy on salmon farms in Tasmania? Are there any planned reforms to handle the topic? We understand that an independent review has currently paused the expansion of salmon farms, but we are wondering if the results of this review would lead to any reforms of existing salmon farm practices.

ANSWER

I'd like to acknowledge the question from those year 6 students and thank them very much for it. The government recognises the importance of the salmon industry's contribution to Tasmania's economy and regional communities and acknowledges the community interest in ensuring the industry operates sustainably and with appropriate environmental safeguards. The government is focused on supporting a strong, sustainable and well-regulated salmon industry underpinned by science-based regulation, environmental accountability and continuous improvement.

Over the past 12 years, the Tasmanian government has implemented a significant suite of policy and regulatory reforms designed to strengthen environmental oversight, improve transparency and support the long-term sustainability of the salmon industry. Central to these reforms has been the transfer of environmental regulatory responsibility to the independent Environment Protection Authority (EPA), supported by legislative amendments that have enhanced the independence of the Director of the EPA, increased transparency of environmental information, and enabled the minister for Environment to establish environmental standards for marine finfish farming.

These changes have been complemented by the development of a more transparent regulatory system, including publication of environmental fish health and industry performance data, public access to environmental and marine farming licences and regular regulator updates.

Alongside these regulatory reforms, substantial investment has been made in science, research and innovation through partnerships with the Institute for Marine and Antarctic Studies (IMAS), the Centre for Aquatic Animal Health and Vaccines and the Blue Economy CRC, supporting evidence-based decision-making and future aquaculture opportunities. These initiatives inform the development of the Tasmanian Salmon Industry Plan, which was shaped through one of the most extensive consultation processes undertaken on the industry, including more than 18 months of community engagement, statewide public meetings, stakeholder workshops, an international salmon symposium and consideration of more than 1200 submissions.

To inform future policy development, the government has commissioned an independent salmon industry study. The study is examining whether Tasmania's regulatory arrangements are effective in achieving sustainable development while protecting the state's marine and freshwater environments. It is also assessing environmental, social, economic and scientific aspects of the industry and benchmarking Tasmania's regulatory framework against leading international aquaculture jurisdictions. The terms of reference for the study have been designed to ensure that it will be independently led and conducted through an evidence-based process informed by broad stakeholder engagement. The government will carefully consider the study's recommendations and evidence in determining whether changes to existing industry practices, regulation or management arrangements are warranted.

Native Forestry - Old-Growth Forest Logging - Reforms

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

[2.34 p.m.]

Again, on behalf of and in the words of the Class 6 students at Tarremah school in Huntingfield, what is the Tasmanian government's policy on the logging of old-growth forests, the aims of reducing emissions and sustaining these environmental landmarks should surely be of utmost importance. Are there any planned reforms for adding protection to these areas?

ANSWER

There are some very engaged grade 6 students in the honourable member for Huon's electorate. The Tasmanian government's policy is to sustainably manage forests across multiple values, including conservation, biodiversity, recreation, carbon storage, and timber production, supported by Tasmania's reserve system and forest practices framework. Tasmania has the nation's highest proportion of old-growth forest with around 85 per cent, including the majority of Tasmania's giant trees protected within the state's formal reserve network. Less than 1 per cent of the 812,000 hectares of permanent timber production zone land is harvested each year and all harvested areas are regrown as native forests for future generations.

Tasmania has been net-carbon negative for more than a decade, and it's achieved that alongside a sustainable native forest industry. The government is committed to the long-term sustainable management of Tasmania's forests for the benefit of all Tasmanians, including long-rotation native forestry. Sustainably managed native forests play an important role in timber production, whilst also storing carbon and providing biodiversity and habitat benefits while they grow. Active forest management also reduces fire risk and supports the maintenance of forestry roads and other assets that are used by tourists and locals alike. Native forests add $398 million annually to Tasmania's gross state product each year and supports over 2300 jobs.

As the IPCC recognises, the full climate picture includes forest regrowth, carbon locked up in timber products, and the emissions avoided when wood replaces materials like steel and concrete. The management of old-growth forests is supported through the forest practices system, the reserve network, and Sustainable Timber Tasmania's forest management practices. Sustainable Timber Tasmania has substantially transitioned away from clear-fell harvesting in coupes containing old-growth forest. In 2024-25, only 0.2 hectares of old-growth forest was clear-fell harvested. Sustainable Timber also has in place specific policies to protect giant trees

that are more than 4 metres in diameter on public forestry land. Evidence shows that Tasmania's approach to native forestry delivers the best balance of wood supply, biodiversity protection and climate benefits over time.

Ms O'Connor - Bollocks.

North West Regional Hospital - Parenting Rooms

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

[2.38 p.m.]

With regard to the North West Regional Hospital and current redevelopment works - I think I put this question through before the fire - has any provision been made for at least one fully equipped parenting room to be constructed? Will the redevelopment of the emergency department include parenting rooms to promote and enable parents with young children and babies to safely and comfortably tend to their babies' needs, including changing facilities, breastfeeding chairs, hot water and sink for formula preparation, and adult and toddler toilets? If not, will this decision be reconsidered?

ANSWER

The redevelopment design was informed by extensive consultation and co-designed with North West Regional Hospital frontline staff, hospital leadership, consumers and community representatives, including consideration of the needs of parents with young children and babies. This engagement helped identify the facilities and supports most important to families. These priorities have been incorporated into the final design to ensure parents and carers can safely and comfortably attend to their children's needs while accessing hospital services. The project at the North West Mental Health Precinct includes facilities to assist parents, carers and families visiting the precinct, including a dedicated family room provided adjacent to the foyer and waiting area. This room will provide a separate space for families, including those visiting with children, to wait or meet with staff. In addition, an accessible toilet in the level 1 public area will incorporate a built-in baby change facility and appropriate nappy disposal facilities.

The redevelopment of the North West Regional Hospital emergency department includes the following provisions: a discreet breastfeeding booth that doubles as a discreet interview space associated with the public waiting room, an acoustically separated paediatric waiting room, a built-in baby change facility in the public area accessible toilet and a dedicated family room inside the emergency department.

Ms FORREST - Mr President, I appreciate the response provided by the Leader. I did specifically ask if there were going to be breastfeeding chairs and hot water and sinks for formula preparation. Women do not wish to breastfeed their babies in toilets with a changing table.

TasTAFE Laboratory Course Cuts - Impact on Recruitment

Ms THOMAS question to MINISTER for EDUCATION, Ms PALMER

[2.40 p.m.]

Minister, as you're aware, TasTAFE is discontinuing its Certificate IV in Laboratory Techniques and Diploma of Laboratory Technology at the end of this year. Given the essential role laboratory technicians play in ensuring the safe delivery of practical science education in our schools and colleges, what assessment has your department undertaken on the impact this decision will have on recruiting suitably qualified laboratory technicians? In particular, has the department assessed whether the alternative online and workplace-based training model is suitable for people seeking their first job as a school laboratory technician?

ANSWER

I thank the member for the question. Our schools and college laboratory technicians are highly valued for their expertise and the vital services they provide for students studying science. I'm advised that the Department for Education, Children and Young People is not aware of any current laboratory technician workforce shortages across our government schools and colleges. I have personally met with Skills Tasmania about laboratory technician training and understand it is actively working with training providers to ensure learners will continue to have access to subsidised courses delivered in Tasmania. My office continues to seek updates from the Minister for Skills and Jobs' office to keep across this progress.

Our government has a solid history of acting upon recognised staff shortages in our education system. For example, our 2024-25 Budget included the following investments, which remain as funded items in our 2026-27 Budget: $3.5 million across four years for our hard-to-staff teacher incentive pilot program, $750,000 across four years to grow our specialist vocational education training workforce in schools, and $500,000 across three years for 20 additional scholarships for speech pathologists and school psychologists. As I say, my office continues to get updates from the Minister for Skills and Jobs' office to ensure that we're across this matter.

Trevallyn Primary School End-of-Year Celebration - Advice to Premier

Ms O'CONNOR question to MINISTER for EDUCATION, Ms PALMER

[2.43 p.m.]

Minister, during the school holidays we saw the very unfortunate insertion of the Premier into school operations and decision-making at Trevallyn Primary School. The politicisation of a joyous end-of-year celebration that had been thoughtfully consulted and crafted by the school community and leadership was extraordinary. While embracing other Christmas activities for this occasion, the school was creating an inclusive end-of-year event for all students and the school community to enjoy.

Minister, I understand the Premier acted against advice from your departmental secretary and he chose, despite being advised not to, to deliberately misrepresent the school as being anti-Christmas, which resulted in a significant and distressing public backlash aimed at the school community. Minister, have you seen that advice from your departmental secretary on

this matter? Have you spoken to the Premier about his extraordinary and needless insertion into the school community's affairs at Trevallyn? Will you outline the advice from your departmental secretary and table the letter?

ANSWER

Thank you very much, Mr President. I'll just seek some advice. I thank the member for the question. I'm going to choose not to name the school in my response. I feel that particular school has had enough unwarranted attention through recent media coverage. Unfair and unkind comments have certainly been levelled -

Ms O'Connor - Where did that start?

Ms PALMER - But it certainly is a school that holds a very special place in my heart. It is my former primary school. I certainly look forward to sharing in the end-of-year festivities as a local member, and as a former student. It is a great school, it has amazing teachers and students, and many of the staff I know very well. I have been in direct contact with the leadership at the school through this very difficult time, offering my support.

As Education minister, the safety and wellbeing of staff and students is my highest priority, and through my department I have ensured that the appropriate support is in place for the school community as needed. I do want to take this opportunity to thank my department for the exceptional way that they have supported this school and this community through this time. Every school should be a safe, inclusive and supportive place. I've certainly seen some of the comments online directed to the school, some of which have been truly disgusting. We're certainly all entitled to our views, however we must continue to do that in a respectful way. Targeted attacks on any one individual, as we have seen in the past week, are completely unacceptable and I, along with the Premier, certainly condemn them.

You've asked if I could table a letter that went from the department secretary to the Premier - that is not mine to table. I think that question would probably need to go to the Premier via the Leader.

Public School Operational Decision-Making - Political Interference

Ms O'CONNOR question to MINISTER for EDUCATION, Ms PALMER

[2.47 p.m.]

Thank you, Mr President. I'm quite surprised to hear that the Secretary of the Department for Education, Children and Young People, who is the secretary to the minister who just answered that question, that correspondence generated by that secretary is not available to the minister to table.

My question is to the minister for Education, Children and Young People. I note in your response - and at a human level I understand why - you didn't address the fact that the Premier of Tasmania chose to insert himself into the decision-making of a Tasmanian public school. I understand that you acknowledge the significant impact of that decision on the school community - who are unable to speak out to account for the decisions made. They can't speak for themselves. In some ways, what's happened is an act of bullying.

Minister, given this precedent set by the Premier, what assurances can you give to school leadership teams across the state that they'll be able to make these operational decisions with their school community without fear of political interference?

ANSWER

I thank the member for the second question. Some work is actually being done by the department, not in correlation to this particular event, which is considering a range of options across this space. For some time, both the department and I have been concerned about the impact online activity can have on schools, and on our workforce. We need to be consulting with a number of education stakeholders around this, and I'd certainly be happy to update the parliament once this work has concluded.

Any questions about what the Premier has said or done will need to be directed to him. Again, I reiterate that as the Education minister, the safety and wellbeing of staff and students is my highest priority, and through my department we've done everything we could to ensure that the appropriate support is in place for the school community as needed. Certainly, I've also been in direct and ongoing contact with the leadership of the school, offering my support. Again, every school should be a safe, inclusive and supportive environment.

Trevallyn Primary School End-of-Year Celebration - Mitigation of Psychosocial Hazard

Ms WEBB question to MINISTER for EDUCATION, Ms PALMER

[2.50 p.m.]

In a similar vein, on 2 October 2026, a northern primary school sent a newsletter to families noting the name of its December fundraising raffle was being changed from 'Christmas on the Hill' to 'End-of-Year Extravaganza'. Other Christmas references remained in the newsletter and on the school schedule. On 14 October 2026, Premier Jeremy Rockliff published a social media post stating the school made efforts to remove all references to Christmas in end-of-year school celebrations, and asked the department to step in.

As a predictable result of the social media post from the Premier, there was an avalanche of public vitriol expressed towards the school, its staff and the acting principal, such as to necessitate extra security measures at the school. In subsequent days, the Premier doubled down on the post, refused to apologise for it and the public backlash it had triggered, and the harm caused to the school, its staff and the acting principal.

My questions to the minister are: clearly the Premier, with his posts and his refusal to apologise for them, has contributed to a psychosocial hazard in the work environment of that school's leaders and staff, so I'd like to have you confirm that a psychosocial hazard or injury has been logged in your system in your department. Given that when a psychosocial injury has been logged in the system it's the responsibility of line managers to mitigate against that happening again, I would like to know how you expect the leaders in your department to mitigate the psychosocial hazard of political decisions made about social media posts by the Premier of the state.

ANSWER

Thank you, Mr President. I'll just seek some advice.

I thank the member for the question. With regard to the aspects of your question around psychosocial and what has or hasn't been logged, I'll need to take that on notice and I'll get back to you as soon as I can.

I just want to really reiterate the safety and wellbeing of students and staff is absolutely my highest priority and the priority for my department. We've worked very closely over the last few weeks to ensure that the appropriate support is in place for that school community as it is needed. We have seen the comments online. We are very aware of the harm that has been done because of that commentary online.

Ms Webb - It was the post.

Ms O'Connor - That's not what it's because of.

Ms PALMER - Again, we are all entitled to our views; however, we must continue to ensure that they are being expressed in a respectful way.

Trevallyn Primary School End-of-Year Celebration - Apology

Ms LOVELL question to MINISTER for EDUCATION, Ms PALMER

[2.53 p.m.]

Minister, at a northern primary school that has been spoken about today, school staff, students and families are very upset about the way they've been publicly targeted by a number of members of your government, including the Premier. Why didn't you stand up publicly for your educators and school community? Are you comfortable with how the Premier acted toward that school community? Given that the Premier won't apologise to that school community, will you?

ANSWER

Thank you very much, Mr President, and I thank the member for the question. As I've stated, as Education minister, the safety and wellbeing of students and staff is my highest priority, and through my department I have ensured that the appropriate support is in place for the school community and the school leadership as required and as needed. I've also been in and continue to be in direct contact with the leadership at the school, offering my support in any way I can. As I say, every school should be a safe, inclusive and supportive matter.

With regard to anything that the Premier has said or done, those questions need to be directed to him.

Trevallyn Primary School End-of-Year Celebration - Advice to Premier

Ms O'CONNOR question to MINISTER for EDUCATION, Ms PALMER

[2.55 p.m.]

My question is, again, to the Minister for Education, Children and Young People. I note that the minister has studiously avoided casting blame for this debacle where it should land, and that is with the Premier. My question to the minister is this: how can a letter generated by the secretary of the department that she administers not be something that the minister can access in order to table in this place?

ANSWER

I thank the member for the question. As I've already said, that letter was sent to the Premier. It is not a letter that I can table but, of course, you have the avenue to ask that question of the Premier through the Leader.

UTAS Stadium and Silverdome - Catering Contract

Ms ARMITAGE question to MINISTER for SPORT, Mr DUIGAN

[2.56 p.m.]

Regarding the awarding of the drinks distribution, corporate and function catering contracts at UTAS Stadium and the Silverdome:

(1) Can the minister confirm whether the tender for the UTAS Stadium and Silverdome food and beverage contract has at this stage been awarded and, if so, to whom?

(2) Were any Tasmanian businesses shortlisted and if so, how many reached the final stages?

(3) (a) Can you confirm that Stadiums Tasmania engaged with the local Tasmanian market before these contracts went to tender? If so, did this engagement ensure that Tasmanian businesses were best placed to compete for these contracts; and

(b) Were any concerns raised or feedback received from previous existing food and beverage providers? If so, how were these addressed in the tender design?

(4) Is support being provided to outgoing local contractors, their suppliers and staff?

(5) Who made the final decision on the preferred tenderer?

(6) Did the Tasmanian Buy Local policy apply here? Was local employment, along with Tasmanian supply chains and regional economic benefits, factored into the tender evaluation process or was it simply a matter of who could undertake the venture at the lowest price?

(7) Given that UTAS Stadium and the Silverdome are publicly owned assets, how does awarding a multi-year contract to an interstate operator align with the government's commitments to supporting Tasmanian businesses and regional employment, especially given the concerns which have been raised over the departure of Hawthorn on the northern economy?

ANSWER

I thank the member for the questions and in answer to those questions:

(1) Stadiums Tasmania announced it has appointed Gema Group in partnership with 24 Tasmanian businesses as the successful tenderer for its catering services on 20 October 2026.

(2) All proposals received to the tender process included Tasmanian businesses, consistent with the accepted probity approaches on open competitive tender processes. It would not be appropriate to comment on individual submissions.

(3) Prior to releasing the tender for catering services, Stadiums Tasmania engaged with the local market to ensure Tasmanian businesses were aware of the upcoming tender, understood what was being sought and were encouraged to apply.

(4) Prior to appointing a catering partner, Stadiums Tasmania engaged services on an event-by-event basis as there was no ongoing contract for services. Stadiums Tasmania is working closely with the local market, including providers that previously serviced venues, to ensure a smooth implementation of its appointed catering services partner. This includes considering where local operators, including providers that previously serviced venues, can benefit from the new catering arrangements.

(5) In its procurement process, the Stadiums Tasmania Board was responsible for awarding the contract for catering services.

(6) Stadiums Tasmania was required to undertake a competitive tender process for these services which included a Buy Local weighting consistent with the Tasmanian government's Buy Local policy. The Economic and Social Benefits Statement required as part of the tender process specifically included questions in relation to local employment, local product sourcing and asked tenderers to demonstrate the value to Tasmanians and the Tasmanian economy.

Proposals were evaluated against a range of criteria including capability, service delivery, event experience, value for money and local benefits.

Stadiums Tasmania considers Tasmania's outstanding food and beverages are at the heart of the event experience at its venues. This partnership will showcase Tasmania's outstanding produce, suppliers and Tasmanian hospitality businesses, delivering significant economic opportunities for all businesses involved in the partnership.

(7) The contract Stadiums Tasmania has awarded includes a partnership with 24 Tasmanian businesses, which creates the opportunity for employment uplift in those businesses. There is also a direct local employment benefit with a local management team to be employed in Launceston.

High-quality experiences in venues increases Stadiums Tasmania's ability to attract and secure more events, creating economic opportunity for the wider region to benefit from an increase in events and the subsequent increase in spending that is associated with those events.

CONDOLENCE MOTION

Honourable Don Wing AM - Former Member for Launceston

Resumed from above (page 29).

[3.01 p.m.]

Ms O'CONNOR (Hobart) - Mr President, I intend only to make a short contribution on this condolence motion for Don Wing. I've enjoyed very much the reflections on his life and enormous contribution to the Tasmanian people. I didn't have the privilege or the pleasure of working with Don when he was here in this place, but I do remember when I was in the early days of my election having some very charming conversations with him in the dining room, where he would hold court quite often with a varied array of captive guests.

I wanted to note something which hasn't come up in this motion today not so specifically, and it relates to Don Wing's clear, very strong sense of justice, fairness, kindness and inclusion and how those attributes in him spoke of his courage as well. I'll read into *Hansard* now some reflection on Don Wing's life from that wonderful former Tasmanian Australian of the Year, Rodney Croome AM. Rodney says:

> Don Wing was a refuge of sanity in a sea of hate.
>
> Don was the Upper House member for Launceston during the heated debate on decriminalising homosexuality in the 1990s.
>
> He voted for reform when most other members fell over each other to vote against it.
>
> He spoke in support of equality and acceptance at a time when other members called for us to be 'tracked down and wiped out' (yes, they said that).

Rodney says:

> He would always smile and give us a friendly wave when we entered the gallery, while other members loudly scoffed or turned their backs on us (yes, they did that).
>
> And slowly, over a decade, the number of members voting with Don increased until it was finally a majority.

> In all that time I never once heard him say a bad word about anyone - no grudges, no recriminations, just optimism [that] history would bend the right way, always expressed in his unmatched mellifluous baritone.
>
> Although he was too humble to agree, he showed true courage, and always with the most impeccable manners and genuine friendliness to all.
>
> He will be missed by many. For me he will always be the model of a good legislator and a generous human being.

Mr President, I thought it was really important to read that in towards the end of this debate.

On behalf of the Greens, I would like to pass on my warmest and most sincere condolences to everyone who loved and admired Don Wing and to all those lives he touched who will be saddened by his passing. Vale, good man.

[3.04 p.m.]

Mr PRESIDENT - Honourable members, before I call the member for Launceston in reply, with members' indulgence, I'd just like to say a few words. It was a wonderful memorial service that many members present and past attended in Launceston to celebrate his great life and contribution to the Tasmanian community. It was a service that probably could have gone on for a lot longer than it did. The stories about Don Wing and the respect that so many people held him in was so evident at the service. It was really interesting to note that the reason he was so supportive of Scotch, later Scotch Oakburn, was because he had received a scholarship there as a young boy and he believed that gave him the opportunity that led him to the life that he led. Then he passed that on to, I think, probably many, many, many other people.

He was highly regarded by all the members I spoke to in his role as president. They mentioned that he was just someone who silently went about his job, didn't look for accolades, just did what he had to do in his community. He didn't want any rewards.

A story that I think really illustrated the type of man that he was, was the fact that he was a criminal lawyer, and he was asked why he was a criminal lawyer and he said, 'Well, you know, everyone deserves a second chance'. He proved this when he became an MLC because he formed a select committee to look into the conditions in the Tasmanian prison system because he believed they were substandard. While he may have been a lawyer and had to do that job, he made sure that the people were looked after and treated with respect while they were being held in the prison system.

Many people spoke about a whole lot of the aspects of his life that probably most people were unaware of because he wasn't someone to blow his own whistle. He had an impact both here and in many places around the world, so I thank honourable members for their contribution.

A former president, Sue Smith, I spoke to, who took the role on after Don, mentioned how he set the standard and how he could be very respectful. One of the speakers today mentioned how he would disagree in a very gentle manner without making you feel you were wrong. As the honourable member for Mersey mentioned, he did have a tremendous sense of

humour, sometimes very dry, but a very deep, considered sense of humour. I just thank members for that indulgence and call the honourable member for Launceston.

[3.08 p.m.]

Ms ARMITAGE (Launceston) - Thank you, Mr President, and I certainly thank members too for their reflections on our dear friend and mentor, the honourable Donald George Wing. Mr President, I move that -

A copy of the resolution be forwarded to the family of the late Don Wing.

Motion agreed to.

Mr PRESIDENT - I ask that all members please stand for a minute's silence to acknowledge the service of the honourable Don Wing.

Members stood in their place and observed one minute's silence.

Motion agreed to *nemine contradicente*.

MOTION

Encyclical Letter *Magnifica Humanitas* of His Holiness Pope Leo XIV - Consideration and Noting

Ms O'CONNOR (Hobart) - Mr President, I move -

That the Encyclical Letter *Magnifica Humanita*s of His Holiness Pope Leo XIV be considered and noted.

Before I begin, I feel morally obliged to acknowledge the mixed history of the Catholic Church. While it has arguably provided sense, higher purpose and order to human existence, it has also caused profound harm over the centuries: neglect, abuse and cover-up at the highest levels of the clergy, and the subjugation of women and minorities, all while amassing great wealth and power. I acknowledge all the countless victims and survivors of the Church's countless crimes, including those alive today who still do not have justice for their suffering.

In bringing on this debate today about *Magnifica Humanitas*, I am not here to laud the praises of the Catholic Church, an institution. As a perpetually lapsing Catholic, I have lived experience, as did my parents, both of whom were damaged by the whips and canes of nuns and Christian brothers. The only beating I ever received at school was from a Catholic nun, for running on the seniors' oval. They were quick to strike, those nuns, Mr President.

I do, however, acknowledge that, in part, it is my parents' Catholic education and the parts of my schooling by nuns that imbued in me a strong sense of social justice, and I'm thankful for that.

This is the social doctrine of the Church at the heart of *Magnifica Humanitas*, the Encyclical Letter of His Holiness Pope Leo XIV on safeguarding the human person in the time

of artificial intelligence. The social doctrine of the Church addresses issues that touch personal, community and global life and speak to the work of governments and lawmakers and the work we do in this Council and in the community every day. It requires of us a necessary focus on human work and social justice, economy at the service of the person, politics as a service to the common good, defence of life and family, integral ecology and care of creation, and peace, international solidarity and human rights. On all these measures we live in a time of darkness and in the dark; it is human nature to look for light wherever we can find it.

There are times when the Catholic Church is a source of light, and I believe these are such times. The Pope's Encyclical Letter *Magnifica Humanitas* is a source of light for those with the time to read it or listen to His Holiness speaking of it.

The rapid, in some cases forced, overlay of artificial intelligence (AI) and the infrastructure that enables it raises questions over what it is to be human, to have consciousness, morality, creativity and connection with each other. This is the central theme of *Magnifica Humanitas*. AI is moving faster than human society has yet shown it's able to control and AI developers reckon the less control by way of laws and regulations, the better for their profits and their egos.

It's happening right here. AI data factories look set to pop up like ugly, noisy resource-hungry mushrooms all over the island, nine at last count. All of them have huge questions hanging over them: power, water, noise, amenity. None of them have anything like a social licence. As it takes the axe to the State Service to fund its unpopular, bankrupting stadium, this government is in fact accelerating its AI Accelerator program. AI will be embedded across all agencies.

We don't know to what extent or what the guardrails the Premier has promised are or could possibly be given the way this technology works. We do know people's jobs and the dignity of work is being stripped away from our fellow Tasmanians who are being replaced by robots. It is short-sighted and brutal from a government that has long boasted it is all about jobs, and it will certainly have an impact on the economy of this beautiful city I represent.

Just recently I received correspondence from the outgoing lord mayor, extremely concerned about the impact of the public sector job cuts on the economy of Hobart. She says:

> As we know from recent experiences in Launceston and Bell Bay, the loss of jobs locally can cause huge knock-on effects on local communities and businesses. While there is no easily accessible plan or document that outlines the location of these jobs, the CPSU advises that the significant majority of these jobs will be ones currently located in the Hobart CBD. Loss of jobs means less money circulating in our economy. In particular, a loss of jobs located in the CBD means these people will not be in the city spending salaries on coffee, lunches, retail and after-work entertainment.

Mr President, I thought it was a good time for this Council and indeed hopefully this parliament to reflect on the words of His Holiness in *Magnifica Humanitas*. It's a message to not just people of Catholic faith, but a message, a most timely one, to people of all faiths and of none. Pope Leo is a man, it seems, almost perfectly born for these times: an American at a time when Trump and his billionaire cronies are shredding the social fabric, goosestepping us into fascism, and accelerating the planet's decline. A mathematician at a time when algorithms

stealth our every online moment, determining what we see, influencing how we feel, what we think, what we buy, who we love, who we hate. These algorithms are feeding division and social sickness. They have not yet been, and may never be, a force for human good.

His Holiness guides us in how to make sense of the new tech-driven world. In many respects it's a dehumanising world that we now inhabit. He reflects on the inherent dignity and inalienable rights of every person, what makes us human, and how to protect our humanity in a time of digital revolution. In *Magnifica Humanitas*, His Holiness reminds us of the right to a good life, meaningful work, a fair share of society's wealth, and a healthy planet. All of these things are undermined or threatened when a powerful, pervasive, corporate-driven technology is embraced without pause to consider risk, and to ensure the public good, the common good of humanity and this beautiful planet, is the paramount consideration.

Plenty of Tasmanians would agree, I think, that the Rockliff government is rushing us headlong into an AI data factory proliferation, AI embedded in the machinery-of-government future without thinking enough about it in their desperation to fill the financial black hole at Macquarie Point. The jobs that would be sacrificed - 1700 at last pronouncement across agencies - are a huge price to pay for those individuals and families, our communities, and our economies. Some of these jobs are irreplaceable. One example is the head of our world-class herbarium at the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery, or the emergency resilience and recovery officers in the Department of Premier and Cabinet, and cuts to emergency services while a monster El Niño bears down on us. You cannot replace those roles with AI. You cannot replace human expertise and decision making with AI. I pause here for a moment to remind honourable members that it was during the break not that long ago that we discovered that the Parole Board of Tasmania had used AI to write a decision on a released prisoner that was designed to curb her freedom of expression, and indeed the Parole Board, in its use of AI, cited fake case law. That has enormous potential to lead to very significant miscarriages of justice.

There will be an economic downturn on the communities we represent, very much so in Hobart, as a consequence of these job cuts and the replacement of humans with AI in the machinery of government. If the Liberals think AI will save us or save them, they are deluded. It is a nonsense to suggest AI data factories are an economic boon. Post-construction, they employ few, but where they're built around the world they're angering plenty from right across the political spectrum.

Pope Leo urges caution on AI. He acknowledges it may have benefits, but only if it is used for the public good. So, we should be cautious, starting with a moratorium, perhaps, on AI data factory construction until the community has a say, the impacts are understood, and the planning settings are right.

According to Pope Leo, the fundamental dignity of each person is neither acquired nor earned, nor does it need to be justified. Among the new tech ideologies, one he finds particularly insidious is the one that suggests every person must earn or justify his or her own worth to the point of attributing greater value to those who are more efficient and effective. From this perspective, he says persons end up being reduced to a means of achieving results, a resource to be used and exploited. The value of persons, he reminds us, however, does not depend on what they achieve or produce. There are rights that apply to everyone, simply by virtue of being human. These inalienable rights, of course, are the foundation of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, human rights charters and acts around the

world, including in numerous Australian jurisdictions, but not the Commonwealth nor Tasmania yet, and that is important unfinished business.

The Pope reminds us that truth is a common good and democracy something worth safeguarding. Echoing his predecessor, Pope Leo XIII from 135 years ago, with his encyclical *Rerum Novarum*, or 'new things', about the dignity of labour, of work, in *Magnifica Humanitas*, his Holiness holds that politics or the state has the role, in his words, 'of orientating economies and technologies to the common good, promoting dignified work, social inclusion and an equitable distribution of the benefits of innovation.' He specifically, and repeatedly, in his encyclical, reminds governments and lawmakers of their moral obligation to work for the common good.

I warmly encourage honourable members to take the time to read this encyclical. I think I'm on my fourth reading now, and I'll probably be reading it on and off all my days. It is such a profound philosophical piece of work. I'll just read into the *Hansard* some of his Holiness's words. He says:

> Each generation inherits the task of shaping its own era, of guiding history to become a place where the dignity of every person is safeguarded, justice is promoted and fraternity is made possible. Yet every era also runs the risk of creating an inhumane and more unjust world. Whenever humanity is in danger of marring its true identity, we Christians -

And this is a message to the Christian world, Mr President -

> lift our eyes to the Incarnate God, knowing that it is 'only in the mystery of the Word made flesh that the mystery of humanity truly becomes clear.'

He encourages Catholics worldwide to diligently contribute to every initiative that builds a more just world, and that's not just a Catholic concern, is it? He encourages dialogue with all men and women of our time, with whom we share in the events, questions and aspirations of humanity. He says:

> In recent years, it has become increasingly evident how rapidly and profoundly digitalization, artificial intelligence (AI) and robotics are transforming our world. Technology should not be considered, in itself, as a force antagonistic to humanity. On the contrary, it has formed part of our history since the beginning as 'a profoundly human reality, linked to the autonomy and freedom of man.' Over the centuries, technological development has significantly improved the living conditions of humanity. At the same time, each phase of progress has also revealed the ambiguity of tools that can cause harm when not oriented toward the good. Today, however, we find ourselves facing a new situation. The power and prevalence of emerging technologies are interwoven into the fabric of daily life, shaping decision-making processes and deeply affecting the collective imagination: 'Never has humanity had such power over itself.' New technologies open up a horizon extending in directions that are imaginable but not yet fully predictable. This complicates the assessment of their potential impact and the long-term effects they may have on both the dignity of individuals and the common good.

> It now falls to us to face the challenges of our time with clarity of thought and responsibility. It is necessary to establish adequate regulatory tools capable of upholding justice and curbing the distorting effects of technological power. Nevertheless, the issue is not limited to regulation. As Pope Francis warned, we must realistically ask ourselves who holds this power today and how they use it: 'It must also be recognized that nuclear energy, biotechnology, information technology, knowledge of our own DNA, and many other abilities which we have acquired … have given those with the knowledge, and especially the economic resources to use them, an impressive dominance over the whole of humanity and the entire world.' In the past, it was largely up to the State to guide and direct innovation. Today, however, the main drivers of development are private, often transnational, parties that are endowed with resources and the capacity to intervene that surpass those of many Governments. Technological power thus takes on an unprecedented, predominantly 'private' aspect, which makes it even more challenging to discern, govern and direct such power toward the common good.
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> We are living

He says:

> through a rapid phase of transition, a 'change of era,' in which, while some are vying for the future of new technologies and others dedicate themselves to reflecting on the matter - most people are watching and waiting, observing from afar and merely hoping for the best. For this very reason, crucial questions impose themselves on our conscience and can no longer be avoided: Where are we going? Toward what goal do we wish to orientate ourselves? What direction should we choose as a people and as a human community?

He makes the comparison between the biblical story of the Tower of Babel and the Book of Nehemiah. The Tower of Babel, of course, is the story of peoples from all over the world, through arrogance and pride, seeking to build a pathway to heaven and in that process the whole thing fell apart because it was every man and woman and dog for themselves. Of course, the consequence of that, in biblical terms, was a scattering and a division within that human family.

The Book of Nehemiah, on the other hand, is a story in the Bible of ancient Israel, in which, after the Babylonian exile, a proportion of the people returned to Jerusalem, which was a wrecked city - the walls had collapsed, the gates had burned - and the people of that town got together and they talked to each other and they worked out what they were going to do to restore their city. They worked together for the common good as a collective. That's a central theme of *Magnifica Humanitas*.

His Holiness encourages us not to follow the example of Babel as we confront these new technologies, but to look out for each other, establish a dialogue of reason and work collectively for the common good. He says:

> … building for the common good means accepting the limits and weakness of humanity without considering them an error to be corrected. Today, the

> human desire for fullness of life is at risk of being misled by deceitful goals, such as the prospect of a technology that promises to free us from all weakness, and models of wellbeing that leave behind entire populations. All too often, we place our hope in unlimited 'upgrades,' in forms of progress that exacerbate inequalities, and in immediate solutions incapable of healing people's wounds. As a result, while some pursue the illusion of unlimited self-assertion, many are deprived of basic necessities. The church reminds us with a firm yet humble voice, that true fulfilment is not achieved by eliminating weakness but through harmonious growth. It is found where freedom and responsibility are intertwined with mutual care and true solidarity, and where progress is measured by the dignity of each person and the good of all peoples.

He says we need to:

> establish standards for discernment in dealing with AI - the dignity of the human person, the universal destination of goods, the preferential option for the poor, care for our common home and peace - and let us translate these standards into practices such as responsible planning, the assessment of human and social impact, the inclusion of the most vulnerable, the promotion of digital literacy and guiding research and industry toward justice and peace.

He says:

> In the era of artificial intelligence, when human dignity is threatened by new forms of dehumanisation, ours is the pressing duty to remain profoundly human.

Now, Mr President, some of us in this room are Christians and some of us are not, and I am not - despite my Catholic upbringing - what I would call a 'Christian', so perhaps some of us in this room fall into His Holiness' categorisation of people as precious allies.

Pope Leo says:

> The Church regards all who sincerely seek 'truth, goodness and beauty' as companions on the journey, and considers them as 'precious allies' in defending the dignity of every person and in caring for creation.

Mr President, he makes the observation that you can't treat artificial intelligence in a neutral way. He says:

> In order to protect the human person in the age of artificial intelligence, I believe that today we must once again reflect on the common good, the universal destination of goods, subsidiarity, solidarity and social justice. I am convinced that a harmonious relationship between these principles requires that they be considered collectively, so that it becomes clear how they relate to and complement each other.

And a reminder to us all, Mr President:

> It is the State's responsibility to ensure cohesion, unity and the proper organization of civil society, so that the common good can be pursued with everyone's contribution. In practical terms, this means that public authorities have the delicate duty to 'harmonize the different sectoral interests with the requirements of justice,' seeking a balance between individual interests and the common good, without leaving behind the most vulnerable. When politics abandons a long-term perspective and reduces itself to short-term calculations or sterile polarizations, then the language of the common good loses credibility, and, at the same time, social inequalities and divisions grow.

He says:

> In this day and age, social justice must also grapple with the environment shaped by digital technologies. The spread of global networks, platforms and artificial intelligence systems is changing the way we obtain information, communicate and access services. Justice demands that we prevent the emergence of new forms of exclusion and deprivation of freedoms: individuals and peoples hindered or denied access to basic technologies, communities exposed to invasive surveillance and social groups penalized by opaque algorithms that perpetuate prejudice and discrimination. In the digital age, a just social order guarantees everyone equal access to opportunities, protects the youngest and weakest members of society, combats hate and misinformation and subjects the use of data and technology to public oversight, so that the guiding principle is not solely profit but the dignity of every person and the common good of all people.

I pause here at the moment, Mr President, to make the observation that we are a long way from there in Tasmania today, particularly under this government, which has attached itself, in the case of Firmus, to a company that seems much more smoke and mirrors than anything of substance. In fact, the investment market determined that to be the case when Firmus sought to list on the stock exchange.

So, in his section about responsibility, transparency and the governance of AI, the Pope says:

> The use of AI is never a purely technical matter: when it enters processes that affects people's lives, it touches on rights, opportunities, status and freedom. Important and sensitive decisions - concerning employment, credit, access to public services or even a person's reputation - risk being fully delegated to automated systems that do not know 'compassion, mercy, forgiveness, and above all, the hope that people are able to change' and can therefore give rise to new forms of exclusion. There are clearly harmful uses, such as the manipulation of information or violations of privacy. Yet there is also a subtler danger, for when AI systems present themselves as neutral and objective, they end up reflecting and reinforcing the stereotypes or ideological bias of their designers and developers.

We're already seeing that, Mr President, in the fundamental character of many of the chatbots, or the 'agents', as they're called: designed, as they were, largely by men, very

powerful, wealthy men, a number of whom are arguably sociopaths. They provided the intellectual input to the character, the nature, if you like, of AI agents as we know them today.

He says:

> Indeed, entrusting an algorithm in practice with the power to select who is worthy or not, without anyone bearing responsibility for that judgment, is to hand over the task of redefining the boundaries of human possibilities. In this process, political responsibility is also lost, not just empathy toward those excluded, which can, after all, be simulated. The exclusion of the vulnerable becomes cloaked in a veneer of neutrality and objectivity, against which it becomes difficult to raise objections. In this way, injustice goes unnoticed, and compassion, mercy and forgiveness - understood not as mere appearances but as real political actions - gradually disappear from view.
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> … we cannot consider AI to be morally neutral. In reality, every technical tool embodies choices and priorities through what it measures, ignores and optimizes, and how it classifies people and situations. If a system is designed or used in a way that treats some lives as less worthy, or excludes them without the possibility of appeal, then it is not merely a tool 'to be used well,' since it has already introduced criteria that contradict the inalienable dignity of the human person.

He goes on to talk about the impact of unemployment on young people and on families, how damaging that is to the social fabric and to a person's sense of worth. He says:

> The quality of a civilization is measured not by the power of its means, but by the care it is able to offer, by its ability to recognize the other as a face not merely as a function. The ability to care for one another is a fundamental dimension of our humanity, one that is learned and mastered through lived experience. Reading stories to a child, offering company to an elderly person and arranging a home so that it is welcoming are simple gestures often rooted in family life. They teach us to value care at a societal level and train us to recognize others as persons worthy of attention. Technology can also support this mutual care between people, for example, by providing tools that help us anticipate and organize things, without undermining human freedom and judgment. After all, human beings are the subjects of relationships and responsible for their own decisions.
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> ...
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> If the human being is treated as something to be perfected or surpassed, it becomes easier to accept that some lives are less useful, less desirable or less worthy. In the name of progress, 'necessary sacrifices' may begin to be justified, placing the burden on the most vulnerable in pursuit of a supposed optimization of the species.

What are we do about it? He says treasure truth, seek truth, listen to the truth tellers. He says protect democracy, treasure it, see it as a true expression of human freedom and dignity.

He encourages investment in public education and elevating digital literacy for people of all ages, so our fellow citizens do not miss out.

He speaks of an economy that values dignity. Here, right now, in Tasmania, for those 1700 state servants who face the axe, we should all extend our hearts to those employees. That is not the action of a government that recognises the inherent dignity and the right to work. It's quite galling to hear members of this government talk about 'jobs, jobs, jobs' and yet here they are, slashing jobs in the State Service, which will impact on urban and regional economies, and replacing people with artificial intelligence.

I'd like to encourage the Tasmanian Labor Party, the official opposition, to see this as an opportunity to step up and work for the common good. Labor quite rightly and proudly speaks for jobs, for people to have the right to dignified work, and Labor this morning in the other place focused very much on State Service job cuts. The corollary of that is what this government is doing to replace those jobs with artificial intelligence, with technology that's being imported to this state straight from Silicon Valley.

His brief points at how we make the world a better place in a time of rapidly accelerating technological innovation. He says, 'Let us remain faithful to the truth!', let us invest in education, let us cultivate relationships, and let us love justice and peace. These objectives or values, I would like to think, are something that guide us in our work every day.

There's an old and often used adage that we live in interesting times. Indeed, perhaps more than at any time in human history, we do - never a dull moment in local, national and global affairs these days. What with the climate breakdown, the rolling collapse of ecological systems and decimation of biodiversity, the staggeringly rapid decline of the United States' democracy and erosion of democratic institutions and trust across the world, an unchecked global pandemic ongoing, raging inequality, genocidal wars raging in Palestine and the Ukraine, the rise of global fascism and rapid development of the unregulated new technologies that, we're told by experts, threaten humanity - these sure are interesting times. These are also clearly dangerous times. It feels some days like our fevered, distressed world has gone completely mad.

All these crises are connected; they're intersectional. The breakdown of the natural world and the systems we and all living things on earth rely on for survival is damaging profoundly the social fabric that wraps around us all. It fractures us into haves and have-nots and those who have even less than nothing necessary for a good life. Think here of the people of Gaza and the West Bank. We have a global economic system which sucks all it can out of our life support systems, often by corrupting democratic governments, and it ensures that there isn't enough to go around. It drives inequality and breeds sociopathic billionaires who are antagonistic to fairness, equality, democratic expression and the common good, which His Holiness reminds us of. Humanity and the planet are paying a very, very high price for this intersectional injustice.

In Pope Leo's predecessor Pope Francis's encyclical *Laudato si'*, which I read some of into the other place when it came out, he connects ecological breakdown with the modern social and economic crises we face. He said 'the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor cannot be separated' and think here of the people of Nepal as one recent devastating example of this intersectionality. In *Laudato si'*, Pope Francis reaffirmed his call for intergenerational justice.

The proliferation of artificial intelligence, and its impact on the lives and hopes of young people and on the natural world, can be viewed through the prism of intergenerational justice. Whether we're Catholic or Christian or what His Holiness calls 'precious allies in the struggle for truth and justice and care for the earth', that principle should guide all governments and all the work we as legislators do. Intergenerational justice certainly has guided the Greens since our beginning, every day since we were born as a political movement working for the common good.

In closing, on AI, we must be cautious. We need to heed the message at the heart of *Magnifica Humanitas*: respect and protect human dignity, reject dehumanising philosophies and tools that can rob us of our rights, or regulate them so we have some control and that they are able to work for the common good. But we have to protect our rights - our right to work, our right to express creatively our history, our stories, our beautiful planet, and we have to uphold the common good through words and through our deeds everywhere we can and in this place. Mr President, I commend *Magnifica Humanitas* to the Council, and I thank His Holiness for being a source of light and truth for our times.

[3.45 p.m.]

Ms RATTRAY (McIntyre - Leader for the Government in the Legislative Council) - I rise on behalf of the government to speak on this motion regarding artificial intelligence. Artificial intelligence presents significant opportunities to improve productivity, enhance public services and support economic growth. Like previous waves of technological change, AI has the potential to reshape how we live and work, creating new opportunities for individuals, businesses and governments alike; and artificial intelligence is increasingly becoming a standard business tool used across government, industry and the broader economy. Across Australia and around the world, organisations are using AI-enabled tools to support customer service, communications, administration, analytics and service delivery.

The question before us is not whether AI will play a role in our future, the more important question is how to ensure these technologies are used responsibly, safely and in a manner that maintains public confidence. The Tasmanian Government supports the responsible adoption of AI where it improves service delivery, productivity, efficiency and positive outcomes for Tasmanians. At the same time, the government recognises that like any emerging technology, AI must be implemented with appropriate safeguards, transparency, accountability and public trust. Importantly, the use of AI does not remove human oversight, accountability or responsibility. Government agencies remain accountable for the services they provide and the decisions they make. Artificial intelligence should support human decision making, not replace human accountability.

Tasmania is actively engaging with governments, industry, research institutions, the community and other stakeholders while progressing a coordinated whole-of-government approach to support the responsible and effective adoption of AI across the State Service. The government has released a policy for the responsible use of artificial intelligence, establishing clear expectations for the safe, transparent and ethical use of AI across government and helping maintain public trust. The government is also developing a whole-of-government AI Roadmap and progressing the AI Accelerator to help agencies identify, test and scale high-value AI opportunities that improve productivity and service delivery.

Mr President, these measures recognise that embracing innovation and ensuring appropriate governance are not competing objectives, and it's also acknowledged that people

have genuine questions about privacy, cybersecurity and the broader implications of artificial intelligence. These are important considerations and Tasmanians rightly expect government to embrace technologies that improve services and deliver value for money while ensuring privacy, security and transparency are protected.

The Tasmanian government recognises that privacy, cybersecurity and public trust are critical considerations in the adoption of artificial intelligence. AI technologies must be deployed responsibly with appropriate governance, risk management and safeguards. Existing privacy, cybersecurity and information management obligations continue to apply when AI technologies are used by government. As AI adoption continues to evolve, the government is maintaining strong, whole-of-government arrangements around transparency, accountability and oversight to ensure public confidence is maintained.

There are also broader questions sometimes raised about artificial intelligence, including discussions around consciousness or sentience. These remain matters for ongoing academic, scientific and philosophical discussions. The government's focus is on the practical use and governance of AI technologies being used today. What remains most important is that people and organisations are accountable for how these technologies are developed, implemented and used, and for the outcomes they produce.

Artificial intelligence presents significant opportunities for Tasmania, but those opportunities must be realised responsibly. The government's approach is to embrace innovation while maintaining appropriate safeguards, transparency, accountability and public trust. Ensuring AI delivers benefits for Tasmanians while supporting confidence in its use.

Mr President, the government notes the motion.

[3.51 p.m.]

Ms FORREST (Murchison) - I'm pleased to rise and speak on this motion and when the member for Hobart listed it for debate, I must admit I was a little bit intrigued. So, I went to the encyclical and read it. I found it quite fascinating and actually a very good read. It does take more than one go to actually get your head around all that is being said. I've since suggested to many others that they should also have a read of it.

As the member for Hobart did, I want to acknowledge that there have been many great writings put out by the Catholic Church, but we can't overlook the fact that enormous harm has been done to many young people, and young boys in particular, that we know - some of them have been proved, some of them are allegations - but we cannot deny that. I just want to say that because I am going to say some fairly positive things about this Pope, as the member for Hobart did as well -

Ms O'Connor - He's pretty good.

Ms FORREST - and I think Pope Francis was also a very decent human as well. I didn't pay much attention to the other ones; it's just the ones that really stick in your mind from being very caring about humanity generally.

As a person who has seen a little too much of what I refer to as the dark side of organised religion, this is a welcome challenge to me. This is a secular parliament and I certainly do not suggest any member needs to share the faith from which this encyclical comes, to appreciate

its content. The reality is *Magnifica Humanitas* is addressed not just to the Catholics, or even to the Christians, but to all people of goodwill. It is a serious, carefully reasoned, and in places remarkably specific, contribution to one of the defining public policy questions, and the very real challenges in terms of public policy of our time.

As I said, it does deserve to be widely read, including by those who are not part of the faith community as I believe this document speaks directly to each one of us. The timing of the writing of this encyclical is interesting and quite likely deliberate. In 1891, Pope Leo XIII issued *Rerum Novarum* ('Of New Things') in response to the Industrial Revolution and the exploitation of workers, the concentration of capital and the upheaval of family and community life. That document helped shape the language of fair wages, the right to organise and the responsibilities of the state that we still use today. Pope Leo XIV has chosen the 135th anniversary of that letter to say, in effect, that artificial intelligence is the 'new thing' of our era, a change of the same order of magnitude, demanding the same moral seriousness. I suspect a few members will disagree with this sentiment.

The encyclical opens by quoting an earlier warning that captures the moment: 'Never has humanity had so much power over itself.' What strikes me most is its honesty about how little we understand. It observes that current AI systems are more cultivated than built. Developers create a framework within which the system grows, and even those who design these systems have only a limited understanding of how they actually function. Haven't we seen examples of that in recent time?

We know some AI bots have escaped their enclosures and expected limitations have not contained them. They've taken instructions so literally they will almost do anything to meet the request of the person who instructed them. I've listened to podcasts on this issue and I found them fascinating and frightening at the same time. There's one story that stuck in my mind about a guy who asked his AI chatbot to find him a gym in the region where he could get membership. He'd done some enquiries and all the gyms were fully booked out. What the AI chatbot did was to confirm that there were no available memberships, so they doctored the membership list and knocked some off to put this guy in. So, suddenly someone's membership's cancelled so this guy has a membership. That's the AI bot saying, 'Well, this is what I've been told to do, so I'll do it.'

The encyclical acknowledges that everything written about AI risks being quickly outdated. What we are hearing from His Holiness is not alarmism, but rather a sober and solemn acknowledgement of a reality that we all need to be alert to and work collaboratively on public policy to promote public safety in this rapidly changing area. There is a very real challenge as we are being asked to govern technologies that change faster than we can study them or respond with well-considered public policy responses to technologies being built by organisations whose resources, as the encyclical notes, now exceed those of many national governments, let alone a state parliament of our size.

The document also describes, rather uncomfortably, where most of us sit in all of this. While there are some who are racing to own the future of these technologies, many others will be reflecting on them, with an even larger cohort, I imagine, who are simply watching and hoping for the best. I think hope is important, but we will need to act as well. The central image of the encyclical is a choice between two building projects. For those who have read the Bible, the imagery is possibly easy to grasp. Regardless, the message is clear. On one hand, the Tower of Babel, a project of pride, uniformity and domination that ends in confusion. On the other

hand, Nehemiah building the broken walls of Jerusalem, where every family is given its own section of the wall to repair. The question before us, the document says, is not whether to say yes or no to technology. It is what kind of society we build with it, and who decides.

This is a question we all need to consider: not whether we say yes or no to technology - we're all using it - it is what kind of society we build with it and who decides. The encyclical insists that technology is never neutral. It takes on the character of those who design, finance, regulate and use it. To quote directly:

> Scientific discoveries are talents entrusted to humanity so that they may bear fruit … Technology has the power to heal, connect, educate and protect our common home; but it can also divide, exclude and generate new forms of injustice. In the abstract, technology in and of itself is not a solution to humanity's problems, just as it is not inherently evil. In practice, however, technology is never neutral, because it takes on the characteristics of those who devise, finance, regulate and use it. Therefore, the primary choice is not between a 'yes' or 'no' to technology, but rather between constructing Babel or rebuilding Jerusalem; between a power that claims to dominate the heavens and a people who work together in the presence of God to rebuild the walls of fraternal coexistence.

His Holiness goes further:

> … building for the common good means accepting the limits and weakness of humanity without considering them an error to be corrected. Today, the human desire for fullness of life is at risk of being misled by deceitful goals, such as the prospect of a technology that promises to free us from all weakness, and models of wellbeing that leave behind entire populations. All too often, we place our hope in unlimited 'upgrades,' in forms of progress that exacerbate inequalities, and in immediate solutions incapable of healing people's wounds. As a result, while some people pursue the illusion -

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

MOTION

Encyclical Letter *Magnifica Humanitas* of His Holiness Pope Leo XIV - Consideration and Noting

Resumed from above.

Ms FORREST (Murchison) - I was just completing a quote from His Holiness in the encyclical. I'll just pick up where I left off and continue:

> As a result, while some pursue the illusion of unlimited self-assertion, many are deprived of basic necessities.

Among those given responsibility for this, or as he calls it, putting the section of the wall back together, he names up legislators as one of those groups, and I quote from that:

> … building a world in which everyone can flourish requires shared responsibility and courage. No one can single-handedly bear the weight of the challenges the world is facing, just as no one is so weak that they cannot play their part, for 'power is made perfect in weakness' (*2 Cor* 12:9). All are given their own section of the wall: scientists and researchers, entrepreneurs and workers, educators and legislators, civil society, popular movements and faith communities. This is the logic of subsidiarity, which values the cooperation between generations, peoples, disciplines and cultures as the best way for fostering stability, prosperity and peace. We should not be intimidated by tensions or differences because they can become creative forces when guided by shared responsibility.
>
> Finally, building for the common good requires an evangelical language. We must avoid humiliating or antagonistic words, opting rather for a clarity that sheds light and a frankness that unlocks new possibilities. We cannot condone naïve enthusiasms, nor fuel unfounded fears. Instead, let us establish standards for discernment - the dignity of the human person, the universal destination of goods, the preferential option for the poor, care for our common home and peace - and let us translate these standards into practices such as responsible planning, the assessment of human and social impact, the inclusion of the most vulnerable, the promotion of digital literacy and guiding research and industry toward justice and peace.

Mr President, there is so much in this for all of us. His Holiness asks in the paragraph for a particular tone in this debate: neither naive enthusiasm nor unfounded fear. I'll try to honour that, as I do waver between the two frequently in this area.

AI was already doing real good; it has been around for a long time. It is the pace of growth and capability that is the real difference here. I doubt there are any of us here who have not used it. It has created great good for medical diagnosis, in research and accessibility for people with disability, in relieving people of dangerous and repetitive work. The encyclical acknowledges all of that. Its concern is the direction of travel, the concentration of power, and whether our laws and institutions are keeping up.

The encyclical noted the importance of recognising that every man and woman possesses an inalienable dignity, together with the rights that no human power can betray or nullify, that requires us to shape the way we live together, including our economic and political choices and the makeup of our cities. He states:

> From this arises the first major principle of Social Doctrine that I wish to highlight: the common good. We can describe it as the social expression of the dignity recognized in every person.

To quote further:

> Working together for the common good means having a shared vision. It is clear that there are many ideological and practical differences among people, as well as differing interests and frequent disagreements, but that does not mean it is impossible to engage in dialogue to establish a set of basic

> agreements that enable the creation of a shared vision, upon which everyone can move forward together.
>
> … It is the State's responsibility to ensure cohesion, unity and the proper organization of civil society, so that the common good can be pursued with everyone's contribution. In practical terms, this means that public authorities have the delicate duty to 'harmonize the different sectoral interests with the requirements of justice,' seeking a balance between individual interests and the common good, without leaving behind the most vulnerable.
>
> When politics abandons a long-term perspective and reduces itself to short-term calculations or sterile polarizations, then the language of the common good loses credibility, and, at the same time, social inequalities and divisions grow.
>
> … This also applies to international politics. As the divide between nations widens, a mentality of confrontation and aggression begins to take hold, and the difficult path toward a more unified and fraternal world suffers new and painful setbacks. It is in this context, speaking of a shared journey toward a more just development for the entire human family, 'sounds like madness'.
>
> Yet we must not lose hope. I invite everyone to conceive of ways of cooperating and of more effective international institutions capable of safeguarding the global common good without compromising legitimate diversity of peoples and nations. Indeed, a proportion of the common good can never be separated from respect of the right of peoples to exist, to preserve their own identity and to contribute their unique qualities to the family of nations. Moreover, any attempt to plan or eliminate or subjugate the nation is gravely immoral and therefore unacceptable.

When we contemplate what we are seeing in our world today, not just in the technological space but broadly, we have much to be concerned about. His Holiness's words are timely and relevant, particularly as he's American.

There is so much in this encyclical that we should all read and contemplate. Another section states:

> In this day and age, social justice must also grapple with the environment shaped by digital technologies. The spread of global networks, platforms and artificial intelligence systems is changing the way we obtain information, communicate and access services. Justice demands that we prevent the emergence of new forms of exclusion and deprivation of freedoms: individuals and peoples hindered or denied access to basic technologies, communities exposed to invasive surveillance and social groups penalized by opaque algorithms that perpetuate prejudice and discrimination. In the digital age, a just social order guarantees everyone equal access to opportunities, protects the youngest and weakest members of society, combats hate and misinformation and subjects the use of data and technology to public oversight, so that the guiding principle is not solely profit but the dignity of every person and the common good of all people.

I could read many parts of this encyclical as there is so much wisdom in its pages. I now want to focus on some of what I see as the key themes.

The first thing that speaks directly to the work we do is around accountability. The encyclical warns of important decisions about employment, credit, access to public services and a person's reputation being handed to automated systems that know nothing of compassion, mercy or hope that people can change. It warns that, when the algorithm decided, political responsibility itself can quietly disappear and the exclusion of the vulnerable becomes cloaked in the veneer of objectivity that is hard to challenge.

The impact of algorithms is so easy to see. Anyone who's on social media will see this, and the way it draws people towards certain ideologies, good or bad; the way decisions can be made without the input of humans and the potentially disastrous outcomes that that can have. AI bots have no moral compass.

In Australia, we certainly do not need to imagine what that looks like. The Robodebt scheme showed us, at great human cost, what happens when automated decision making is deployed without lawful foundation, without adequate human oversight, and without accessible avenues for challenge. In my view, the royal commission into the Robodebt scheme findings should be a required reading alongside this encyclical. The document sets out practical criteria that read almost as a checklist for any government agency or public policy decision where data and algorithms influence credit, hiring or access to services and opportunities: decisions must be understandable, contestable and subject to oversight so that people are not reduced to mere profiles. Responsibility must be clearly defined at every stage so that someone can always account for, justify, monitor and remedy a decision. And it makes a point I found particularly important - these criteria do not constitute a curb on innovation. Instead, they make it civilised and humane. That's the lesson of Robodebt.

The second theme is regulation itself. The encyclical makes it very clear that adequate regulatory tools are necessary. That's a matter I absolutely agree with. I know it isn't easy, but that's not a reason not to progress.

It argues that calling for prudence, rigorous evaluation and an ever-slower pace is not opposition to progress but responsible care for the human family. I agree. It names the core problem in this way, that is, the frequent imbalance between the speed of technological growth and the slower development of the norms, safeguards and institutions needed to govern it. This has been very obvious, indeed, since the very development of the World Wide Web.

Members might remember the person who invented that, whose name escapes me, warned it could be used for great good; it could be used for great harm.

It says ethics in the abstract is not enough. What is required is robust legal frameworks, independent oversight, informed users and a political system that has not abdicated its responsibility. Otherwise, it warns, change will be presented as necessary and inevitable, and the rules will be written by those who control the data and the infrastructure and the computing power.

Well, for anyone watching, listening to or even casually observing, this is exactly what is happening. Major AI companies such as Anthropic and OpenAI are asking to be regulated.

They want to be part of the decision making. Sure, we should be hearing from them, but we shouldn't let them guide it. I'm not suggesting those big tech companies are not to be engaged with, but they should not be the drafter of these laws. They can provide advice, feedback and input, but absolutely not control it.

It goes further, making AI 'more moral'. What I understand the industry calls 'alignment' is inadequate if that morality is set by a few. The ethical frameworks embedded in these systems must be open to public debate and the encyclical argues that social justice cannot be bolted on after a technology is deployed, it must shape the design from the outset.

Then it introduced the word that has drawn the most attention, to 'disarm' AI. By this, His Holiness the Pope means freezing it from an arms race mentality, not only military but economic and cognitive, the race for even more powerful models and large datasets in pursuit of commercial geopolitical dominance. To disarm, he says, is to reject the assumption that technological power automatically confers the right to govern. His Holiness speaks to this matter being close to his heart. He states:

> Disarming AI means freeing it from the mentality of 'armed' competition which today is not limited simply to the military context, but is also an economic and cognitive phenomenon. This entails a race for even more powerful algorithms and larger datasets, driven by the desire to secure geopolitical or commercial dominance. To disarm means discrediting the assumption that technical power automatically confers the right to govern. To disarm does not mean rejecting technology, but preventing it from dominating humanity. It means freeing technology for monopolistic control and opening it to discussion and debate, therefore making it human-friendly and restoring it to the plurality of human cultures and ways of life. Our task today is not only ethical or technical. It is ecological in the deepest sense, for it concerns a new dimension of our common home. AI is already an environment in which we are immersed, as well as a force with which we must engage. For this reason, merely regulating it is insufficient; it must be disarmed, welcoming and accessible.

Mr President, this is a challenge to us as much as the industry. Regulation that arrives years after a technology has embedded itself in our daily life will always be playing catch-up. The question is whether we are prepared to shape the systems, not merely tidy up after them. We need to be at the front, beside the change, not chasing from a cold start.

The encyclical also makes a direct appeal to those who build AI, reminding developers that every design choice reflects a vision of humanity and carries real ethical responsibility. As I mentioned, some developers themselves are calling for regulation and I welcome this. But as I said, they cannot be the architects of our law, even if some of these companies are responsible. A responsible industry player is not a substitute for a responsible law.

The third theme that is covered is power, a pretty important focus right now in our world. The encyclical observes that control over platforms, data and computing power increasingly rests not with the states, but with a handful of very large companies, which sets the conditions for access and visibility and tends to escape public oversight. It is unusually direct, calling on us to name the new monopolies of AI. His Holiness states:

> In a world where data, computational resources and regulatory influence remain in the hands of a few, to speak of the common good means exposing this new form of epistemic, economic and political asymmetry and naming the new monopolies of AI.

Data, it says, 'is the product of many contributors and should not simply be sold off or entrusted to a selected few'. Its ownership must be appropriately regulated, and it should be managed as part of the shared good. We have all heard of the voracious approach to training AI, with whole books being fed into AI platforms and destroyed in the process, with the spines removed and the books thrown away, with this data/information clearly written by others who cannot give consent, it seems. It also warns of a new form of colonisation in which health, genetic and demographic data of whole populations become the new rare earths of power, and calls for people to be given back the ability to decide how data about them is used, by whom, and for whose benefit. For those of us concerned with privacy reform, and with the vast amounts of personal information government holds itself, it is a timely reminder.

The fourth theme goes to the heart of this institution and society at large: truth. That is, the truth as a common good. Understanding truth and democracy, His Holiness had this to say:

> The use of digital platforms and AI systems is driving profound changes in public and political communication. Tools that could foster dialogue and participation are often used to construct distorted narratives and blur the boundaries between truth and falsehood, mixing facts with opinions. Disinformation did not begin with AI, yet today it finds a powerful amplifier in AI. The ability to manipulate content, images and videos exposes people to biased or misleading perspectives. This problem has both cultural and moral dimensions, since the quality of public communication depends directly on social trust and, in turn, shapes it. At the same time, truthful information does not arise from centralized or automated control. In public discourse, the truth of facts has a rational dimension, as it requires verification, cross-checking of sources and responsible argumentation. Moreover, it is deeply relational, built through bonds of trust and shared practices, as well as an honest exchange with others and with the world. Only the shared pursuit of the veracity of facts, perceived as a common good, can provide a solid foundation for just communication.

Mr President, the encyclical notes that disinformation did not begin with AI, but AI has become a powerful amplifier of it through manipulated images, video and content that blur the line between fact and opinion. It argues that the search for truth is essential to democracy, and that indifference to truth leads slowly but surely toward authoritarianism. It cites Hannah Arendt's observation that the ideal subject of a totalitarian regime is not the committed ideologue, but the person who can no longer tell fact from fiction or true from false. The proposed remedy is what it calls an ecology of communication: norms that make the decisions behind content selection more transparent and protect personal data, strong intermediary institutions, serious journalism and forms of genuine debate and education in the critical use of digital tools.

He warns too that algorithms which reward conflict amplify polarisation and resentment. A democratic parliament depends on a shared commitment to evidence and facts. I personally have tried always to base my decisions on evidence and facts, but it's become increasingly more

difficult every day to discern even what you see for yourself to be true. This is a very real and constant challenge, and it's certainly not an abstract concern these days. When the community can no longer trust what it sees and hears, the work of holding power to account becomes far harder.

The fifth theme, and for many families the most immediate, is the wellbeing of children and young people. The encyclical draws on the growing body of evidence that early and unsupervised exposure to devices and social media can harm sleep, attention, emotional regulation and relationships, sometimes with tragic consequences. It names online grooming, sextortion and exploitation, made more insidious by fake profiles, recommended algorithms and AI tools that manipulate images. Crucially, it says parents cannot be expected to resist business models built to monetise attention on their own. It calls explicitly for legislators to set age limits, to hold service providers accountable, rather than shifting the whole burden onto families, and to provide specific protections against online sexual exploitation. Australia has, of course, already moved on some of these matters, on the social media minimum age, and this encyclical will be read with interest by those watching how it's implemented. I commend our federal government for taking the global lead on this issue. The harm to children and young people is real.

It also speaks to the attention-based economy broadly, platforms designed to capture time by exploiting human vulnerability, and says those who design or finance such systems bear a moral responsibility.

On education, it makes a point that every teacher will absolutely be alert to: teaching young people must include teaching them when not to use it. The ease of instant answers risks extinguishing the desire to ask questions and to be curious. It calls for teachers to be supported with ongoing professional development and for schools to offer what the digital world cannot: time and trusted relationships. This is a very real need, and as there are all the other pressures on teachers, we ask them to do something else.

The sixth theme is work. The encyclical rejects the easy assumption that automation will simply benefit everyone. It knows that AI can force workers to adapt to the pace of machines rather than the reverse: de-skill them, subject them to automated surveillance and confine them to rigid, repetitive tasks. It acknowledges a legitimate fear of rapid job losses that would ripple through families, young people and local economies, and observes a pattern already visible: outsized rewards for a highly specialised minority, alongside wages for many.

I do note that the AI sector itself does create other employment opportunities, but we simply can't be complacent about that. The encyclical's response is a practical one. It calls for social criteria for innovation. For every introduction of automation, AI should be accompanied by verifiable measures to protect workers' employment, retraining and participation. It calls for accessible lifelong training, so the cost of adaptation does not fall solely on individuals, and for businesses to count the quality and dignity of work among their measures of success. It says transitions must be managed at local and national levels, with local communities involved, and that for regional communities, this matters. We have lived through economic transitions before, and as we know, they often land hardest on the places with the fewest alternatives. The encyclical also argues for moving beyond GDP alone a measure to capture wellbeing, the dignity of work, inequality and environmental protection. That aligns with the Commonwealth's own Measuring What Matters framework and is a conversation this

parliament could usefully have about Tasmania's budget reporting, especially as we struggle to measure outcomes for the majority of our spending and policy decisions.

The seventh theme considers hidden costs. It is the cost that we do not see, such as environment matters and exploitation. The encyclical is quite blunt in this area. It states nothing in the world of AI is immaterial or magical. Every seemingly instant answer rests on vast energy and water consumption and heavy demands on natural resources. For a state that prides itself on renewable energy and is debating major energy infrastructure, the energy and water demands of data centres are matters we need to fully consider and understand. I note the member for Hobart's comments in that area.

It rests, too, on human labour that is largely invisible: millions of people, many of them young women, labelling data and moderating disturbing content for minimal pay, and children working in dangerous conditions extracting the minerals our devices depend on. It describes how traffickers use the same digital platforms and payment systems to recruit and control victims. We simply cannot turn a blind eye to these matters.

It issues a call to action in this area of transparent supply chains so that no competitive advantage is built on hidden exploitation, but by genuine due diligence by companies and investors and platforms cooperating with authorities to prevent their tools from being used for trafficking. Australia's *Modern Slavery Act 2018* provides a framework for exactly this kind of reporting. The question the Encyclical Letter poses is whether our procurement, including the state government's own procurement, of technology is asking the right questions of our supply chains.

The eighth theme is perhaps the most profound and considers relationships, care and what it means to be human. The Encyclical Letter warns of the risks of over-reliance on AI for ready-made answers, of the false impression of objectivity and of the simulated companionship these systems can offer. The danger, it says, is not so much that people mistake a machine for a person, 'but rather that they may gradually lose the very desire to form genuine human connections'. It argues that when efficiency becomes the ultimate measure of value, we are tempted to see ourselves as projects to be optimised rather than persons called to relationship.

It offers a test I find compelling - the quality of a civilisation is measured not by the power of its means, but by the care it is able to offer, its capacity to see another person as a face, not merely a function. It speaks of the martyrs of everyday life: parents, nurses, doctors, volunteers and those who sit with an elderly person or an outcast.

I came to this place from nursing and midwifery, and I know that the most important moments in a person's life - birth, illness, death, grief - are not problems or experiences that can be optimised. They call for human presence, judgement and compassion. Technology can support that care, and this Encyclical Letter acknowledges that, but it cannot replace it.

The ninth theme is the gravest: war. The Encyclical Letter warns that AI risks making decisions about life and death faster and more impersonal, lowering the threshold for the use of force and reducing the enemy to a statistic and the victim to collateral damage. At the launch, His Holiness the Pope spoke of troubling warnings he had received about increasingly autonomous weapon systems practically beyond human control. The document is unequivocal in this area. It says:

No algorithm can make war morally acceptable.

It sets out what it calls 'non-negotiable requirements', that any system used in war must allow decisions to be retracted so accountability never collapses into the machine; that the decision to use lethal force must remain under effective and responsible human control; and that an international framework is needed to curb the technological arms race and protect civilians. We should all be very afraid about what we see happening around the world in this space.

He also warns of cyber-attacks and AI-driven influence campaigns that can destabilise countries before any shot is fired. He calls for diplomacy to negotiate shared rules for digital technologies. Whatever one's view of the broader document, the prospect of lethal decisions being removed from meaningful human control is one we should all be deeply troubled by.

I did contemplate where we stand in this here in Tasmania and Australia. The rest of the world is moving. The European Union's AI Act moved into its main enforcement phase this year, bringing binding transparency and risk management obligations for high-tech, high-risk systems. Other jurisdictions, from South Korea to individual US states, have introduced and passed relevant legislation.

Australia, by contrast, still has no dedicated AI law. The Commonwealth consulted in 2024 on mandatory guardrails for AI in high-risk settings, testing, transparency, human oversight, the cap, the ability to challenge outcomes. As far as I am aware, these guardrails remain unlegislated. I do appreciate the complexity of this task, but things are moving fast and we do need to act.

The National AI Plan released by the Australian Government on 2 December 2025 is a high-level summary. In a high-level summary, it is a whole-of-economy strategy with three goals: capturing the opportunity, spreading the benefits, and keeping Australians safe. These are to be delivered through nine actions spanning infrastructure, investment attraction, workforce development, public sector modernisation, harm mitigation, responsible practice guidance and global standards work. Under opportunity, it targets compute capacity, new data centres, better NBN connectivity and more submarine cables, consolidates a $460 million investment in the existing funding, and adds a cooperative research centre and 'AI Accelerator' round. Claimed benefits include a secure government AI platform, generative AI pilots in schools and public service skills uplift. On safety, $29.9 million was allocated to establish the AI Safety Institute in early 2026. Controversially, the previously announced mandatory guardrails were paused, with the plan favouring technology-neutral regulation under existing laws.

I appreciate the challenges we have. However, in my view, we do need legislative guardrails and clear parameters, for many of the reasons I've spoken about in noting this Encyclical Letter. There are reasonable arguments about how best to regulate, acknowledging it is not a simple, straightforward task, and it's not about stifling innovation within the limits of what a single nation, let alone a single state, can do. The Encyclical Letter itself calls for institutions able to regulate without stifling, and to protect without taking over. The principle it articulates, that the pace of change is no excuse for inaction, is pretty clear.

There is much within the state's own control. The Tasmanian government, and I myself, are users of these technologies, and I'm sure everyone else in this Chamber is.

Ms O'Connor - No.

Ms FORREST - You have a mobile phone?

Ms O'Connor - I don't use AI. Yes, of course I've got a mobile phone, but I never ask AI anything.

Ms FORREST - Any Google search will toss up anything. We can insist that any automated decision-making effect in Tasmania is lawful, transparent, explainable, subject to human review and open to challenge. We can require agencies to be clear about where, and how, AI is being used. We can ask hard questions of supply chains behind the technology we buy. We can support our schools and teachers, and we can add a Tasmanian voice to a call for a coherent national framework.

The Encyclical Letter returns at its end to Nehemiah, the man who heard the cry of a ruined city, organised the work, faced down resistance and rebuilt the walls brick by brick, with the help of the people. It says our vocation is not to be passive spectators nor mere commentators on what is crumbling, but to enter the construction site of our time - laboratories, schools, companies, the media, institutions, the local communities. It also confronts the temptation to think that problems are too big, and we are too small to make a difference, which it calls 'a polite form of resignation, often disguised as realism'. No-one is without responsibility, we each act in the fields we know.

The document's deepest point is a simple one: that human dignity is not earned through efficiency or productivity, that no machine can replace what it means to be human. Whether or not one shares its faith, that is the principle on which good law can be built. We are not spectators to this change in this place, we are among those who will decide whether it serves people or diminishes them.

I again thank the member for Hobart for bringing this forward to the Chamber for consideration and noting. It is timely; it has helped me, and I'm sure others, focus our attention on this pretty important matter. I'll leave the final words to His Holiness Pope Leo XIV:

> It now falls to us to face the challenges of our time with clarity of thought and responsibility. It is necessary to establish adequate regulatory tools capable of upholding justice and curbing the distorting effects of technological power. Nevertheless, the issue is not limited to regulation. As Pope Francis warned, we must realistically ask ourselves who holds this power today and how they use it: 'It must also be recognized that nuclear energy, biotechnology, information technology, knowledge of our own DNA, and many other abilities which we have acquired … have given those with the knowledge, and especially the economic resources to use them, an impressive dominance over the whole of humanity and the entire world. 'In the past, it was largely up to the State to guide and direct innovation. Today, however, the main drivers of development are private, often transnational parties that are endowed with resources and the capacity to intervene that surpass those of many Governments. Technological power thus takes us on an unprecedented, predominantly 'private' aspect, which makes it even more

> challenging to discern, govern and direct such power toward the common good.
>
> For this reason, it is necessary to begin a shared discernment process for identifying the spiritual and cultural roots of ongoing transformations. If we focus only on contingencies, we risk letting the succession of emergencies dictate the direction of our path. We are living through a rapid phase of transition, a change of era in which while some are vying for the future of new technologies and others dedicate themselves to reflecting on the matter - most people are watching and waiting, observing from afar and merely hoping for the best. For this very reason, crucial questions [must] impose themselves on our conscience and can no longer be avoided: Where are we going? Toward what goal do we wish to orient ourselves? What direction should we choose as a people and as a human community?

[5.06 p.m.]

Ms O'CONNOR (Hobart) - Mr President, the day is moving on and so I'll simply take the opportunity to thank the honourable member for McIntyre on behalf of the government and the honourable member for Murchison for their contributions, particularly the honourable member for Murchison. I reflect that the depth with which she examined this issue is heartening.

I hope that other honourable members have learned something from this debate. I know it's a slightly odd thing to do, to bring an encyclical into a parliament for discussion and debate, but as I said in my opening contribution, when it's dark, as human beings we tend to look for even the smallest glimmer of light, and in *Magnifica Humanitas* we can find plenty of light in the darkness. Thank you again to the members for McIntyre and Murchison and to the whole Chamber for listening.

Motion agreed to.

MOTION

Fragrance Sensitivity Recognition Accommodation and Public Awareness

[5.08 p.m.]

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

(1) That the Legislative Council notes:

(a) fragrance sensitivity, also referred to as multiple chemical sensitivity in its broader form, is a documented and often debilitating health condition affecting a significant proportion of the Australian and Tasmanian population, characterised by adverse physiological responses to fragranced consumer products including perfumes, colognes, air fresheners, cleaning products, and scented personal care items;

(b) peer-reviewed research published in *Air Quality, Atmosphere & Health* (Steinemann, 2019), drawing on nationally representative surveys across four countries including Australia, found that:

(i) approximately one in three adults in Australia (33 per cent), report adverse health effects from fragranced consumer products;

(ii) commonly reported health problems include respiratory difficulties, mucosal symptoms, migraine headaches, skin rashes, and asthma attacks;

(iii) 7.7 per cent of Australians had lost workdays or a job in the past year due to illness from fragranced product exposure in the workplace;

(iv) a single application of perfume can release over 100 different chemical compounds into the air, many of which are not listed on product labels due to trade secret protections;

(v) fragrance-free policies have been implemented in workplaces, schools, healthcare facilities, public buildings, and other indoor environments around the world, and national surveys indicate that more people prefer fragrance free rather than fragranced environments;

(vi) among the general population, 47.8 per cent would support a fragrance-free policy in the workplace, compared to only 20.4 per cent who would not.

(2) That the Legislative Council acknowledges:

(a) fragrance sensitivity is an invisible condition, and this invisibility contributes to a pattern of scepticism, dismissal, and minimisation that compounds the burden on those living with the condition, creates barriers to disclosure, and discourages people from seeking workplace accommodations or participating fully in public life;

(b) fragrance sensitivity can have a profound impact on people's professional and personal lives, including their ability to maintain employment, attend events, access public spaces, and perform their work, and many Tasmanians living with this condition do so largely in silence for fear of disbelief or ridicule;

(c) fragrance sensitivity is a legitimate and debilitating health issue deserving of the same seriousness afforded to other airborne health triggers, including cigarette smoke and known allergens;

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(d) workplaces, government and public institutions should develop and implement fragrance-awareness or fragrance-reduction policies as a reasonable and practical measure to support access and inclusion;

(e) the culture surrounding invisible illness needs to change, and institutions have a role to play in modelling respectful, evidence-informed responses to accommodation requests; and

(f) those who raise health and accessibility concerns in institutional settings are entitled to have those concerns treated with confidentiality, dignity, and professionalism.

(3) That the Legislative Council calls on the government to:

(a) consider what steps can be taken within government services and public institutions to reduce fragrance exposure and support those with fragrance related health conditions;

(b) consider whether public health guidance on fragrance sensitivity could be developed or promoted to assist employers, event organisers, schools, and health care facilities; and

(c) reflect on the importance of maintaining confidentiality and trust when individuals raise health and accessibility concerns in professional or institutional contexts.

The motion considers three matters. First, to note the evidence on fragrance sensitivity; second, to acknowledge that people who live with it are too often disbelieved; and third, to call on the government to consider practical, low-cost steps within its own services and institutions to respond.

It does not ask anyone to stop wearing perfume or aftershave or other strong fragrances when out and about in public places or in their own home. It does not propose a ban. It asks us to take seriously conditions that a substantial body of research says and, since I raised this matter publicly - well, I didn't intend to raise it publicly, it was raised publicly for me - I've heard that there are many, many people in our community who have this challenge. The research says it affects around one in three Australian adults to some degree and that for a smaller group it is actually disabling.

Members may have heard from constituents about this issue, as I have, and for some I've spoken to, this is quite debilitating. What did strike me in some of these conversations and in many emails I received when I raised this matter is not only the physical symptoms - the physical symptoms are very real and quite debilitating - but people often said they had stopped raising it because they expect to be dismissed, or worse, bullied or treated disrespectfully in the workplace by co-workers and managers. Sounds pretty right to me.

Some make light of this very real issue and dismiss it, especially if they themselves are not impacted. As I said, there is a growing body of work in this area that clearly shows there is a very real issue here. The most comprehensive work in the field has been done here in Australia by Prof. Anne Steinemann, then of the University of Melbourne. In 2019 she

published an international study in the peer-reviewed journal *Air Quality, Atmosphere & Health*, which drew on nationally representative surveys of around 1100 adults in each of four countries: the United States, Australia, the United Kingdom and Sweden. Across the four countries, 32.2 per cent of adults reported adverse health effects from fragrance to consumer products. In Australia the figure was 33 per cent. That is one in three. One in three Australians.

The most commonly reported problems are respiratory difficulties, reported by 16.7 per cent of the general population; mucosal symptoms, such as watery eyes and congestion, by 13.2 per cent; migraine/headaches by 12.6 per cent; skin problems by 9.1 per cent; and asthma attacks by 7 per cent. We know that people die from asthma. Seven per cent of that 33 per cent - one in three - can suffer an asthma attack. I'm not suggesting they're going to die from that particular event, but asthma is a condition where things build on each other. It might be that you're having a high pollen day and you come into work and someone's wearing a really overpowering fragrance. Then you're in a serious health crisis. That doesn't diminish all the other things that I've already listed because they are health-related problems and serious to the person who's suffering them.

These products involve not only perfumes; they include air fresheners, cleaning products, laundry products, scented candles and personal care products. The single most common trigger was simply being near someone wearing a fragrance product - reported by 20.1 per cent of people. For some, the effects go well beyond discomfort. Across the four countries, 9.5 per cent of the general population reported effects severe enough to be considered disabling under each country's disability legislation, including our own Disability Discrimination Act. The burden is heavier still for people already living with other conditions. Steinemann's work found that 57.8 per cent of people with asthma, 75.8 per cent of people with autism, and 82 per cent of people with chemical sensitivity reported adverse effects from fragrance products.

To be clear about what the surveys show as well as what they don't, these are self-reported; they're cross-sectional surveys and much of the work comes from one research group. I want to make note of that - the limitations - because all research has its limitations; I think it's important to be clear about that, but they do tell us what people experience. They do not, on their own, tell us which chemical causes which symptom in each person. It's probably quite difficult to figure that out at times, but the findings have been replicated across four countries with consistent results, and they sit alongside objective clinical evidence. A 2024 systemic study in contact dermatitis found that among European dermatitis patients patch tested for allergy, 6.8 per cent were sensitised to a standard fragrance test mix. Fragrance remains one of the most common causes of allergic contact dermatitis worldwide. We do not have Tasmanian-specific data, but there is no reason to think Tasmanians are less affected than any other Australians. If a natural figure holds here, we're talking in the order of about 115,000 Tasmanians of working age being impacted.

This is not only a health issue. It is a workforce and access issue. Steinemann's Australian national survey published in *Preventive Medicine Reports* in 2017 found that 7.7 per cent of Australians had lost workdays or a job in the previous year because of illness from fragrance products in the workplace. Across the four countries in the 2019 study, that figure was 9 per cent, with estimated personal costs exceeding US$146 billion in a single year. That's a huge cost. The same Australian survey found that 16.4 per cent of people reported health problems from air fresheners and deodorisers, and that 16.7 per cent would enter a business and leave as quickly as possible because of fragrance products. At least you have a choice there whether you stay or leave. A workplace is not so straightforward.

The international study found that 13.3 per cent of people were unable to or reluctant to use a public restroom that has an air freshener - that includes staff and public toilets and I suggest it includes the staff and public toilets in this place that spray a scented thing all over the top of you when you go in there - and 22.7 per cent have been prevented from going somewhere because they would be exposed to a fragrant product that would make them unwell; that's nearly 23 per cent.

We do need to think about what it means in practice - a person who cannot easily and comfortably use a bathroom at a public venue or in their workplace; a person who leaves a medical appointment because the waiting room is scented; a worker who takes sick leave rather than raise yet again a colleague's perfume or the plug-in air freshener in the office kitchen. These people are what this motion is about. What we are looking at here is a straightforward productivity case. Lost workdays have a cost to employers, to the public sector and the economy.

Part of the difficulty is that people often don't know what they're being exposed to. A single fragrance is typically a mixture of dozens of compounds drawn from nearly 4000 documented fragrance ingredients. No law in any country requires full disclosure of the ingredients of the fragrance. In fact, they probably wouldn't fit on the bottle, but a label can simply say 'fragrance' or 'parfum'. For many household products it need not even say that.

In 2015, Steinemann tested 37 products - air-fresheners, laundry products, cleaners and personal care products. Together, they emitted 156 different volatile organic compounds, an average of 15 per product; 42 of those were classified as 'toxic' or 'hazardous'. So, there were 156 detected; 42 were classified as toxic or hazardous under United States federal law. Fewer than 3 per cent of the compounds emitted were disclosed on any label or safety datasheet. The products marked as 'green' or 'organic' emitted hazardous compounds at a rate not significantly different from conventional products.

Most recent research has added a further dimension. Fragrance compounds such as limonene - a citrus scent that you might smell in a lot of cleaning products - react with ozone indoor to form secondary pollutants including formaldehyde and very fine products. There's a real public health issue there. In 2025, researchers at Purdue University in the United States reported that air-fresheners, wax melts, floor cleaners and deodorants rapidly fill indoor air with nanoscale particles small enough to reach deep into the lungs. The same team reported that scented cleaning products, including those using plant-based essential oils, can briefly push indoor ultrafine particle levels above those outdoors. A study in London homes found that incense, oil diffusers and candles drove sharp increases in fine particle pollution during ordinary household use.

Again, to be clear, these studies measure exposure but do not yet establish long-term disease outcomes. But they tell us that the air in our offices, schools and hospitals is shaped by the products we choose to use in them and that is something institutions can control.

Fragrance sensitivity is invisible. There is a visible injury and that invisibility is the heart of the second part of this motion. People who raise it are too often met with scepticism or ridicule. They are told they're being fussy or difficult or it's all in their head. Some are made the subject of jokes. Many are ridiculed, belittled and mocked, as I was when I raised this matter earlier this year. Social media is a wonderful thing, isn't it really? That didn't have to

happen. It should never have been an issue. So many stop raising it because of these responses and reactions. Some avoid events, decline invitations, take sick leave or leave jobs rather than ask again and be dismissed, ridiculed and/or belittled again.

There are times when I have not gone into a room where I know someone has perfume on that I just will not be able to breathe near. I don't think it's rude on my part if you try to raise it. But I will say that the member for Hobart was wearing Chanel No.19 and it was giving me the most fearsome headache, and I mentioned it very gently and quietly to her. She was mortified that she had made me feel like that, and she has not worn it in this place since. So there, that is how we can deal with it, and I thank the member for Hobart for her compassion, care and respect.

Ms O'Connor - I never wear it around you.

Ms FORREST - You can wear whatever you like when I'm not there, that's fine. This is the thing: it can be done when it's done respectfully, rather than being put down, diminished, there was no question of 'Oh, suck it up', which I've heard from others. Not in this Chamber, I'm not suggesting, but certainly the member for Hobart's response was entirely appropriate and I really appreciate it being so responsive.

The pattern is familiar, as with other invisible illnesses. It discourages disclosure. It discourages people from asking for reasonable adjustments, to which they may well be entitled under disability discrimination law, and it pushes people out of public and work life. I spoke to some people who contacted me from the mainland, who have actually been bullied out of their workplace when they raised it and then were told they couldn't work at home, even though it was an office job, and so they had no choice but to leave work.

We have been here before. Not so long ago it was considered unreasonable to ask someone not to smoke in a shared office or restaurant. I remember being very pregnant with my first child at an event. We were sitting at these tables during a collective dinner, and after main course, before dessert, the man across the table leant back and said, 'You don't mind if I smoke, do you?' and I said, 'Yes, I do.' He looked at me and said, 'What am I going to do then?', and I said 'Well, how about you don't smoke?' He said, 'No, I can smoke.' He was just mortified. He did have the decency to ask; he just didn't want to hear the answer. But he did smoke, and so I went outside. I chose not to smoke during my pregnancies. I chose to try to protect my babies as much as I possibly could, while I could, while they were in utero. He had no right to expose me to that. I had to make the change, not him. What a surprise.

Today smoke-free indoor environments simply are expected. I'm not suggesting fragrance is equivalent to tobacco smoke in its health impacts or effects, but I am suggesting that how we treat people affected by an airborne trigger reflects a cultural choice and cultures can change. Institutions have a role in modelling that change. When someone raises a health or accessibility concern, the response should be respectful and informed by evidence, and that concern should be handled with confidentiality, dignity and professionalism. This was far from my own personal experience. Confidentiality, dignity and professionalism should be the baseline in any workplace, and especially in public institutions, including this one.

The good news is that the response is practical and inexpensive. It won't cost the government anything. There is a clear public appetite across the four countries in Steinemann's study: 47.8 per cent of people would support a fragrance-free policy in their workplace,

compared with 20.4 per cent who would not. So, most people, even if it doesn't affect them, would still be happy to support it. More than twice as many people would prefer healthcare facilities, hotels and aeroplanes to be fragrance-free rather than fragranced.

There were times when you used to get on an aeroplane and the front section was a smoking section and the back was a non-smoking section. So, if you didn't want to smoke you sat at the back, and if you wanted to smoke you sat at the front because the smoke only stayed in the front section - not. At the time it was just the way it was and you couldn't possibly complain. It didn't do you any good if you did.

Mr President, the measures that I think that can easily be undertaken, and they're hardly earth-shattering, are:

- choosing fragrance-free cleaning and hygiene products in government buildings, schools and health facilities, which are widely available and often no more expensive;
- removing automatic air fresheners and plug-in diffusers from shared spaces;
- including fragrance awareness in workplace health and safety and inclusion policies;
- encouraging people to go lightly in shared places rather than prohibiting anything -

I'm not suggesting we say people can't wear any sort of fragrance; it's those really strong, overbearing fragrances and aftershaves and things like that that you can smell a mile off. In fact, when you walk past someone in the street, if you're walking behind them, you'll smell it far before you catch up with them;

- noting fragrance-reduced arrangements in event information as we do for wheelchair access or dietary needs -

I mean, it's one of the things that we could easily include;

- having a clear, confidential process for people to raise concerns where they feel safe and respected;
- respecting an individual's personal health-related information by maintaining confidentiality beyond those who need to know -

That'd be a nice start. One caution from recent research is worth heeding. A 2026 study of fragrance-free policies found they often focus narrowly on perfume while overlooking cleaning and laundry products, air fresheners and building materials. Any guidance should look at all sources, starting with those an institution directly controls. Some things are beyond our control, but there are plenty of things that are.

I do also note when I asked some of our staff some years ago when they were bringing fresh flowers in, and some incense sticks - which is very nice, but they're pretty overpowering at times; lilies would just about kill you; jonquils, from my perspective, are so

overpowering - when I gently made that request they were removed and now we've got Lego flowers, which are just as beautiful, including in our Deputy Usher's office -

Mr PRESIDENT - A full garden.

Ms FORREST - many nice flowers and others. A lot of our secretarial staff have got lovely Lego flowers in their offices, so there's all different ways of addressing this.

This is why the motion's calls on the government are measured. It asks the government to consider what steps can be taken with its own services and public institutions. It asks the government to consider whether public health guidance could be developed or promoted for employers, event organisers, schools and healthcare facilities. It asks the government to reflect on the importance of confidentiality and trust when people raise health and accessibility concerns - a matter they have failed on at least one occasion I'm personally aware of. None of this actually requires legislation. None of it requires significant expenditure. It requires leadership, compassion and a willingness to listen and act.

One in three Australians report that everyday fragrance products make them unwell. For around one in 10, the effects are disabling. Many of them are in our workplaces, our schools, our hospitals and our public spaces. Most are dealing with it quietly. The evidence has limits as much of it is self-reported, but the weight of it from population surveys, clinical allergy data and indoor air research points in one direction: fragrance sensitivity is real, it is common and it can be serious. The motion asks us to acknowledge that reality. It asks us to acknowledge the people affected, to support a culture where they are believed rather than dismissed, ridiculed or belittled, and to encourage the government to take reasonable, practical steps within its own institutions.

I commend the motion and look forward to the contribution of other members.

[5.29 p.m.]

Ms WEBB (Nelson) - Mr President, thank you and thank you to the member for Murchison for bringing the motion for us to address today in our Chamber. My contribution is a short one. The member for Murchison has gone through lots of detail and data and really explained the elements of the motion very thoroughly for us, and I concur and thank you for doing that.

I'm also someone affected by fragrance sensitivity, particularly at this time of the year when I've got seasonal allergies in play as well. I regularly am affected in different workplace environments by fragrances that others are wearing or in cleaning products that have been used in the environment. Sadly, I'm particularly badly affected by some flowers, which is a shame because there are some that I love. It is something that does become intrusive into a workplace environment and your capacity to actually be undertaking your role in some particular environments. In this workplace, we have very closed rooms with no windows you can throw open, for example, to air it out. Once you're in a room and there's a fragrance present, it's very difficult to escape the effects of it.

I think the motion is pretty straightforward. It just asks us to note these things and acknowledge that people shouldn't be denigrated or made fun of or put at a disadvantage because of experiencing something which is such a commonly experienced and unfortunate physical response to fragrances. Thank you to the member for Murchison. I support the motion

fully and I appreciate that we've been able to raise it. I'm also incredibly sorry that we've had a reason to discuss this in the Chamber because of appalling behaviour from people earlier this year on this sort of matter.

[5.31 p.m.]

Ms LOVELL (Rumney) - Thank you, Mr President. I too will just be making a brief contribution. I wanted to thank the member for Murchison for bringing this to the Chamber for us to debate. Like the member for Nelson, I'm sorry that it's come to this. As a member of the committee where this all sort of evolved from, it was a real kind of wake-up call and a bit of a shock to see. What I think fundamentally this comes down to is really just how we treat each other. To have the contrast between - as I think I can speak as a member of the committee - seeing how members of the committee responded to the issue that had been raised by the member for Murchison, including the member for Hobart, as the member has explained earlier, and how what was seen by us to be not really a big deal - it shouldn't have been a big deal - it was a really reasonable request from a member of our committee that we were all really comfortable to support her in.

We took steps as a committee to write to people who would be attending hearings to raise this with them because we understood and had witnessed the difficulty that the member for Murchison had had the previous year. To see that kind of response that I thought was a pretty normal response and how I would have expected people to just respond to this request, it wouldn't have occurred to me to respond in any other way. I don't think it would have occurred to any of us. But to contrast that with the response that then eventuated with that email finding its way into the hands of a media outlet and that media outlet deciding that it was somehow in the public interest to write a story about this, and then to see some of the responses from people online as well, was really disappointing.

It was really quite shocking to see that something that is so common: as the member for Murchison has explained, we've heard examples today of similar conditions or situations. My mum suffers from fragrance sensitivity. I've had to tell my 11-year-old son, 'Ease off on the cologne when grandma's picking you up from school, just one spray, not several'. I know that my mum is impacted by fragrances, by pollen, she suffers from hay fever, there are particular flowers, all the same sorts of things we hear. I think all of us would know somebody well, if not ourselves, who suffers from sensitivity to fragrances. We can see what kind of impact that can have on people, not just in their ability to participate in their job in their workplace, but long-lasting impacts in terms of migraines and headaches and other health conditions.

I really support this motion from the member and I'm really disappointed in the response that we saw online. I'm disappointed in the way that story - well, it wasn't a story, but the way it became a story; I'm disappointed in the fact that we had to ask questions about it at this very table in Estimates hearings. I'm really disappointed that people who have been involved in that haven't seen fit to acknowledge it even, to apologise, to recognise that there is a member of this parliament who has been exposed in this way and subjected then to attacks from people online. Sounds familiar, doesn't it?

Ms Webb - That vitriol is now a pattern of behaviour, I believe.

Ms LOVELL - You could be forgiven for thinking that, member for Nelson, absolutely.

I support the motion. I support the calls in the motion on the government, but I really wanted to make a contribution because I just wanted to highlight how this could have been handled, how it started to be handled and what it turned into. What an absolute shame that was and, frankly, behaviour that is just unbecoming of any workplace, let alone the Parliament of Tasmania, where we're meant to be setting an example for the rest of the community in terms of how we treat each other - and we've heard that so recently and seen some really extreme examples of what happens when we don't conduct ourselves in a way that is about treating each other with respect and dignity. So, I support the motion, and I thank the member for Murchison for bringing it to the Chamber.

[5.35 p.m.]

Ms O'CONNOR (Hobart) - Mr President, I want to thank the honourable member for Murchison for bringing this debate on. It's regrettable, isn't it, that we're having to discuss it in this place? But the reason that we're here, just for a bit of contextual background, is that an email went out to people who would be presenting to Government Administration Committee A, requesting that people not wear perfume at the table because the Chair has a fragrance sensitivity, then someone maybe didn't read the email but there was a very strong perfume at the table that day. Now, I saw firsthand the physical effect on the Chair of that very strong perfume. The colour drained from the honourable member for Murchison's face. She looked a bit dazed and confused, which for the honourable member for Murchison is not the default mode. I saw the effect that I had on the member for Murchison at a previous hearing when I was wearing my favourite perfume and, yes, after hearing that I had, quote, 'made you sick', I, of course, wasn't going to wear it again in the company of the member for Murchison, but I will say it's a really great perfume, Chanel No. 19. But the reason -

Ms Forrest - It wasn't only me at the table who was unwell at that point, there were people on the other side who were also unwell.

Ms O'CONNOR - Yes, well, we've learned today a little bit more detail on how pervasive this condition is and I think to some extent or another, quite a few of us suffer from a chemical sensitivity, so very strong bleaches and chlorine, caustic chemicals - I think they probably make most people feel a bit sick, but they certainly make me feel unwell and I do also suffer from hay fever.

But there are two reasons this became a small scandal. Someone in government decided it would be a great idea to send a polite request email to people who are presenting to our committee to Pulse Media. They did that because they knew Pulse would do a hit job, and so they did. The second reason it became a disrespectful and insulting process is because once that sequence of events had transpired from government, there was a dismissal of the fact that the Chair of GAA had been made sick by someone not reading the memo and, in the end, it's all about respect in this place. Well, it should be, but that's not what transpired.

I would just, of course, support the motion. I'd also encourage the government to perhaps learn a lesson from that one. If you've done the wrong thing or someone within your machinery has done the wrong thing, acknowledge it, apologise sincerely, move on and don't do it again. It really is that simple and it really is, at the end of the day, all about respect for each other.

[5.40 p.m.]

Ms RATTRAY (McIntyre - Leader for the Government in the Legislative Council) - Mr President, the government recognises the motion moved by the member for Murchison and

the importance of ensuring that health and accessibility concerns are treated seriously and with appropriate consideration. The exposure to fragrances and scented products can cause adverse symptoms for some individuals and, depending on the individual, their circumstances and their tolerance, these symptoms may include respiratory irritation, asthma symptoms, headaches, migraines, skin reactions and other forms of discomfort clearly outlined by the honourable member for Murchison in her contribution. It's also important to recognise that the impacts of fragrance exposure are not always limited to physical symptoms. For some individuals, particularly those living with asthma or other respiratory conditions, concerns about exposure to known triggers can contribute to stress, anxiety and a sense of uncertainty when attending workplaces, public buildings or community events.

For people who are sensitive to fragrances, the impacts described by Prof Anne Steinemann's research can be significant and deeply challenging. An exposure to common fragranced products in workplaces, healthcare settings, shops and other public spaces may trigger symptoms that affect their health, wellbeing and ability to participate in everyday activities. This research highlights that fragrance sensitivity is a real experience for many people and underscores the importance of listening to and understanding the concerns of those affected. While there is limited Tasmanian-specific data available, these findings suggest that many Tasmanians may also experience adverse effects from exposure to fragrance products, and the honourable member for Murchison gave some numbers.

The research highlights the value of considering how public spaces, workplaces and services can support people who are sensitive to fragrances, helping to create environments that are safe, accessible and inclusive for all. The government acknowledges that for people who experience adverse reactions to fragrances, these circumstances can affect not only their physical health, but also their wellbeing, confidence and ability to fully participate in everyday activities. It is also understandable that some individuals may feel concerned about entering environments where they may be exposed to triggers that impact their health. By promoting awareness, encouraging open discussion and considering measures to minimise exposure, where appropriate, organisations can help create environments that are both inclusive and supportive, while recognising the diverse needs of everyone who shares those spaces.

Responses to fragrance sensitivity should be informed by contemporary health advice, relevant scientific evidence and established workplace health and safety obligations. It is important to distinguish between recognising that some people experience symptoms associated with fragrance exposure and making broader assumptions about the prevalence, causes or clinical nature of fragrance sensitivity. Workplace health and safety frameworks already place obligations on employers to identify hazards, assess risks and take reasonably practicable steps to eliminate or minimise those risks. Where scented products or other chemical substances present a risk to a worker, these obligations may require consideration of the circumstances and appropriate control measures.

Asthma Australia notes that strong smells and scents, including perfumes, deodorants, incense and some chemical products can trigger asthma symptoms for some people. While these products may not affect everyone, they can contribute to respiratory symptoms and discomfort for individuals whose asthma is sensitive to these triggers. Asthma Australia also acknowledges that it is not always practical to completely avoid fragrances in shared environments such as workplaces, schools and other public settings. Instead, it encourages open discussion, awareness and practical measures that can help reduce exposure where concerns are identified. This may include considering alternative products, improved ventilation or

working collaboratively to address individual needs. They also highlight the importance of employers working proactively with staff to identify asthma triggers and appropriate risk mitigation measures. This approach aligns with existing workplace health and safety obligations and supports practical, reasonable adjustments that improve participation and accessibility for people living with asthma or other sensitivities.

The government also recognises that these considerations may extend beyond workplaces to schools, healthcare facilities, public buildings, community events and other settings where people are required to share space. The appropriate proportionate responses will necessarily depend on the nature of the setting and the circumstances of the individuals involved. There may be circumstances in which particular adjustments are appropriate, and others in which the available options are more limited. Consideration should therefore be given to individual circumstances, the needs of other people using the same facility, the feasibility of proposed measures and the responsibilities of the relevant organisation. The government supports an approach that encourages awareness, and the consideration of reasonable measures to minimise avoidable exposure where appropriate. This does not necessarily require a blanket prohibition across workplaces or public institutions. Rather, it recognises the value of practical, context-specific responses that are informed by current advice, and that take account of the needs of people who may be affected.

In closing, the government recognises the importance of treating fragrance-related health and accessibility concerns, while ensuring that any measures considered are evidence-informed, proportionate and appropriate to the circumstances.

[5.47 p.m.]

Ms FORREST (Murchison) - I thank the honourable members who have spoken on this motion, and I appreciate others alluding to some of the reasons why I ended up putting it on the Notice Paper. Part of that was also driven by the number and volume of communications I got on this matter from around Tasmania, but also from around the mainland, so obviously that's how far the news travelled on this issue. I must say I'm a little bit underwhelmed by the Leader's response. 'The government recognises this motion' - what does that mean? Recognises that I put it on the Notice Paper? Recognises that I have stood here and spoken? The Leader did then go on to talk about some of the things that Asthma Australia have put out, which is fine because they're the things I refer to as well.

I will note the absolute lack of any comment on point (3) of the motion, which was the part where the Legislative Council calls on the government. I would have expected the government response perhaps to respond to that bit, particularly to (c), which says 'reflect on the importance of maintaining confidentiality and trust when individuals raise health and accessibility concerns in professional institutional contexts'. This is about anyone of the thousands of public servants who work across our state: our teachers, nurses, police, people working in the justice system, all of those people, who have no guarantee, not even the commitment from the government, that they will seek to maintain confidentiality and build trust.

I listened carefully. I'm not sure there's any commitment - aside from saying, 'Well, it's in the workplace, health and safety area' - to actually look at proactively putting out information that encourages people to be aware of the matter, to provide the information that may assist them in mitigating the risk to them. There was a vague allusion to this, 'We don't want to prohibit things'. This is not about prohibition; I talked about that right at the beginning. It's

about recognising it, looking at alternatives where they present, and it's not that hard. If I had called on the government to ban the use of all fragrances in every school, hospital and public building, well, that would be a very different thing. That is not what I was doing. I must say, I am dreadfully underwhelmed. I remain underwhelmed by the unwillingness of the Premier to actively and meaningfully apologise for that leak of that email that was referred to by other members, which just adds insult to injury.

The reason I sometimes lose my voice almost in here is because of the effect of the dust in the carpet, the dust in the curtains - we can't do anything about that, these are old buildings and I accept that. It's when you put another thing on top of that; the spray in the toilet, the smelly chemicals for cleaning - our staff are really good now, they don't use that stuff, but someone then comes in with a really overpowering aftershave or a really overpowering perfume on - that's it. You can't go any further.

I would hope the government would take this a little bit more seriously than that pretty underwhelming response with lack of any real commitment to address this. I do thank the members who have absolutely recognised and responded in a more meaningful way, and maybe the Leader will feed that back.

Motion agreed to.

MOTION

State Government Contribution to Construction of the Macquarie Point Stadium

[5.51 p.m.]

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

That the Council -

(1) Notes in relation to the estimated total costs of the Macquarie Point Stadium (the stadium), and the estimated State Government contribution towards the stadium's construction, the following;

(a) On 1st of March 2022, when announced by then-Premier Peter Gutwein MP, the estimated cost for the stadium was $750 million;

(b) On 18th of September 2022, when announcing Macquarie Point as the preferred new stadium location, Premier Jeremy Rockliff MP stated in a media release that: '*the government is firm that it will cap its investment at $375 million*';

(c) On the 15th of February 2024, prior the March 2024 state election, Premier Jeremy Rockliff MP stated in a media release that: '*a re-elected majority Rockliff Liberal Government will cap Tasmanian Government capital expenditure on the*

Macquarie Point Stadium at the currently budgeted $375 million - and not one red cent more.';

(d) When announcing the Macquarie Point Development Corporation (MPDC) had submitted the Project of State Significance application for the stadium to the Tasmanian Planning Commission on the 18th of September 2024, then Minister for Sports and Events Nic Street MP reiterated: '*Our funding to this project is capped at $375 million*.';

(e) On the 27th of May 2025, then Minister for Business, Industry and Resources Eric Abetz MP released draft enabling legislation for the stadium and also provided a revised total cost estimate of $945 million;

(f) On the 18th of September 2025, the government announced a revised cost estimate of $1.13 billion for the stadium;

(g) By the time the *State Policies and Projects (Macquarie Point Precinct) Order 2025* was debated in the Council on the 3rd of December 2025, Premier Jeremy Rockliff had committed to capping the state's contribution to the stadium at $875 million;

(2) Further notes:

(a) Global economic instability due to ongoing conflicts in the Middle East continues to pose risks of escalation of the total stadium project cost estimate, and therefore, also to the expected state contribution, including any interest payable on borrowings;

(b) Treasurer Eric Abetz MP on ABC Drive Radio on the 27th of July 2026 anticipated the cost of the proposed stadium could change by the end of the year and stated: '*Until such time as we have a proper figure to announce the figure of $1.13 billion remains*';

(3) Acknowledges:

(a) The commitment made by the Leader for Government Business in the Legislative Council during debate on the *State Policies and Projects (Macquarie Point Precinct) Order 2025* on the 4th of December 2025, that: '*if additional funds are required, it would need to be appropriated and that would occur in an appropriation bill or a supplementary appropriation bill.*';

(b) Correspondence regarding the potential tabling of any revised stadium construction cost estimate following a motion passed by the House of Assembly, from the MPDC Board Chair to the

Minister for Macquarie Point Urban Renewal dated the 4th of August 2026, and tabled during Public Accounts Committee hearings which states: '*If there are matters related to cost identified in the assessment process, I anticipate advice on this being provided to you at the end of September or early October*';

(4) Recognises that in regard to Parliamentary scrutiny of significant state-funded infrastructure projects:

(a) The usual approval process includes inquiry by the Public Works Committee, which routinely undertakes examination before the tender process has concluded and before any contract has been signed;

(b) In the Public Works Committee process, the onus is upon government Departments to provide the Committee with sufficient information about cost estimates to enable it to make public value assessments as part of its deliberations;

(c) While the Project of State Significance process excluded the Macquarie Point stadium project from Public Works Committee scrutiny, it should still be available to the Parliament to scrutinise and assess public value at a similar stage in the progress of that project without jeopardising tender and contract negotiations; and

(5) Formally requests the Government, at the completion of the stadium project procurement process but prior to the formal signing or completion of the contract process with any successful tenderer, to provide to this House:

(a) The highest likely cost of total project construction based on the successful tenderer's bid and the proposed final contract terms, whether it remains $1.13 billion or is a revised amount; and

(b) The estimated state contribution component of the total project construction cost as referred to in (5)(a), whether the state contribution remains $875 million or is a revised amount.

The text of the motion tabled is lengthy, for which I don't apologise, as it's intended to, in its detail, support and inform consideration of the two specific resolution clauses that comprise the final clause (5) of the motion. I'm going to speak through the motion in some broad terms and then get to those resolution clauses later in my contribution. Part (1) of the motion, in particular, documents the timeline of shifting financial sands. This is by no means an exhaustive timeline here in the motion. It also reflects the length of time this oppressive dark cloud has simmered on the Tasmanian horizon, casting a shadow over our political discourse, our community trust and confidence.

Numerous elections and parliamentary debates have been overshadowed by this issue over four years since this travesty was first foisted upon the Tasmanian community in March 2022, when the then Premier Peter Gutwein stated the estimated total cost for the AFL-demanded stadium was $750 million. Throughout these last four years, the primary consistent element has been how hard the community, and this parliament, have had to work to essentially pull teeth to get anything resembling straight and consistent comprehensive answers from the government on this matter. Sadly, within the context of this AFL-demanded stadium, the main area of consistency has been a lack of transparency along with deliberate bamboozling and obfuscation from the government.

The other main element of consistency threading its way from March 2022 to the present is the fluctuating final estimated total cost of constructing the stadium, as well as the total amount of expected state contribution, which has also been rather fluid over time. There can be no argument that for many Tasmanians this stadium exemplifies the worst of an arrogant, out-of-touch government. They struggle to comprehend how this expense can be countenanced at a time of job losses, service cuts and budget austerity.

The self-congratulatory back-slapping and wilful shrugging of shoulders when faced with the potential of ongoing cost blowouts beyond the extraordinary amount of $875 million before interest payments is a glaringly harsh juxtaposition to the experience of the daily lives of many Tasmanians - days where putting food on the table is a challenge, where payment of bills is a continual juggle of deciding what to do without, where essential community support services which Tasmanians rely upon are being increasingly cut. They're all thrown into sharp relief against the wilful and blinkered, almost fanatical, approach to pursue this AFL-demanded stadium at all costs, and that is not hyperbole. In the eyes of many despairing, bemused or downright angry Tasmanians, this myopic obsession is at any cost. It is at the cost of their fiscally sustainable future, their immediate access to timely mental health support services, sexual assault support services, legal services, ambulances arriving in a timely manner, children having three square meals a day and an exemplary education system, a properly resourced community support sector, vibrant local arts and creative industries, and on and on the cost list goes.

It's worth remembering, Mr President, that this at-all-costs approach includes the rejection of independent expert advice. The TPC expert panel which assessed the stadium on the apparent total construction cost estimated at that time of $945 million and, as we know, recommended the project did not proceed on the grounds it would damage Tasmanians economically, amongst other concerns. Yet, as we know, the government rejected that advice, as did this parliament. That is a broad contextual background that I'm just laying out to this debate. However, I do not intend to revisit the many arguments prosecuted over the last four years as to the fiscal recklessness epitomised by the stadium -

Ms Forrest - There's probably some good news in that.

Ms WEBB - Pardon?

Ms Forrest - I'm just joking. I'm glad you're not going to revisit all of it, it would be too tortuous.

Ms WEBB - Well, I'm now constrained and I'm not able to revisit all of it, so that's all right. However, I don't intend to revisit all of it; that's not what the motion is about, but it's the

context in which we are having the debate today on this motion. It is appropriate that accountability is exercised by this place to remind the government that if you have deliberately decided to pursue a policy direction counter to the concerns raised by many, many Tasmanians about the immediate and future financial implications, you then have a clear responsibility to provide clear and timely pertinent updates. The final construction costs and the final estimated state contribution are clear examples of information the community deserves to receive.

If the government is happy to ignore independent expert advice, not once, but on multiple occasions, that the eventual costs of the stadium will be excessive, and is further happy to ignore broad community disquiet regarding those financial warnings then the government has a clear responsibility to be upfront and to disclose relevant pertinent updates such as the total estimated construction costs.

As previously stated - and I do not intend to spend too much time revisiting previous debates or well-known arguments prosecuting the concerns surrounding the AFL-demanded stadium itself, instead - the fundamental purpose of this motion is to provide a responsible mechanism by which meaningful, timely and accountable disclosure of pertinent financial commitments entered into by the elected representatives in government is made to those who elected them and also in the broader public interest.

Broadly speaking, there are three elements to the stadium's financing. The first, those paying for the stadium's construction. In this instance, the federal government has committed to a total of $240 million; the AFL has committed to $15 million, and the last we heard, the Tasmanian government has committed us to paying out $875 million. Apparently, this will consist of $375 million plus the rest in borrowings. The second consideration is the total cost; how much we are all paying for the stadium and to whom. As we know, this is currently being negotiated with the announced preferred tenderer, BESIX Watpac. The third consideration is the unknown externalities, the most obvious being the current and ongoing global economic instability due to, among other things, the Middle East conflict and the impacts that's having upon fuel availability and costs.

The latter is beyond our control and beyond any crystal ball of this place. All we know is it will have an impact, and the first indication we will have on the scale of that impact will be reflected in the transforming of the target construction price into a fixed lump sum, which in turn will have a potentially material impact upon the first element I mentioned, those paying that fixed lump sum.

We know that both the federal government and the AFL have stated very clearly that their contributions are their respective upper limits. That is the static ceiling; no more will be forthcoming from them, and as part (1) of this motion demonstrates, should the overall total construction cost estimate increase ultimately, by definition, so too does the state's obligation.

For example, despite repeated declarations that the state's contribution is capped at $375 million and not a red cent more, by the time the estimated total construction cost had increased to an estimate of $945 million by May 2025, and then a further revised cost estimate of a whopping $1.13 billion by 18 September that same year. We then saw the expected state contribution increased to that $875 million figure. Somehow, in its wisdom, the government signed Tasmanians up to a deal where it's our state's financial outlay that is the only contribution in play, which highlights why the nexus between the total expected construction cost - or what is now being referred to as the fixed lump sum by those reported in the media,

such as the CEO of the MPDC - and the state's contribution is so fraught and so firmly entrenched in the upper forefront of the minds of so many Tasmanians.

As clause (2)(b) of this motion highlights, the Treasurer acknowledged in July this year that it is anticipated the cost of the stadium could change even further by the end of this year, stating:

> Until such time as we have a proper figure to announce, the figure of $1.13 billion remains.

Whether and to what extent the final construction costs change, that $1.13 billion figure could have a very real bearing on the state's contribution either in payment and borrowings or even just in the interest payments on those borrowings over time.

I'll now touch briefly on clause (3) of the motion. This clause provides two salient examples of official recognition that the Tasmanian contribution could very well rise. Clause (3)(a) contains a statement made by the Leader in this place in December, clarifying the process by which further state funds would be provided. Clause (3)(b) references correspondence tabled during Public Accounts Committee hearings, written from the MPDC Chair to the minister stating that should there be further advice regarding costings identified during the assessment process, that advice is anticipated to be available 'by the end of September or early October'.

There are probably a range of other relevant citations I could have included from the evidence material to the Public Accounts Committee that make this same point: that not only was it expected that the costs would change throughout the procurement assessment process, which the state's budget process would then have to accommodate, but that such advice was expected to be available to the government by early October. While allowing for some slippage in timelines, it will not escape members that it is now late October - the last week of October, in fact - and I will return to that point of the timing of advice later in my contribution.

Moving on to clause (4) of the motion, these clauses are self-explanatory and are intended to provide an example of a relevant and comparable parliamentary process by which tender processes and costings are routinely examined. As members who have been or are currently on the Public Works Committee can attest, its core responsibility is to examine cost estimates in order to determine whether the taxpayer is receiving appropriate value for that publicly funded investment. The Public Works Committee is not a performative rubber stamp - far from it. As stated in many of its reports, when assessing any proposed public work, the committee seeks an assurance that each project meets the criteria detailed in section 15(2) of the *Public Works Committee Act 1914*. These criteria relate to the purpose of the works, the need for an advisability of undertaking the works and, crucially, whether the works are a good use of public funds and provide value for money to the community.

In order to be able to make that assessment, the committee requires the expected costings. A scan of the multiple reports of concluded Public Works Committee inquiries available provides a detailed range of such costings being provided as part of those processes. For example, the recent Rokeby Road - South Arm Upgrades - Acton Road Intersection report of earlier this year details P50 and P90 estimates for base costs, contingency costs and escalation costs, and all before the final contracts are signed and work proceeds.

It would be remiss of me if I did not also mention the efforts by the parliamentary Public Accounts Committee, the PAC, to drag out pertinent details on the stadium into the light of day; it has been diligently working on this matter. I'm aware that members in this place who serve on PAC and are in a better place to discuss those efforts may wish to reflect on that.

My purpose of putting in the motion a reference to the Public Works Committee is not to suggest that we undertake a process analogous to the Public Works Committee. It's just to point out the fact that a process of parliament has, under normal procedures around the Public Works Committee, the availability of cost estimates before contracts are signed and work commences in order to make some scrutiny of public interest and public value. We know that the stadium project is not going through the Public Works process and I'm not making an argument that it should; I'm simply pointing to the fact that parliament, as a representative of the community, has a role to play in scrutinising the expenditure of public money of major projects and that that scrutiny in other circumstances can and does occur at a point in time of the project where contracts have not yet been signed necessarily and works have not commenced, and receiving broadly information about cost estimates for projects in order to do that scrutiny is a normal part of those processes.

As I've outlined, clauses (1), (2), (3) and (4) of the motion seek to highlight in a clear and factual manner why the nexus between the final total expected construction costs of the stadium and the state's financial contribution propels both into the realm of genuine public interest. Further, the text of the motion also seeks to present a comparable parliamentary example of such fiscal scrutiny of estimated costs against public value for money criteria being undertaken in the public interest as a matter of scrutiny of the parliament.

Any genuine and effective leadership which is more than just a title by name is that which brings people along with you as you engage partners in an endeavour in a respectful and inclusive manner. We all know that. In this instance, it's a measure of genuine leadership whether those who will be required to pay for the stadium will be actually paid the courtesy of being told upfront how much they will be paying and under what terms before they're locked into that arrangement and whether they'll have the opportunity for their parliament, the representatives they've elected to represent them in that parliament, will have an opportunity for scrutiny of that, which brings us to clause (5) and the crux of the motion.

Clause (5) presents a formal request from this House to the government that, and I quote:

> … At the completion of the stadium project procurement process but prior to the formal signing or completion of the contract process with any successful tenderer, to provide to this House:
>
> (a) The highest likely cost of the total project construction based on the successful tenderer's bid and the proposed final contract terms, whether it remains $1.13 billion or is a revised amount; and
>
> (b) The estimated state contribution component of the total project construction cost as referred to in (5)(a), whether the state contribution remains at $875 million or is a revised amount.

Mr President, that procurement process was completed prior to the announcement on 15 October that BESIX Watpac had been selected as the preferred tenderer; therefore,

timing-wise, this motion is prescient. Between now and the eventual finalisation and signing of the contract is the opportunity for parliamentary accountability to be exercised and government leadership to be demonstrated, a genuine opportunity for government to demonstrate transparency, honesty and openness to the Tasmanian people on a matter of significant public interest.

I mentioned previously I would revisit the matter of timing. Clause (3)(b) of the motion references the fact that in August this year, the MPDC Board Chair anticipated any updates relating to costs arising from the assessment process by the end of September or early October. Later on Friday, 16 October, the MPDC CEO, stated on ABC local radio that stage 2 is a, 'relatively short stage' and that they are 'only really a few weeks away from finalising the final lump sum costing for the contract.'

A *Pulse* news report of 15 October states more specifically that the MPDC CEO said 'that stage would end around mid-November', after which the corporation will assess the price and take it to the government with the aim to sign the contract before the end of December. It's also important to note the *Pulse* news article also reports the Premier as saying: 'As we have committed to, we will detail the cost to the Tasmanian people prior to the signing of that contract.'

Mr President, that's a statement I'm sure we'd like to take at face value. However, I do hear, and I must acknowledge, concerns raised that, yes, the community will be told, but potentially that will be at the eleventh hour. Potentially, it's going to be something like Christmas Eve, a minute before the contract is signed and well past the time that parliament has an opportunity for scrutiny or for discussion on behalf of the Tasmanian people who elected us to be here. Cynical or not, it can be no surprise that people are so jaded that they would not put such an action past this government to leave it to the eleventh hour just before ink goes on the page. A sleight of hand where technically a commitment is met, but not in the spirit of being open and accountable to the Tasmanian people or via this mechanism, the parliament, on behalf of the Tasmanian people.

Instead, this motion presents a mechanism by which both the intent and the spirit of that public disclosure commitment can be met in full by the government, should they choose to do so. There are two joint sitting weeks in the second half of November, during which the government could provide to this House and the other place the final highest likely cost of total project construction, otherwise known as the final lump sum, and whether the estimated state contribution component has been revised from the previous $875 million. We also know the MPDC expects to have that final lump sum price by around mid-November. Again, if that schedule remains on track, then that information should be available to be provided to the parliament while it is in session and prior to any December signing of the contract. There should be no impediment to the timely provision of the final expected construction costs to this House, to this parliament, in fact.

To summarise, for over four years, the Tasmanian community has not received the honesty or the timely, transparent disclosure regarding decision-making surrounding this stadium from their political leaders. In fact, we've just begun to see some more of that come to light today. I know there's been discussion in the public domain and in the other place around the fact that we are now, it would seem, subsidising the non-successful tenderer for this project above the $250,000, I think it was, initially indicated in the tender process that was going to be reimbursed by Tasmanian taxpayers. It quietly now comes to light that that got rounded up -

perhaps that is a facetious way of putting it - to now a $2 million reimbursement, potentially, of the non-successful tenderer. That's only come to light through persistent questioning by people representing the Tasmanian community who have concerns in this area. It didn't come to light because the government was voluntarily open and clear about it with the Tasmanian people. It's another example of these things being dragged into the light of day. It's a shame. This could be a turning point for the government.

This motion that I'm putting forward is nothing nefarious. It's simply presenting an opportunity to take a step in the right direction when it comes to openness and accountability and transparency, and to allow the parliament to do a job on behalf of the Tasmanian people by providing it with information while there is potential opportunity for scrutiny, or, at the very least, questions put in the Chambers.

Clearly, we still have a long way to go. We have a persistent pattern of obfuscation and hiding of information, rather than openness and transparency, from this government. Despite being told the long-held dream of a Tasmanian team in the AFL did not have strings attached - that's what we were told initially, remember - we all woke up one day in 2022 to be told that in fact a backflip had occurred and now the promise of the team was tangled so tightly in the strings of a new stadium that transparent public debate risked being strangled to death by those over-tight strings. Despite being told there were a range of potential location options for the new AFL-demanded stadium on 18 September 2022, the community were informed the Macquarie Point site was the designated preferred location. This was despite taxpayers already footing the $45 million bill for the Macquarie Point Development Corporation's site master plan 2017-2030, and its reset plan which incorporated the MONA-proposed vision and which complied with the Sullivans Cove Planning Scheme and had already received Hobart City Council permission along with broad community support. No matter those previous community-driven processes and decisions. They were unilaterally overridden by the AFL's preference, and on 18 September 2022 the community were also told by the Premier the state's contribution towards the new stadium would be capped at $375 million. That brief timeline recap serves to highlight exactly how and why the government has considerable credibility catch-up to make with the Tasmanian community on this topic.

Too often throughout this saga, Tasmanians have been told one thing, only later to be told another, and as a fait accompli. Time and time again they have entered or watched community engagement or independent processes, only to see their respective outcomes overridden by the government. Utterly disrespectful every step of the way. It cannot surprise anyone that there is now an extremely sizeable trust deficit, which is why this motion in essence says, okay, we hear you, government, Premier, minister, when you say you recognise the public interest in knowing the final construction costs and that will be revealed in due course, but we have some stipulations on how and what we are told and when. This motion says that we, the parliament, are not going to be fobbed off anymore on this matter. We will not accept the ongoing withholding of this critical detail which affects current and future Tasmanians. In all of our electorates, there are sizeable numbers of constituents who are deeply interested in this, putting off critical details about fiscal security for our state until some vague point in time which benefits the government to release in a manner that's overshadowed. No doubt if it occurs in December, outside of the parliament sitting, overshadowed, potentially we can maybe even use our imaginations, by some hi-vis vest-clad good news announcement or perhaps just by Christmas, quite frankly, as we've discovered recently, Christmas can provide all manner of politically convenient distractions in this state.

This motion says we request the expected total cost to be provided to the parliament and within a certain timeframe, though, as I discussed earlier, this motion does not attempt to pluck a date out of the calendar by which we would require the costings total to be released to the parliament. It's not about trying to set up a 'gotcha' moment for the government to fail because the required deadline does not correlate with the procurement negotiation timeframe. That's not the intent. Instead, this motion is trying to work with the procurement process, not to override it.

Stage 1 of the procurement process is complete with the formal selection of the preferred tenderer announced on Thursday, 15 October. Stage 2 of the request for tender process is now underway or could even be nearing completion, based on public comments made. This stage involves, amongst other things, resolving the final fixed costing sum. At the conclusion of stage 2, the government will have two choices.

Choice one is to withhold that final agreed total cost until after parliament rises for the year and perhaps just prior or even just after the ink is dry upon the contract being signed. This choice clearly benefits the government, intent on protecting its back and seeking to control the public narrative around what, I think most of us would inevitably imagine is going to be a final cost that's higher than the one we've been given to believe over 12 months ago now.

Choice two is to disclose to the parliament on behalf of the Tasmanian community the agreed updated final fixed costings before the contract is signed and while parliament is still able to undertake a scrutiny role on behalf of the community. There should be no procedural or legal impediment to that choice - it's as simple as that. It's available to the government to step up and do that.

One choice is driven by what may work best for the government, the other choice is driven by what is best in the public interest and in the spirit of a transparent and accountable government. Therefore, this motion states that parliament would like a say regarding which option the government chooses. The motion states parliament chooses the public interest as the best option going forward. We cannot impose a public disclosure date as we are not privy to the expected timeline of stage 2 negotiations underway, so the motion doesn't try to do that. But we can require another step be included in the overall process, which is at the conclusion of stage 2, prior to the final stage of the signing of the contract, that the parliament is informed formally of the expected total cost we are signing up to, as well as any changed estimation of the state's contribution towards that final cost. How could that possibly be considered contentious? It's really beyond me to imagine. It's just standard accountability to a parliament.

The motion also ensures that such an expectation is transparent. Neither party to the negotiation underway can claim the requirement to disclose the final construction cost has come as a shock and is counter to their understanding. It would be utterly disingenuous anyway for such a spurious argument to try to be mounted, given the other place's previous debate earlier this year and the broader ongoing public discourse on this matter, including the media's questions at the press conference announcing BESIX Watpac as the stadium builder. Everyone's interested in this piece of information. Yes, it's politically potent, but it's also taxed by our money that we're signing up to and it's a reasonable request of the parliament to be able to undertake scrutiny of that on behalf of the Tasmanian people.

To recap, before I close my contribution, the CEO of the Macquarie Point Development Corporation informed the public via an ABC Radio interview on 16 October that stage 2 is

occurring under 'a relatively short' timeframe and that they are 'only really a few weeks away'. So, there is every likelihood that information will be available by, or during the parliament's final sitting sessions this year, with the two November sitting weeks and this Chamber's December sitting week available. In short, there's no good reason for the final expected total construction cost to be withheld from Tasmanians at the conclusion of stage 2 negotiations prior to the final signing of the contract. It's clear and responsible public interest consideration. In fact, we also know that, as part of the tender process, those organisations putting forward for the tender had to propose a total cost for the stadium, so there's nothing that's mysterious or particularly unusual here about everyone having clarity on that.

The only reason not to disclose is that the government doesn't want to wear the actual parliamentary scrutiny that should ensue on behalf of the Tasmanian people on information about a major public project using taxpayers' money and entering into borrowings that taxpayers in Tasmania will be paying for decades to come and that that should be something that is under scrutiny by the parliament before contracts are signed. It's clear and responsible, it's in the public interest for this to occur. The ongoing secrecy and disrespect shown both to the public and to the parliament regarding this project since 2022 has, sadly, tainted the prospect of the Tasmanian AFL team, which should, I think we all still agree, have been a milestone all Tasmanians could celebrate, and it has severely corroded the public trust and confidence that we should have been sharing about that outcome.

One motion will not fix what has occurred or undo damage that's been done in terms of public trust and confidence. I appreciate that; it's not what I'm attempting to do with the motion. But it does make it even more important for the parliament to now stand up and say that we have a democratic responsibility and hold a fiscal duty to those who elected us to require complete, genuine openness and transparency on this matter which will have such enormous material impact upon our current and future economic, social and cultural fabric in this state.

On that, I hope members will recognise this motion as something that's pretty standard and reasonable. It's something that we all pledged we would be doing when we spoke about the stadium as the order came through. It's about undertaking the standard parliamentary role of scrutiny. It doesn't ask the government to do anything other than something that may cause it some political discomfort, which is to be open and honest and available for scrutiny on what is now the final expected cost of the stadium, prior to contracts being signed and while the parliament is still in session.

I commend the motion to the Chamber.

[6.24 p.m.]

Mr GAFFNEY (Mersey) - Mr President, I rise in full support of the motion tabled by the honourable member for Nelson and I thank her for bringing such a thorough speech because it speaks directly to one of the most fundamental responsibilities of elected members of parliament, ensuring that major public investments are justified, affordable and subject to rigorous scrutiny before the state commits itself to obligations that may extend for decades. The Macquarie Point Stadium is no ordinary project. It's probably one of the largest and most complicated infrastructure undertakings in Tasmanian history. Its cost trajectory alone, and potential contemporary and long-term impacts on our state's limited finances, demands that this House exercise the highest level of vigilance.

As a lifelong enthusiast of sports of every kind - as a participant, administrator and spectator - I fully understand the passion behind us having our own AFL team. We only have to look to the warm welcome the Hawks have had in their time here in Tasmania, and the pride we have in seeing 'Tasmania' on the Hawks' guernsey. I also appreciate the wish to have the very best facilities for our team to utilise and at the same time empathise completely with the real concerns rational economists have with the overall cost of the project. I fully understand the long-term implications of our state's ability to deliver essential services and investments.

I have to ask, however, if the government has even begun to consider the full implications of its determination to push ahead with the stadium project in the face of a collapsing world economy. With the growing fuel price crisis, which could see diesel knocking on the door of $4 per litre, what then for our primary industry and transport sectors, on which we rely so much, and that cannot move without diesel fuel? Recently, with Simplot demanding a 2.5 per cent cut in the price they pay their growers for spuds, the minister for Primary Industries has said it's a commercial matter and he couldn't possibly intervene. I'm not sure that the north-west farmers hit by this cut and the exploding costs of fuel, nitrogen fertilisers and agrochemicals, would necessarily agree. In the scheme of things, farmers by themselves are simply small fry, small businesses without the collective power to take on the government - and yet primary industry employs well over 10,000 Tasmanians.

Let's hold that thought for now and get back to the motion. It's a motion that speaks to the power of big business in Tasmania, big businesses that always call the shots, and a government - and apparently an opposition - that's too weak and fearful to stand up and call them out. The song sheet is always the same: 'poor us' is the melody; 'save our shareholders' is the tune; corporate welfare is the hidden rhythm; and as per a recent *Tasmanian Country* article by Mr Brad Stansfield, the title may as well be, 'Please Sir, I want some more', in gold block lettering.

The AFL are no fools, and yet they have played the government for fools. It's a sweet deal they have made, with barely $15 million from its own coffers, for approximately a $1.5 billion stadium and training facility to house a team we only hire in. That's a 100-fold, or 10,000 per cent, return on its $15 million, and there are penalties attached for an even better return to the AFL. We don't even own the team; we simply pay tribute to the AFL for the privilege of having an AFL-owned corporate asset based in Tasmania. Shame on us and shame on them.

In recent times I've had the opportunity of talking to a number of previously pro-stadium Tasmanians very concerned now about the government's, opposition's, and members in this place, decision to support the new build at Macquarie Point.

Mr Stansfield's article was damning in its focus on the government's willingness to give away hundreds of millions of dollars of our money to highly profitable foreign entities based on a wish and a prayer. Closer to home, his comments extend to the AFL as well. I'd like to quote an excerpt from his article, as it's highly relevant to the motion:

> And it isn't only smelters. Let's not forget the biggest boondoggle of them all - the Macquarie Point Stadium. The AFL, a business turning over more than a billion dollars a year, offered the same sort of 'deal': no stadium, no team. So the Tasmanian taxpayer is up for a $1.2 billion (and counting)

> stadium and a $105 million 'High Performance Centre', not to mention $12 million a year in cold, hard cash on top of that to help fund the team.

Mr Stansfield is no one's fool, and maybe his clear-headed thinking is what derailed his bid to become a Liberal senator. Truth hurts when it's plainly told, and maybe it's too early for the government to recognise its own mistakes. He clearly recognises the value small business brings to our economy, and the hardships they must endure so the corporate entities can have a guaranteed return - a guarantee paid for in fewer jobs in Tasmania's small business and our needy public sector.

We're living in a financial bubble that's about to burst. To put it bluntly, we are a mendicant state that's living beyond our means. Even with $1.4 billion of operational efficiencies and endless job cuts, I doubt very much that the mainland states will be minded to bail us out when it all goes wrong and Tasmania ends up bankrupt and having to sell what's left of the family silver. In Rio's case, we've given away the Tasmanian family silver in exchange for aluminium. The final price we'll have to pay for the stadium is still anyone's guess. That's why I back this motion.

Back to the motion. In March 2022, the then premier Peter Gutwein announced the stadium with an estimated cost of $750 million. Six months later, in September 2022, Premier Jeremy Rockliff stated unequivocally that the government would cap its investment at $375 million - the cap that was repeated in February 2024 with the added caveat of 'not one red cent more', a point reiterated by minister Nic Street in September 2024. Yet, by May 2025, the estimated total cost had risen to $945 million. Four months later, in September 2025, the estimate rose again to $1.13 billion. Finally, as we have been led to believe, by December 2025, the Premier had committed to a state contribution of $875 million.

These are not minor variations. They represent a near doubling of the original cost estimate and a more than doubling of the state's original funding cap. Tasmanians have watched the numbers climb from $750 million to $1.13 billion in the space of three years, and watched as the state's contribution climbed from $375 million to $875 million - that's another half a billion dollars.

The motion rightly notes the impact of global economic instability; in particular, the ongoing conflicts in the Middle East, which continue to pose unquantifiable risks to construction budgets and the cost of borrowing.

The Treasurer himself acknowledged on ABC *Drive* on 27 July 2027 that the cost 'could change by the end of the year' and that the figure of $1.13 billion remains only until a 'proper figure' is available. Tasmanians are entitled to ask: what will the proper figure be, and, even more importantly, what is the government's threshold for reconsidering whether this project remains viable, or does it even have one?

Supporting the intent of this motion is a matter of ensuring that the government does not commit future generations to servicing debt for a project whose costs have already escalated far beyond what was promised.

The motion also acknowledges the commitment made by the Leader for Government Business during debate on the State Policies and Projects Order - a commitment that any additional funds required would need to be appropriated through an appropriation bill or

supplementary appropriation bill. That is an important insurance, but it's not a safeguard. Appropriation bills can be passed, caps can be lifted, commitments can be revised - we've already seen that happen.

The correspondence from the Macquarie Point Development Corporation Board Chair, tabled in the Public Accounts Committee, indicates that advice on costs matters may be available by late September or early October. That is precisely the kind of information we must have timely access to. It's not unreasonable, it's not obstructive, it's not an attempt to derail the project; it's simply an attempt to ensure parliament can properly perform its constitutional role and the MPDC can demonstrate sound governance rather than a 'she'll be right' bravado of bluff and obfuscation. I have to admit, after attending the GBEs from the Audit Office today, it's even scarier than what I thought.

The motion also highlights a critical point: the stadium project has already been excluded from scrutiny by the Public Works Committee due to its designation as a Project of State Significance. It's an exclusion which may have been allowable under POSS protocols but has left a significant and gaping hole in the usual accountability frameworks for such a significant expenditure commitment. With such a divisive and controversial project, the government has an overt responsibility to demonstrate transparency. The Public Works Committee (PWC) processes allow the government to give enough information for the committee to assess the public value in a proposed investment.

The fact that the stadium has been excluded by a twist of protocol leaves a void - a vacuum where tangible oversight and scrutiny should still exist - but it's nowhere to be seen. As we know, nature abhors a vacuum and in the absence of PWC scrutiny, the rational alternative is parliament. The very fact that the government made numerous commitments regarding oversight to secure the votes of several members in this place surely adds weight to that expectation. Parliament is the open forum in which intended government expenditure can be examined and it is value-tested. As the motion indicates, parliament can assess tender and contract terms without jeopardising any negotiations. Parliamentary scrutiny may well enhance the government's position with safeguards and red lines that can define non-negotiable terms to any bidder for the contracts.

Mr President, supporting the intent of this motion does not mean opposing the team. It does not mean opposing investment in Macquarie Point per se. Many Tasmanians are excited about the prospect of a Tasmanian AFL team. They see the potential for economic uplift, tourism growth and national recognition, but they also see the realities in their daily lives - the cost-of-living crisis, with the cost of housing driven up by its scarcity. It's a scarcity exacerbated by TasWater in crisis with 93 per cent of its treatment facilities failing to meet existing licence regulations and no capacity to cope with new subdivisions. It's a crisis in our hospitals struggling to cope with the number of patients and burnt-out nursing staff. It's a coming crisis in our aged care services as the wave of the baby boomer generation begins to seek places to live in their remaining stages of life.

These are just some of the challenges our departments and GBEs are facing and as I've already mentioned, the guillotine of $1.4 billion of operational efficiencies has already started falling on what are essential services. These are real needs and not wishful wants.

We as Tasmanians are not unreasonable. We don't begrudge investment in sport or infrastructure where there's a real need and a genuine value to be had, but we do expect honesty,

we expect prudence and we expect that when costs escalate, governments reassess priorities rather than simply blowing the budget and pressing ahead.

As Brad Stansfield suggests, the corporate pleas of 'Please sir, I want some more', and the government that says, 'Of course you can' whilst cutting essential services to pay for it, is wearing a bit thin on the Tasmanian sense of fair play.

Ms Forrest - It's probably the only time you'll ever quote him in here, I reckon.

Mr GAFFNEY - I reckon.

Mr President, the government is convinced that the stadium is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity but, if the estimate costs continue to rise, if it becomes $1.3 billion, $1.4 billion or more as the tally wheels on the stadium price poker machine continue to spin, then we must ask whether the perceived benefits still outweigh the risks. When will we know how much we're up for in the final reckoning?

The member for Nelson's motion does not give an opinion on that answer. It simply requires that parliament be given the information necessary to make that judgement before the state signs a binding contract. That's not only reasonable, but also an essential function of this parliament.

Mr President, as a bit of a stop press, it gets worse. As we all read this morning in a news update, it turns out the failed underbidder for the chance to bid for the final contract has come up trumps on the deal. It looks like a paltry $250,000 agreed in the documentation to reimburse the costs of putting in a tender is yet another furphy. Dare I suggest it was a typo as it now looks like Webuild may be getting another zero on the end of that figure, one which will take it into the millions.

Is there no end to the government's capacity here when it comes to corporate welfare? I suppose, if we're talking of a project in the billions, then maybe a few more millions are just a few crumbs on the edge of the breadboard if there's a big fat loaf of expensive sourdough sitting in the middle. It's yet another reason why the government must open the books on the whole scheme before any more surprises can smack us in the face.

Mr President, I fully support the intent of this motion as it seeks to restore the balance between what might be government overconfidence and what is rational public accountability. It ensures the whole of parliament has access to the anticipated total cost of the project, together with an update on the estimated state contribution before any contract is finalised. We must assess whether we can afford this project without fully knowing the cost.

The motion ensures that Tasmanians we represent can have confidence that parliament can function as it should: to scrutinise the government's actions based on facts and up-to-date information and not on past assumptions, unrestrained vanity and hyperbole.

And finally, it ensures that the government cannot commit the state to escalating costs without first demonstrating public value and allowing that modelling to be publicly examined. For these reasons, I fully support the motion, and I thank the member for Nelson for bringing that to the table. I hope that all members of parliament in this place and the other understand

exactly where we're at at the moment. We're on a real pivotal moment in Tasmania's history and we must make sure that we do our job.

[6.40 p.m.]

Mr EDMUNDS (Pembroke) - Thank you, just briefly from me. Obviously, a few of us have started from scratch here, so, obviously, when we dealt with this at the end of last year, I voted in favour of the project for the three reasons that I said the entire time during my election in Pembroke: because it's secured the Devils' club, the AFL side, the AFLW side, the VFL, the VFLW, the off-field, the investment down the highway in Kingston - which, again, I lament could have been in Rosny Park - the junior programs and, indeed, I was fortunate enough in my shadow portfolio to go along to the event where the Devils unveiled their first 17-year-olds for the AFL side and each of those players talked about how it's something they actually targeted.

This is not the reluctance to come to Tasmania that so many people were against and, frankly, we all know there are some people who, no matter what this project comes in at - it could actually come in at zero dollars - would still not support it. That's fair enough, but these were people who targeted Tasmania and saw being recruited as one of those initial 17-year-olds was a real badge of honour for those players to have been wanted by this club, which I think is a pretty cool thing to reflect on.

The other reasons, the infrastructure pipeline that's been talked about, again, a year ago, but rehashing that the state does need an infrastructure pipeline to have the people that we can train and keep in jobs in this state and, obviously, the point about giving young people, and particularly professionals across the services that we rely on, another reason to stay in Tasmania. I saw we had the tabling of papers today, so I've requested my hard copy of the Spirit of Tasmania annual report.

A lot of the statements made about this project are probably more applicable to that absolute debacle. I also acknowledge, like the member for Mersey, the briefing, and I understand why some members couldn't be there because of all the other committee commitments at lunchtime today, but I actually almost felt like throwing up during that briefing. It was, in my view, a much more ghastly picture for our state than any one infrastructure project, whether it's related to a boat or a football side or sporting performances. I know there's more to come and more to play out about those words from the Auditor-General, which, again, I think are far more concerning than pretty much anything else we've got to deal with here in Tasmania.

So, this project has had the scrutiny and the oversight from the get-go both within here, whether it's in this Chamber, whether it's in the other Chamber, whether it's through committees and public hearings and also outside the chamber. Acknowledging that members of this parliament obviously have different views, we had two votes in two different Houses on this project at the approval stage, which was, I think, last December, and people voted accordingly.

As this has gone through, there have been media standups or motions in either House and some of those I've viewed quite sceptically. I myself and others have even questioned where the line is between scrutiny and sabotage, and I think that that has been a pretty fair enough comment about some of the things that our members, particularly probably in the other place, have had to deal with this, and people have voted accordingly.

Ms O'Connor - Well, at least they've tried to scrutinise it.

Mr EDMUNDS - Anyway, so, there's been a lot of waxing and waning on things like the POSS. People who didn't support the POSS then all of a sudden hold it up as what would have been a fantastic outcome. I'd also note, as the member for Nelson did, and I don't have the date on this print-out, the comment from the Premier that says:

> As we have committed to, we will detail the cost to the Tasmanian people prior to the signing of the contract.

I don't know if you have that date off the top of your head, member for Nelson. It's the Pulse news article. Anyway -

Ms Thomas - 15 October, I think.

Ms Forrest - The source of all knowledge.

Mr EDMUNDS - Thank you very much, 15 October. And I think if and when a cost is locked in, we should know. I'll welcome that as it will represent progress and might actually start to see something coming out of the ground over at Macquarie Point. Acknowledging that this dollar figure will probably just send people further into the tribe they're in anyway regardless, but for the people who want to work on solutions and want to work on lobbying, should that figure be more, as the Premier's identified, that they'll be off to Canberra, off to cricket and those other organisations, well, that work should begin in haste. So, I welcome this information as soon as practicable and would like to see it in the public domain, particularly in the parliament. It also gives people an opportunity to work on solutions and put forward ideas about how, if those challenges exist, they can be tackled.

So, I'll support the motion. I look forward to the government's arguments. But like any motion on this topic, we'll deal with what's in black and white, and I think the request is reasonable. However, as we've shown throughout this process, when a decent argument can be made about why that may or may not be the case, [inaudible 6.46.24] but that's not my argument to make. I think where it's practical, we should be informed of this as soon as possible and it should have as much public rigour around it as possible.

[6.46 p.m.]

Ms THOMAS (Elwick) - Mr President, I rise, too, to speak in support of this motion, and I thank the member for Nelson for bringing it forward for debate. When this Council considered the stadium order last December, I sought and secured safeguards because of the significant financial risks associated with this project and the consequences for Tasmanians. Central to those safeguards was the government's commitment to a maximum state contribution of $875 million. I sought that commitment because Tasmanians deserve a clear limit on their financial exposure. They also deserve independent oversight, openness and transparency and accountability for how their money is spent. Perhaps on reflection, I would have also sought to secure a commitment to publicly release this information, but, hey, I couldn't think of everything at the time. It was a very stressful time, as members will recall. Certainly, the safeguards that I secured are there and I expect the government to stand by those.

Ms O'Connor - They won't.

Ms THOMAS - My support for the stadium order did not remove my responsibility to scrutinise its delivery. It reinforced the importance of holding the government to the commitments that it made.

There are two distinct figures here: one, the $1.13 billion total project budget that was determined based on the P90 cost estimate determined by the independent quantity surveyor; and two, the $875 million state contribution. An increase in the first should not automatically result in an increase in the second. If the final project cost exceeds $1.13 billion, I expect the government to explain the increase, to disclose the funding gap and to demonstrate how it proposes to deliver the project while honouring its commitment to Tasmanians. I expect the government to seek any additional funding required from the Australian Government, the AFL, Cricket Australia or through private investment, as it has agreed to do. Any private investment proposal, of course, ought to clearly disclose also the financial obligations and risks that it would create for the state. The government must also examine responsible savings or changes to scope. Any proposed savings must be credible, with their consequences explained, including whether they would shift costs into future maintenance or operations.

If the government concludes it cannot deliver within its promised state contribution, the government must return to the parliament with a fully explained proposal before entering contractual commitments that depend on additional state funding. This is a fair and reasonable ask by this motion that the member for Nelson has brought to us for debate. As (3)(a) of the motion before us acknowledges, any additional state funding would require an appropriation bill to be considered and decided on by the parliament. The assurance about seeking an appropriation must provide a meaningful opportunity for scrutiny and decision. Parliament should not be presented with a signed contract and told that further expenditure is now unavoidable. That would be entirely irresponsible, it would be extremely poor governance, and it would place Tasmania at significant legal and financial risk. It is also reasonable for Tasmanians to expect the government to present a clear reconciliation between the construction contract price and the total project cost, including contingency, costs outside the main contract and risks retained by the state. The ongoing scrutiny by the Public Accounts Committee, of which I'm a member, has certainly been seeking to get a clear picture of all of the costs.

I'll support the motion wholeheartedly and I urge the government to also support it in the interests of openness and transparency. I would appreciate the member for Nelson clarifying in summing up what is intended by the words 'provide to this House,' in paragraph (5) of the motion. Is the intention that the government formally table the information, making it publicly available? Would providing members with an opportunity to review the information privately satisfy the motion, or is either approach acceptable at the government's discretion? Or is some other mechanism intended? That distinction is important because members should understand precisely what we're requesting, and what would constitute compliance with the motion.

Providing figures before the contract is signed is essential. Providing sufficient time to examine those figures is equally important, and those points have been well made. These are both legitimate and reasonable asks of the government. Now, supporting this motion does not predetermine how I would vote on any request for additional funding the government might make in the future. Let's hope it doesn't come to that. Any such request would require its own rigorous assessment, including the consequences for other public priorities. The member for Mersey in particular spoke a lot about that, and I appreciate that contribution. The government made commitments to this parliament and, through it, the Tasmanian community. I expect those commitments to be honoured. Tasmanians deserve for those commitments to be

honoured. The government owes it to Tasmanians to stand by its word, to be open and transparent. So, I support this motion and in the interest of transparency, I urge the government to support it too.

Debate adjourned.

SUSPENSION OF SITTING

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

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

This is for the purpose of a dinner break.

Sitting suspended from 6.52 p.m. to 8.00 p.m.

MOTION

State Government Contribution to Construction of the Macquarie Point Stadium

Resumed from above.

Ms THOMAS (Elwick) - I had finished my contribution, so I again commend the motion to the House and really hope that the government will support it.

Mr HISCUTT (Montgomery) - I rise to make a brief contribution. I would like to rise today in support of the member for Nelson's motion. I would like to thank all those who have contributed so far and would especially like to mention the member for Elwick who just spoke, who summed up a position quite similar to my own.

Back in December we agreed as a parliament to a $1.13 billion stadium, and there were assurances given to members and around this Chamber. One such statement, which is evident in the motion before us, was when the government stated:

> If additional funds are required, it would need to be appropriated and that would occur in an appropriation bill or a supplementary appropriation bill.

This was an answer to statements and questions that I had posed during the debate. This does not mean that due to circumstances, parliament shouldn't look at funding additional expenditure, just that it should be given the opportunity to prosecute this.

I also think that this motion shouldn't be hard to follow, especially when, as pointed out by others, the Premier said on 15 October in a media article:

> As we have committed to, we will detail the cost to the Tasmanian people prior to the signing of this contract.

This should be a no-brainer, and the government should be quite happy to support this motion, although I have my suspicions that they won't.

Mr President, I do also understand that a contract is not a contract until it is signed and that these items may be of a commercial-in-confidence nature. I know that that is the excuse that will be used, but this place deserves to be respected for the level of consternation that was shown during the debate regarding this bill back in December, and regarding the agreements that were signed and accepted.

In a similar vein to the member for Elwick, I would also like to know what is intended by 'provided to this House'. I am not averse to the idea that we could be given a confidential briefing as long as it was open and transparent amongst the members and that we can expect reasonable answers given to our questions. If reasonable excuses can be made as to why this should not be public, then so be it. This is not an ideal outcome but perhaps a way forward.

I would also like to make some comments about the motion and comments from the member for Nelson regarding Public Works and having recently been appointed to that committee. Unfortunately, I'm seeing that it does not quite work in the way that the member presumes. We are offered the government's quote or the pre-tender quote, for example, the $1.13 billion number associated with the stadium and then expected to make the decision based on that. I'm working on a question on notice to find out how often the prices that we agreed to in Public Works match the final price. That happens myself. (? 8:03:41)

Ms Webb - Surely, they're not year-old figures, though, by the time you get them.

Mr HISCUTT - The process would not have helped in this case, however I understand the principle.

I think that this request is fair and reasonable. I think it respects the debate that happened in early December and I think it could lead to a more respected outcome, whatever that outcome may be. Thank you, Mr President.

[8.04 p.m.]

Ms O'CONNOR (Hobart) - Mr President, I rise to speak in support of this motion. I will start at the end of the motion, on the question that's been asked of the honourable member for Nelson - and thank you for bringing on this important motion. The question is what 'provide to the House' means in the context of providing to the House details of revised costings of the proposed Macquarie Point stadium. One way government could fulfil this, should it pass, is to simply provide confidential documentation to members to consider. That wouldn't be good enough, to be honest. It's not something I would want to be part of. This is the money that belongs to the Tasmanian people. We're talking here about public money, and it was one thing earlier this year to be broadly accepting of the government tabling its alleged P90 assessment or providing it as a confidential briefing to members of this place, but when we're talking about what the ultimate cost of this massive infrastructure project will be to the Tasmanian people, to provide that information in confidence to a small group of people, in my view, is completely unacceptable. So, I look forward to the honourable member for Nelson's answer to that question.

I'm very thankful for all the people who I represent as the member for Hobart, who remain implacably opposed to the Macquarie Point stadium, and the intergenerational theft that it

represents. I'm thankful to the honourable member for Nelson for bringing this motion forward, because it is an attempt to counter what has been an extraordinarily opaque, secretive and dismissive approach to transparency around stadium costings by this government. We become inured to political dishonesty in this job. We become accustomed to premiers and ministers being either loose with the truth or not even telling the truth. When you run through the timeline in this notice of motion, it is quite striking how deceptive on costs this whole project has been. Just in the language, we have gone from the former premier and treasurer who signed us up to this folly, Mr Gutwein, committing the state to a new stadium at Macquarie Point and telling Tasmanians it would cost in the order of $750 million. That was four-and-a-half years ago. Then we had only six months after that statement, by the new premier, Jeremy Rockliff, such a definitive statement on 18 September 2022, when he announced Macquarie Point as the preferred new stadium location. Our Premier, the then new premier Jeremy Rockliff, said in a media release, 'The government is firm that it will cap its investment at $375 million.' Well, a couple of things here: it's not the government's investment, it's the investment made by government on behalf of the Tasmanian people. But that language, 'The government is firm that it will cap its investment at $375 million.'

It wasn't very long after - it was five months after that - where the then premier, just before the March 2024 state election, in fact, it was the day, as I recall, after the election was called, where the Premier stated in a media release that a re-elected majority Rockliff Liberal government will cap Tasmanian government capital expenditure on the Macquarie Point Stadium at the currently budgeted $375 million, and 'not one red cent more'. That is language that the Premier and other ministers used any time they were talking about stadium costs from that point, for a time. Now, the ordinary person who operated on the basis of trust and faith in politics might listen to that and think that was a firm commitment that the Tasmanian government will cap its expenditure at $375 million and not one red cent more. It's such definitive language. Of course, in the lead-up to a state election, it was a really important turn of language, in order to persuade voters very worried about this project that it was in safe hands with a Liberal premier who made a promise that the state's, and therefore the public expenditure on this project would be $375 million. That was reiterated not long after the 2024 election when the then minister for sport and events, Nic Street MP, reiterated our funding to this project is capped at $375 million.

That was in September 2024. Fast-forward a little bit to May 2025, and we're being primed for a higher cost of construction - that is, a higher investment of public funds - when the new minister for business, industry and resources, the now Treasurer, Eric Abetz MP, released draft enabling legislation for the stadium and provided a revised total cost estimate of $945 million. Again, this was part of warming up the Tasmanian people to expenditure on a stadium which seemed to be ever creeping up. Even when those of us of rational mind looked at the $945 million as a proposed cost for a very large stadium on a contaminated and constrained site like Macquarie Point, we understood that $945 million was likely to be a very conservative estimate, if not downright deceitful.

Then, May to September, so within the space of four months, the government announced another revised cost estimate of $1.13 billion. It was in September last year. Then we got, when the State Policies and Projects (Macquarie Point Precinct) Order was put to this place after it regrettably, with Labor's help, sailed through the lower House in December last year, we had the Premier committed to capping the state's contribution to the stadium at $875 million. We had correspondence exchanged between the Premier, the Treasurer and members of this place that made a commitment to cap the state's expenditure at $875 million. I understand why some

members who voted for the stadium order would like to think that they got a meaningful assurance out of government on costs, probity, oversight and the like. But I put to you, Mr President, that that assurance was meaningless. It had as much meaning and substance as every other promise the Tasmanian Premier or Treasurer or minister had made about what this stadium will cost and what the state's contribution will be. We've seen the sands shifting on this project since the very beginning, so why would anyone think they were telling the truth when they said $875 million? You can believe people with a good heart for the best of reasons, but it doesn't mean the people you're believing are telling the truth. It was simply, I think, disingenuous on the government's part to make that promise to this place. They knew it couldn't be kept; they knew it.

When we heard from the honourable member for Elwick that she quite rightly expects the government to stand by its word on costings, my question is, which word? Which statement at which point and to who? The letter that contained that promise on 4 December last year lacked substance, lacked integrity; it pointed to a P90 cost assessment that indicated the government, on the information available and its analyses, had a 90 per cent certainty that the cost of the stadium would be $1.13 billion and therefore on the basis of a P90 assessment - which it would never let this place see - it said it could make a concrete reassurance to this Council and certain members in this place that the state's expenditure, the expenditure of Tasmanian public funds, would be capped at $875 million.

Now we can see that that was simply a cynical attempt to buy votes in this place. It was. You make a promise to members of parliament who want to believe they're doing the right thing, doing the right thing by their communities; you make a promise that has all the dressings of a good faith argument, but no attachment to reality. Ever since then, we have seen the government wobbling around on stadium costs. We've seen the other place and this place seek some clarity on revised and updated costs. We've had the other place pass a motion that called on the government to present revised costings - a motion that acknowledged the conflict in the Middle East was part of accelerating increases of construction costs.

The government at the time had told the parliament, told the Tasmanian people, that they couldn't provide that information, denied the reality of the influence of the Middle East conflict on supply chain issues, and basically gave the middle finger to the House of Assembly. That's what they did, because the House of Assembly made a very clear resolution that it wanted to see revised costs.

I put it to you, Mr President, we cannot believe a single word this government says on stadium costings. Nada. None at all. They will say and do anything to skate through the political week, to take the heat off themselves. We should all be completely unsurprised if the contract for the stadium is not resolved until after parliament rises this year.

The member for Mersey asks a very good question on the costs, the likely cost of this stadium: where will it end? It's too late now, because the order has been passed by the parliament. We don't know where it will end. We do know that in AFL media circles, they're certainly pointing to a higher price tag than $1.13 billion. Common sense tells you, and it told us at the beginning of the invasion of Iran, common sense tells us that the price of this stadium, of its construction could not be fixed at $1.13 billion. That's why the Greens were so cynical about this purported P90 cost assessment - a 90 per cent probability, the government said, that costings would come in at $1.13 billion, and then subsequently when various arms of the parliament sought to get clarity on the actual costs and raised the issue of the Middle East

conflict with government, we had premiers and treasurers going, 'No, no. Our absolute certain cost estimate of this project is $1.13 billion. The state's contribution will be capped at $875 million.' More lies. Let's just call it what it is. More untruths.

It is very important that we have some measure of transparency on this project, and particularly at a time when 1700 state servants are going to be thrown on the scrap heap; where we're having more than $700 million cut out of the Health budget over the next four years; where there are cuts across all agencies. There are cuts to the Tasmanian fire and emergency services. There are cuts to our emergency responders, to our resilience and recovery unit.

There are cuts across the board, and part of the reason there are cuts across the board is that despite their personal self-belief, the conservatives in government are terrible economic managers. They really are. They're lousy economic managers, and while they trash budgets, they underfund our social infrastructure; and here we are, with a projected deficit. Last time I looked it was somewhere like $9 billion within the next 18 months to two years. Part of the reason that we're here and that this government is sacking people is that since 2014 it's mismanaged the budget. The other significant part of the reason that we are here, is that this Premier and this government attached us to the AFL and gave the AFL everything that they demanded, at the expense of what will be generations of Tasmanian people.

I just take a slight issue with a couple of things that have been said by previous contributors. I note Mr Edmunds has left the Chamber, and I haven't read the TT-Line annual report yet and do look forward to the briefing tomorrow. You can deflect from your failures to scrutinise government on the stadium by pointing to the TT-Line but I can't see the basis in logic that the TT-Line is a much more ghastly picture for the state than the Macquarie Point stadium, particularly the evidence that Martin Wallace, former Treasury secretary, gave through the Tasmanian Planning Commission process and the briefings that we had where he said, 'It is simply untenable that you'd saddle the state with that level of debt'.

On the member for Montgomery's contribution when he talks about 'we' agreeing to a $1.13 billion stadium - we didn't all agree to that. It is true that a majority of members in this place, particularly of the major parties, agreed to support the stadium order, but a number of us, on the evidence, decided in all good conscience we couldn't agree. I don't agree that we all, by sheer virtue of us being members of parliament, agreed to a $1.13 billion stadium. The Greens remain implacably opposed to this folly because we know what cost it will come at.

I am sure honourable members have had ongoing conversations within their communities with Tasmanians who are really worried about the social and economic cost of this project. They understand that it's about political choices, and when they see stories in the media of ambulances that don't arrive on time and a health system which is clearly struggling and already underfunded and about to be gutted even more, Tasmanians are able to draw those connections between political choices and social and economic consequences. I don't think any member of this place, particularly major party members of this place, should allow themselves to believe that because the order has been passed, this has broad community acceptance, because it doesn't.

In closing, of course, at the completion of the stadium project procurement process but before any contract is finalised and signed, this House should see the highest likely cost of total project construction based on the tenderer's bid and the proposed final contract terms. It is unlikely to be at $1.13 billion and we've already had that confirmed by the Treasurer and

Anne Beach from MPDC in sideways language at a recent press conference. Of course, the House should see the estimated state contribution component of the total project construction cost, whether the state contribution remains at $875 million or is a revised amount.

I just remind honourable members that, contrary to multiple statements made by government ministers and, in fact, the head of MPDC about likely cost blowouts and the impact of the Middle East crisis, we now have more softening up from government. We now have confirmation of what we all knew to be true. We've got Ms Anne Beach saying that cost pressures will play a part in the outcome, and she said to the media a week ago:

> We'll need to consider, as we go through this process, cost pressures that are in the market and the cost to build as at today.

I'll pause for a moment here. The normalisation of deviance - where we're simply expected to just accept after a year of asking questions about increased costs, where a GBE bureaucrat goes, 'Oh yeah, well, of course costs have gone up. Of course, costs have gone up, and partly they've gone up because of the war in the Middle East', as the House resolved and understood and as was denied by the Premier and the minister responsible for that time.

Then we've got the Premier, who said back in 2024 'not one red cent more' than $375 million, saying the final cost will be publicly revealed before the contract is signed. 'But when asked', ABC reports, 'whether he could promise the state's input would be limited to $875 million, as previously flagged, he repeatedly skirted the question'. 'We're working through a very rigorous process,' Mr Rockliff said. 'We're at stage one, and we're working through and continuing that to get to stage two and, of course, signing the contract. And I'm not going to detail costs - they are being, they continue to be, worked through'.

Well, how utterly galling. How galling. He expects that the Tasmanian people have the memory retention of a goldfish. Most Tasmanians will remember when he said two short years ago, '$375 million is the state's capped contribution and not one red cent more'. It is now half a billion dollars more than that and he still can't commit to $875 million.

We have been led down this path by a premier who was so desperate to get a team. He sold out this state, and he has been untruthful with the Tasmanian people about the true costs of this folly ever since he signed up to it. So, at a bare minimum, we should see those costs before they sign the contract. On that basis, of course we will support the motion.

[8.29 p.m.]

Ms ARMITAGE (Launceston) - Thank you, Mr President. I was looking to see if the Leader was going to get up but it didn't look like she was about to move. I didn't want to with her sore knee.

Ms Rattray - I thank the honourable member for her kindness.

Ms ARMITAGE - That's all right. I just have a very short contribution because I believe just about everything has actually been said. I do support this motion because I believe Tasmanians deserve transparency, accountability and responsible management of public money.

As was said, I think by the member for Hobart, when the Macquarie Point stadium was first announced in March 2022, the estimated cost was $750 million. The government repeatedly promised to cap its contribution at $375 million, with the Premier declaring in February 2024, as was said, 'not one red cent more'. Yet by September 2025, the estimated total cost had risen to $1.13 billion while the proposed state government contribution had increased to $875 million. These significant changes, to my mind, raise legitimate questions about the project's financial management and the commitments made to Tasmanian taxpayers. With ongoing global uncertainty and, as has been mentioned, the war in the Middle East, and the possibility of further cost increases, we have to ensure that the public is fully informed about the final cost, borrowing expenses and any additional funding requirements.

It's also important, I think, to emphasise the government's commitment that any additional funding must be brought before the parliament through an appropriation or supplementary appropriation bill to ensure proper scrutiny and accountability. To me, supporting the motion is about ensuring that major public projects are managed transparently, that financial commitments are clearly explained, and that parliament can hold the government accountable for every additional dollar of taxpayers' money. For these reasons, I commend the motion before the House.

Ms RATTRAY (McIntyre - Leader for the Government in the Legislative Council) - The government acknowledges the member for Nelson's motion and firstly seeks to provide clarification in relation to the Public Works Committee and the procurement process. The Macquarie Point Development Corporation does not fall within its scope, and as per section 15(3) of the *Public Works Committee Act 1914*. In addition, the *Public Works Committee Act 1914* allows for works to commence authorised by parliament under section 16(1). In the case of the Macquarie Point stadium project, parliament approved the project through the State Policies and Projects (Macquarie Point Precinct) Order 2025, and we've heard quite a bit about that in previous contributions.

The procurement process for the stadium contractor remains underway and is required to determine the final contract price, which is a key element of the overarching project budget. The procurement process continues until the contract is signed, and the cost of the contract, and therefore project cost, can change until the contract is in place. The government has previously responded to a similar motion in the House of Assembly and sought advice from the Macquarie Point Development Corporation before doing so. The advice received by the minister from MPDC board chair Kim Evans on 4 August 2026 outlines the risks of tabling a cost estimate prior to the procurement process being completed.

As members may be aware, on Thursday 15 October 2026, the government announced that the request-for-tender process for the main contractor has moved to stage 2 of the procurement process, with Watpac Constructions nominated as the preferred tenderer. The first stage of the assessment considered the capacity and capability of the tenderers, their understanding of the project, economic and social benefits for the state and, importantly, value for money. While this is a significant step in the process, the second stage of the request for tender process continues to be progressed, which includes a focus on resolving the contract price.

As the honourable member for Nelson noted, there are cost pressures in the current market - and that was backed up by other members - which are putting pressure on construction budgets. As the procurement process remains underway, negotiations need to continue around

the contract risks, requirements and value management opportunities. Until these are resolved, impacts on the cost to deliver the project are not at a point where the corporation has requested a change to the approved project parameters, which include costs.

The procurement process commenced promptly after the decision was made by the parliament for the project to proceed and has continued on the timeline and process outlined. That is, an expression of interest process was undertaken, followed by a two-stage request for tender, and work continues to have a contract in place by the end of the year. That timeline has not changed. The government has made the commitment that if the contract cost exceeds $1.13 billion, this will be shared promptly with the community as soon as it can be so shared. A commitment has also been made by the government that any additional funding required will be pursued by requesting additional contributions from the Australian Government, the AFL and Cricket Australia. There is extensive governance in place for the project, including parliamentary scrutiny through the Public Accounts Committee, and I understand the corporation is due to appear before that committee again before a contract is signed.

The government has previously set out the risks of disclosing cost-estimate data while in an active procurement process. These risks remain and include value for money and probity. Until the procurement process is finalised, the contract price is not agreed. Announcing a price that is subject to change and negotiation risks not achieving the best value-for-money outcome. Probity arises from releasing pricing information during a live process, which is inconsistent with best practice. It is important that it protects the integrity of the procurement process for this project and the precedent set for others. Releasing a revised estimate before completion of the evaluation process undermines the process and is inconsistent with the Treasurer's Instruction PF-1 - Procurement Principles, including AS4120-1994 Code of Tendering.

The government has already made a commitment that updates will be provided if the scope, timeline or cost of the project is impacted as a consequence of the procurement process. The procurement process remains live, and the government remains focused on appointing a contractor in compliance with the parliament-approved order by the end of the year. The government has also made commitments to the parliament in terms of how any cost escalations will be approached, and that remains the government's intention.

Mr President, before I close, I'd just like to add something. I know that members have very strong views about this particular project, but it is disappointing to hear a member of this place criticise the CEO of the MPDC in the way that happened tonight and in the language that was used. The corporation's CEO is a highly respected and accomplished professional and I believe doesn't deserve to be verballed that way.

[8.38 p.m.]

Ms FORREST (Murchison) - Mr President, I just want to go through a few points that have been made. I might be jumping around a little bit in relation to the motion, but in broad terms, this motion is entirely supportable. I do have one concern about it, which I'll come to, but I think it's important to note, in the context of what other members have talked about, this state is in real financial trouble. Our government businesses aren't performing, they aren't delivering; they are costing far more, by and large, some more so than others, but we keep getting told things are all on track now; except, if we're to take any notice of the Auditor-General's report today, which we absolutely must, it's a little bit of a stretch to suggest that. We're seeing the guts cut out of the State Service and the Fiscal Sustainability Report by our own Treasury completely ignored in that it was very clear that you can't just pull one lever

to fix the problem. In pulling one lever to fix the problem, removing the stadium from the picture won't fix the problem either, but it may give some other options. That's not what this motion's about. I just want to be really clear that in the context of this, this is just one of the really serious financial situations and problems we face in this state. Let's make no mistake about it.

We all know it; there have been escalating costs around the world because of a variety of factors. It started with COVID, it continued with the Ukraine War, and then it was exacerbated with the Middle East War, and that continues. It's not getting much better. At this stage, it will be interesting to see what happens in the Israeli elections, which must be happening pretty much now or very soon. We can absolutely see with great clarity the increasing costs associated with the *Spirit of Tasmania* replacement program. We saw the impact of the Ukraine War very clearly writ large with the extra €50 million we had to pay for those two vessels. That was partly the COVID costing process. We did have a contract with a shipbuilder that went broke. There was no financial loss as a result of that, but then we had to go back to find a shipbuilder. We got in the queue and then the prime minister at the time, Scott Morrison, instructed the premier of the state at the time, Peter Gutwein, to go back out and see if we could build them in Australia, which was clearly not possible because they'd already done that and said no. Anyway, around we went, we lost our slot in the queue, so we ended up back in the queue with the same shipbuilder and then before they could really get started, the Ukraine War started and the steel factory was bombed, and there you go.

That's just a little potted history of why that went up so much, and then we've seen the cost escalation associated with the Devonport berth. Now, part of that's because it was an absolute nonsense, the first proposal that was put up, but there have been other costs associated with transport costs and building material costs. The subsequent cost estimate for that has proven to be fairly correct, but I think by this stage we had people who knew what they were doing in charge in terms of project management and delivering a project at that scale. The reality is, global conditions haven't improved, so costs are not going to go down. There's every chance they'll continue to escalate, and we know how much that hits the average Tasmanian with the cost-of-living pressures if the interest rates go up again because of the inflationary pressures that we see around the globe.

What we see here with this particular project won't be cheaper, it's likely to be more. How much more is the question. I agree with the member for Pembroke, the sooner this is out, the sooner we can look at what the hell do we do about this. And saying, as the Leader did on behalf of the government, that we'll go to Cricket Tasmania and we'll go back to the AFL - good luck with that. We'll go here, we'll go there, we'll go and ask the Australian Government, we'll go and do all these things, but they can all say no and they probably will, and then what? We plant a money tree. There's a good idea. Do you have the seeds? I'll help you dig the hole.

It's really clear we need to have an indication of what we're dealing with here as early as possible. I can't remember which member it was. One member stated that when asked during the debate on the order and the agreements made with the member for Elwick and the former member for Huon that any additional money that had to be appropriated would be in a supplementary appropriation or some other form that came through parliament. Well, it'll just be buried in the next budget because by the time we get to this, that's where it'll be. So, what are we going to do? Block the budget? Force another election? Not us, the other place. Is that what we're going to do? That'll be the option if it's blown right out of the water. And then we'll also see - and this is my little prediction for those who want it - a really tight rein around what

is considered a stadium cost. Anything that's not immediately on, attached to, physically part of the stadium will not be considered a stadium cost; it'll all be shunted over into MPDC or some other avenue so it won't be counted as a stadium cost. I think what I need to see and what the people I represent and most of the people of Tasmania I think really want to see is: what is the total cost of this? What are we willing to pay to deliver this facility, notionally to secure the team?

On that point, some people raise great concern that the AFL will pull the team. It's gone too far for that. We've been through the draft, we've been through a whole range of processes that you can't - well, it would cause chaos in the AFL if they tried to pull it out now because these sorts of processes happen a year or two in advance. I don't know all the ins and outs of the AFL in terms of how that all works. Some people probably do in this Chamber, how the draft works and how those trading periods work and all that sort of stuff - but they're not done right before you start the season. All the special draft picks we have been granted, they're already in the tube. Anyway, that's another point. I think there's this fear that we perhaps - anyway, the only way we're going to test it is to stand our ground. But anyway, there you go.

If scrutiny is the focus here, and I agree it absolutely should be, this motion should be supported, but I'm not sure it'll deliver it. The reason I say that is when we go to part (5) of the motion, that is the formal request to the government, it says:

> (5) Formally requests the Government, at the completion of the stadium project procurement process but prior to the formal signing or completion of the contract process with any successful tenderer, to provide to this House:
>
> (a) The highest likely cost of total project construction based on the successful tenderer's bid and the proposed final contract terms, whether it remains $1.13 billion or is a revised amount; and
>
> (b) The estimated state contribution component of the total project construction cost as referred to in (5)(a), whether the state contribution remains $875 million or is a revised amount.

Well, the Premier said it won't be a revised amount, so I don't know why we need that there, to be frank, but anyway. You're opening the door, member for Nelson. They'd say, 'Oh well, here's the revised amount' - you foresaw that.

The reality is the completion of a tender process has always been set for December this year. Now, if this House wants a chance to consider it by providing it to the parliament, which I presume means tabling in parliament with an opportunity for scrutiny, we sit one week on our own without the other in early December. But what do you think is going to happen? Is it going to be tabled by then and finalised and ticked off by then or not? When are the really contentious pieces of legislation, like the matters put out for public consultation? That's usually about 15 December or a bit later. We're not here then. There'll be no opportunity for scrutiny and of course they're not going to hold off signing the contract until who knows when we sit next year, because we still don't know.

Ms O'Connor - It's weird.

Ms FORREST - Maybe the Leader could tell us when we're proposing to sit next year?

Ms O'Connor - We're in October and we haven't seen the calendar. Weird. Shocking.

Ms FORREST - Who would know? We might not be sitting until May. Who would know? In any event, I don't think the signing of the deal will be held off until we're back with some time to scrutinise it. I think we need to demand - if you want to demand to see it, which I think we should have every right to in whatever form, with whatever requirements necessary to see it so we know whether we need to bring something on for debate in the time we've got available, which is not much more time this year.

Now, the Premier - and I haven't got his words in front of me - but it was along the lines that he commits to releasing it to the people as soon as he's able to. Is that what he said? Something like that.

Ms Webb - No, he just said before the contract is signed.

Ms FORREST - Before the contract's signed? Well, hello. Let me provide example (a) over here, the whole-of-state business case for Marinus Project. Oh, and we're going to get 30 days to look at that. Oh yes, some election got in the way, dear, oh dear. It could have been held off, but we were told, the public were told we would have 30 days, at least, to look at that deal before it was signed. What happened? It was signed during the caretaker period, committing us to a massive infrastructure project. When you look at Hydro Tasmania's results in the Auditor-General's report today - their annual report is not published yet, it will probably be by Thursday, no doubt, in this House. Well, it had better be because it's required to be. But obviously it's been done, because the Auditor-General has reported on it. Things are not looking all that bright in Hydro this year either. This is the one that's going to save the state. So, I don't have a great deal of comfort or ability to trust the word of the Premier or this government on that.

Ms O'Connor - On much, really.

Ms FORREST - I know that another member asked, what does it actually mean to be 'provided to parliament'? I know that there's a bit of ambiguity around when the completion of that process will occur and thus make it possible. I mean, to meet this, the government should support it, they really should, because then they can just not finalise the arrangements until whatever date the Friday after we sit last is. They could easily do that. Well, it can't be tabled until sometime next year, who would know when? Anyway, here we are, nearly November.

I'm happy to support the motion, but I just think there's so many - and I absolutely commend the member for Nelson for the intent and the process, but I think that the government won't even support something that they can easily manage without even compromising anything, when they really should be providing the parliament, and the people of Tasmania through the parliament, an opportunity to understand what this looks like now. There's been a whole heap of things that have come out during the process, including the information that came to light today about the payment for the non-successful tenderer. The process around that looks a bit dodgy, but anyway, that's another thing for PAC to look at.

Ms O'Connor - It's only public money.

Ms FORREST - Yes, and what else could we spend it on? I'll be supporting the motion, but I just ask if the member for Nelson can address for us some of those matters perhaps - probably not that it would have done any better with a motion, even if you hadn't put in an order to table it. I appreciate the opportunity to speak on this because I think it's really important that we keep it in the forefront of our minds, particularly at a time when there's so much financial pressure on this state and a real lack of a plan.

[8.53 p.m.]

Ms WEBB (Nelson) - Thank you, Mr President, and my thanks to members for contributions on this motion. I've really appreciated hearing people express their views on it, and I think it's particularly telling of the range of members who have spoken on the motion. There was all manner of variation in views on the stadium itself and the project, and all manner of ways that people voted and different circumstances around that.

Yet, there's very broad support for this motion being expressed. That's quite telling, and it was certainly my intention in drafting the motion to try to make it a reasonable, achievable and supportable motion, because I think it is a very reasonable and accountable requirement to have the government provide an update on totally expected costs of the stadium to this Chamber, or to the parliament, for scrutiny purposes. This seems to have certainly been the thing that struck a chord with most members as being reasonable, and in fact a core piece of work for the parliament of Tasmania, and for this Chamber, to do. It's not about whether or not you support the stadium - we know that there's a variety of views amongst us on that - it's about whether there's a role for this Chamber, for the parliament, to play now on behalf of the Tasmanian community as this project goes forward. That's not about support or otherwise for the stadium, it's about responsible financial management for the state and the role that this Chamber can play in attempting to deliver that for our constituents and our communities. I won't speak for too long, but I will address a couple of those matters that were raised and I won't necessarily have definitive answers for people that are as clear-cut as people may like, but I think it's an interesting conversation to have.

First, on the terminology that I have in the request at the end of the motion about 'provide to this House' and then the two elements of what is being requested to provide to this House. My interpretation of that, and I think from the contributions - my contribution and other contributions made in this Chamber - the intent is very clear that that information be provided to this House in a manner and a time that allows for there to be scrutiny undertaken of that information by this Chamber, by the parliament broadly. Typically, that would mean tabling because then we would be able to undertake scrutiny in an open and transparent manner ourselves as elected representatives here. My core expectation is that 'provide to this House' means tabling with this Chamber while we're sitting at a time and in a way that means we can then undertake scrutiny.

Having said that, what that terminology means in this motion, ultimately, in holding the government to account for it, should the motion pass, which it looks favourable that it may, if this motion passes and this Chamber wants to hold the government to account for what it's requesting, it's up to the Chamber to decide what it means to 'provide to this House'. If the government were to come to this Chamber with a suggested course of action about how it would like to undertake the request that's been made of it to provide that information to this Chamber, the Chamber could then consider and, as a Chamber, decide whether that's an

appropriate way to meet the request in the motion or not. The Chamber is the master of its own destiny, so ultimately, it will judge whether or not the government has complied with this motion if it passes and that request is made through the motion to the government. Certainly, my expectation, as I said, is very clearly that 'provide to the House' would be an open, transparent, accountable, public way, like tabling. If other ways are contemplated by the government or by this Chamber, that's a matter for the Chamber to deal with down the track once it comes to that.

That probably ties in a little bit with the member for Murchison's comments. I don't know that there's a way that we could have written this motion that actually delivers the intended outcome. The important matter here - and certainly when I was preparing the motion - is to retain focus on the intent of the motion, which has been articulated to the government incredibly clearly in this Chamber by virtually everybody who's got up to speak on it. The intent is that this updated expected total cost for the stadium be provided to us here in this Chamber as representatives of the Tasmanian people in a manner and in a time by which we can then provide scrutiny of that on behalf of our constituents and communities. That's the intent of the motion. It's what we have each discussed as we've made contributions on it. The government cannot at any stage pretend that that isn't the clear intent of the motion. Should the motion pass, if the government were to look to try to wiggle out on a technicality - for example, if the government were to table something in this Chamber on the afternoon of Thursday, whatever the last Thursday is, 3 December - that wouldn't be complying with the intent of this motion and would clearly be against what had been requested by the Chamber. If the government were to try to find a way to not deliver on the request through any other sort of technicality like that, I think that would be a very damning indictment and bad faith of the government to do that. Instead, what's available to the government, and if the government has carefully listened to the contributions made in this Chamber on this motion, I'd advise it to do this. The government could look for a way to best comply with this motion. It's available to the government, if this motion passes, to take the motion on good faith and look for a way to comply with the intent of the motion, given the circumstances that it finds itself in.

Ms Forrest - I love your optimism.

Ms WEBB - Well, this is a week in which I'm trying to be optimistic about standards in politics and about politicians acting in the public interest and not political self-interest. I'm going to aim for a high expectation here, member for Murchison, and I encourage our whole Chamber to aim for a high expectation of the government and encourage the government to see this as an opportunity to meet a high expectation here.

So, if this motion passes now, I invite the government and strongly encourage the government to look for a way to best comply with the intent of the motion and come back to the Chamber in good faith with that and if that's what eventuates, I'll be very impressed and congratulate the government for doing that. It would be a very good way to build credibility. It would be a very good way to deliver higher public trust in the way the government works. It would be a very good way to set a new tone for how this project moves forward from here and the continuing relationship of the parliament to the government in relation to this project. That's a really positive opportunity right there.

On that note, thank you again to members for their contributions on the motion. I appreciate that it's been in the evening of a long day but I think, as I said, I feel quite heartened and it was my intent in bringing the motion to try to leave space for there to be some common

ground in it that we could come around, but also progress our role and our responsibilities, and that feels to me like that's what's happened, so I appreciate that from members and I commend the motion to the Chamber.

Motion agreed to.

MOTION

Interim Report of the Joint Select Committee on Energy Matters (No. 17 of 2026) Inquiry into Energy Prices and Related Matters in Tasmania - Consideration and Noting

[9.03 p.m.]

Ms FORREST (Murchison) - Mr President, because of the hour, I only intend to move this motion tonight. I have indicated to the Minister for Education that I won't proceed with that. I'm just conscious there is a lot of private members' business to get through. I just hope that we can perhaps collaborate to get through some of the things that have been sitting around for a while in future, that's all, which means I won't do the Expression of Interest in Tourism either.

Madam Acting President, I move -

> That the Interim Report of the Joint Select Committee on Energy Matters Inquiry into Energy Prices and Related Matters in Tasmania, Paper No. 17 of 2026, be considered and noted.

This has been a long and often interrupted process, and this interim report is intended to report on evidence received up to the third early election in 2025. Matters further considered relate to matters during the election period, in particular, related to the whole-of-state business case, and the final investment decision for Marinus Link will be covered in an upcoming report. Whilst this is an interim report, it's not a minor one. It contains 111 findings and six recommendations, and it draws on a body of evidence gathered over almost two years.

It's worth reminding members of how we got here, because the history of this inquiry says something about how difficult it's been to give these matters the sustained attention they deserve. This work began in April 2023 with the Government Administration Committee A Inquiry into Energy Prices. The proposal at the time - relatively newly elected honourable member for Pembroke - I think it was a commitment you'd made to establish that inquiry into energy prices.

Mr Edmunds - Into the prices, yes.

Ms FORREST - A Joint Select Committee on Energy Matters was then established in October 2023, originating in the other place. Both lapsed when parliament was prorogued in February 2024. The motion was moved by the former member for Lyons, who lost his seat at that election.

In May 2024, following the election, I moved in this place to re-establish the two inquiries as one joint committee, so I think this is the context of how the two got wrapped together. This

seemed to make the most sense, and many of those who had made extensive submissions to either or both inquiries did not wish to see their input lapse without meaningful scrutiny and consideration. I did get many enquiries when all that was happening, Madam Acting President, from people who put a lot of time and effort into their submissions, so it was a commitment I made that I would attempt at least to reconvene the committee, but join them together to try to avoid duplication of effort.

The House of Assembly agreed to that proposal in June 2024, and then the joint committee, the Energy Matters Committee, which this is the report of, received 108 submissions, held nine public hearings in Hobart and Launceston, and undertook site visits across the state in February 2024, October 2024 and March 2025. It was a really interesting and good experience to go out and visit many of the places, particularly in the remote parts of the state. I got to take a bit of a cook's tour around the west coast and north-west coast. We went up and had a meeting at the top of Whaleback Ridge, which would just about blow your head off the day we were there - the perfect site for a nice wind farm up there. It was really interesting for members to go to some of the hydrogeneration facilities, to the proposed wind farm sites and to visit Tarraleah as well to look at what Hydro were working on and what the proposal was for the Tarraleah redevelopment. Then, after we'd done that, in March 2025 was the last visit we undertook.

On 11 June 2025, the House of Assembly dissolved again for the second time during this inquiry and the committee lapsed again before it could report. The committee was re-established in this, the 52nd Parliament, in September 2025. In its first meeting in October 2025, we resolved to publish an interim report on the evidence received up to and including 11 June 2025 - that was when the election was called. This was a point in time when we thought the information was going to become dated, and we thought it was appropriate to report on the matters to date and then for a subsequent report to look at the matters related to the whole-of-state business case and final investment decision around Marinus Link.

As I indicated, the decision was deliberate for more than 100 individuals and organisations that had taken a lot of time to make submissions and they appeared before us, some more than once, and that evidence does deserve to be reported on. This interim report deals with evidence taken before that election. It does not deal with the government's final investment decision on Project Marinus or the release of the redacted whole-of-state business case, a rather significant development since that date. There have been even further developments in this energy space, as I'm sure members are aware of, but they will be subject to a subsequent report. Where this report speaks about Marinus, it speaks about evidence as it stood before the final investment decision was made, and members should read it in that light because a lot of water has gone under the bridge since that decision.

I want to start where most Tasmanians start: with their power bill. I think it was really critical that we did report on these matters around the energy prices that customers are facing, which was the original impetus for this inquiry because it was back then and it still is a major contributor to household costs and cost-of-living pressures.

We often hear that Tasmania has the lowest regulated electricity prices in the country. The Minister for Energy and Renewables made that claim to the committee. The committee found that claim is technically narrow and does not reflect the lived experience of Tasmanians, particularly those living in energy poverty. This is not a criticism of the Economic Regulator's work. The Office of the Tasmanian Economic Regulator (OTTER) explained to us that it

compares close to 400 tariffs across the country. It does find Tasmania among the cheapest for regulated tariffs at Tasmanian consumption levels. As TasCOSS pointed out, there are market offers in other jurisdictions that are lower than our regulated prices. There are over 400 tariffs across the country. We have to be honest and factual with what we are saying.

Even more importantly even than that is that a price is not a bill. Tasmanian households use more electricity than mainland households. We have a cold climate, an ageing and poorly insulated housing stock, a heavy reliance on electric heating and very little household gas. A low price per unit multiplied by high consumption still produces a high bill. TasCOSS put it bluntly to the committee: Tasmanians have among the most expensive electricity bills in the country. It's just as well we have a lower tariff than many others, but it still doesn't mean our bills are lower than other customers' in other parts of this country.

The evidence before the committee estimated that approximately 50,000 Tasmanian households are experiencing energy poverty. That means they cannot afford enough energy to maintain a decent standard of living and good health. That's a lot of Tasmanian households. That's households, not individuals. More than one person lives in many of those homes. This is the lived reality for many Tasmanians in a state built on more than a century of hydroelectric development. That should give us all pause, especially when we see what has occurred more recently with energy prices and cost-of-living pressures more generally. Many causes are well outside of this government's control, I acknowledge.

It's also worth understanding how little of the price in the bill is in our direct control as customers. The regulator told us that network charges make up around 42 per cent of the regulated price set by the Australian Energy Regulator. Wholesale energy prices make up around 32 per cent. Market, metering and renewable scheme costs make up around 14 per cent, and the Tasmanian regulator has real discretion only over about 12 per cent. If you want to criticise our regulator, remember they have only have control over 12 per cent, or are in any power to adjust that. Most of it is done externally, particularly by the AER with the network charges. This is important because it tells us where the levers to pull really are to reduce power bill prices for customers.

The committee found that the most effective long-term lever for low-income households is not a one-off rebate. It is reducing how much energy they need to buy in the first place. The committee found that current concession arrangements do not adequately address the underlying causes of high energy costs, particularly for renters. We also found that poorly targeted rebates have provided support to higher-income households. Renters are in a particularly difficult position. They cannot install insulation. They cannot replace an inefficient heater. They cannot put solar panels on the roof they do not own. They carry the cost of decisions they have no power to make.

This is why the first of our four recommendations focuses on households. The committee recommends that the government:

(1) Reform electricity concession arrangements to target and better support vulnerable households from cost increases.

We don't need broad sweeping rebates. We need targeted support.

(2) Review the legislation on minimum energy efficiency standards for rental properties so they meet contemporary standards.

I do acknowledge that work has been going on in this space, but there is still more that needs to be done because we still have so many older homes in the rental market that add to this burden.

(3) Work with the Australian Government with ongoing dedicated programs to improve the energy efficiency of public and private rentals, including minimum insulation and efficient fixed heating suited to the size of the dwelling.

I'm sure that all of us have had constituents come into our offices who are in a rental property, either public or private, often public, who have one heater in a house that's three-bedroom. It's probably in the loungeroom or it may be in the hallway, and it is inadequate to heat the whole house, and then you get problems with mould and condensation. We know. I'm sure other people get them. I certainly get them in my electorate.

(4) Work with the Australian Government on a targeted strategy to substantially increase rooftop solar and battery uptake, including in public housing.

That's another area that I think could really do with some attention. This is a matter the energy committee continues to look at with the impact of solar generation as opposed to new wind and other variable renewables. The beauty about solar is that the rooftops are already there on sheds, buildings, and houses - the land is already utilised. It's not pristine land that's not being used for anything. It's already been disturbed and is used, so why don't we use it to its maximum capacity? These are practical, achievable measures and they should make a measurable difference to people who are right now choosing between heating and eating, or perhaps getting their medicine.

I will now make some comments from the report on the structure of our market. Hydro Tasmania is a remarkable asset. More than 30 power stations, around 50 major dams, and a storage capacity larger than our entire annual electricity consumption, depending on the water storage at the time, perhaps that may be the case, but the capacity is certainly very large. No other jurisdiction in the National Electricity Market can match that. But the committee also heard during the period we collected evidence that Hydro's scale has given it the ability to set the price in Tasmania much of the time. This may not be so much the case now with the regulation of Basslink. Up until 1 July this year, the Basslink has not been regulated. It's been under two different arrangements the two years prior to that - one with Hydro calling the shots and the most recent year with APA calling the shots - but now it's regulated and the Australian Energy Market Operator calls the shots now in terms of how it operates pretty much when they assess all the bids that come in. That will probably change.

The committee heard Hydro is involved in almost all power purchase agreements in this state. It is in effect the market maker both buying and selling on terms that are favourable to it, which is fine if you want to make money for us, but it can be not so fine for those who have to pay. New developers told us this makes it hard to secure the offtake agreements they need to finance projects. If anyone was watching the energy committee hearing the other day, you would have seen a bit of a shift in that approach. That is available online if you want to watch

and see what was said. The committee found that the dual obligation of our state-owned energy businesses creates a real tension. Hydro is required to maximise returns to the government. It's also expected to keep power prices as low as possible for Tasmanians. These two objectives do not always point in the same direction. They can be a real tension. It's not a new tension, but this is one that has become sharper as the system changes.

The committee noted that retail electricity prices rose by approximately 30 per cent in the five years to 2023, despite all our renewable strengths. Over the decade, regulated prices rose about 16 per cent in nominal terms, which is a real-terms reduction. Both things are true and do need to be understood. Professor Richard Eccleston from UTAS offered the committee a memorable analogy. He likened our hydro system to a classic car. Very valuable, very nice to have, but not something you'd drive to work in every day. The point is that cheaper wind and solar should do more of the everyday work, so the water is safe for when it's most valuable. At the time we were getting some of this evidence, the water storages were not what they are now. So, it's slightly different circumstances now in terms of the water storages.

Energy security was a constant thread through our evidence. We currently have a single interconnector; Basslink has the capacity of around 500 megawatts and members, I'm sure, will remember the 2015-16 crisis when the six-month Basslink outage coincided with drought and low storages. Diesel generators were shipped in, and the gas station was restarted - it must have been taken out of mothballs - and major energy users were asked to curtail. Now, there are provisions in their contracts to do that but, still, they were serious times. The 2023-24 year recorded the lowest inflows since records began in 1997-98, so, it was a particularly dry period. I do remember being in a marquee in Burnie on the day the drought broke after we got all the diesel generators in place with Bryan Green, who was the minister for Energy at the time, and the marquee flooded. It was quite welcome but everybody was standing in the water.

Hydro reduced hydrogeneration at this time by about 20 per cent. We imported 2570 gigawatt hours through Basslink and generated 440 gigawatt hours from gas, the most since 2018-19. Storages were managed down close to the prudent storage level; then, in August 2024, a storm left more than 47,000 customers without power, many in my electorate on the north-west coast, including my own home for some weeks, and it was weeks. I live in town. It was two weeks. Some were longer when you got out of bed. TasNetworks paid my power bill that year because there was more than that outage for us. We were on a very poor line, and they paid me several cheques that year which effectively covered almost my whole power bill that year. They've done some work since on that line. We haven't had a power outage now for probably six to 12 months, maybe six months, I reckon. Well, not that I've been home to notice, Mr President. Maybe it's been out and I haven't been home to notice.

One of the ones that really upset people the most was an extended outage on Christmas Eve, and there are a lot of families around. This is just in my area, just in this little bit, I think we are about 140 customers. There are many young families in this area. They're all getting ready with Christmas food in the fridge, all that sort of stuff. So, it was a pretty difficult time, and those things cost money to repair. It's a huge cost, the cost of paying all those customers the amount of rebates they would have had, and I'm just one. I know how much I got. Every other customer in that area would have been getting similar payments.

The committee found that until our second interconnector is operating or more on-island renewable generation is online, our energy security will remain dependent on Basslink and on sufficient water and storage. Since then, as I said, we've seen our water storage at almost record

high levels. We are facing a Super El Niño which will, no doubt, have serious impacts, particularly until the extra online renewable generation is constructed or the second interconnector, potentially.

Also, climate change is making dry sequences more likely, so, diversifying our generation in Tasmania is essential.

The committee also noted that measured electricity consumption on mainland Tasmania has been relatively flat for five years, between about 10,700 and 11,200 gigawatt hours. The regulator attributed part of this to rooftop solar used behind the meter.

You would have thought, with the population increasing somewhat over that time and new business and industry starting up, it would have actually increased, but we don't know how much is generated behind the meter and consumed before it gets beyond the property, but it is appearing to have a bigger impact. It is really impossible to know what electricity consumption is in the state, because you don't measure what's behind the meter.

Electricity meets only around 40 per cent of our total final energy use; despite that, as transport and industry-electrified demand will grow, there's still a lot of reliance on diesel and gas et cetera. Grange Resources, a company in my electorate, alone is contemplating going from 34 megawatts of electricity to more than 200 megawatts. That's a huge step up in the decarbonisation of their operations, so, we need to plan for that growth honestly rather than assume it.

This report is not only a catalogue of the challenges. The committee also heard a great deal about opportunity. The standout finding for me concerns rooftop solar. Tasmania has by far the lowest share of rooftop solar relative to electricity demand of any region in the National Electricity Market: approximately 3.3 per cent. South Australia is at 26 per cent and Victoria is at 11.8 per cent, and our sun is just as good. We are further south, but solar panels can generate a significant amount of energy. The CSIRO estimates rooftop solar is the lowest cost source of new electricity generation, at around $50 to $75 per megawatt hour. Tasmania has an advantage no other region has: when the sun is shining, Hydro can save its water for when it's needed.

Professor Bruce Mountain told the committee that wider rooftop solar would bring Tasmanian prices down, as it has in Victoria, without the extra cost of firming that the other states face. Some analysis put to us suggested that a dollar of public support for rooftop solar would deliver many times more clean energy than the same dollar amount spent on Battery of the Nation or Marinus Link.

To be realistic, we need to acknowledge that rooftop solar is seasonal and daytime weighted. It will not keep the lights on on a still winter evening. Hydro, wind, storage, including battery storage, flexible demand and interconnection are still needed. The committee found that rooftop solar is among the quickest, cheapest and least disruptive ways to add renewable generation in this state. As a state, we are leaving that opportunity largely untouched; although there is an expansion, it's still at nowhere near the rate of other jurisdictions.

The committee also heard about larger-scale opportunities. Hydro's Tarraleah redevelopment will deliver up to 190 megawatts of flexible capacity and around 30 per cent more energy from the same water. There's a lot of hurdles for that project to get through. It still

needs to come through this place at some stage. The preliminary cost estimate was $1.05 billion with upward pressure. That was a while ago, I'd imagine that would be more.

The proposed and more recently deemed prospective Lake Cethana pumped hydro project could possibly deliver 750 megawatts off 20-hour storage. Hydro's early modelling indicates Cethana may not require Marinus stage 2 to be commercially viable. But there is a long way to go for this project and as we know, in the budget papers, it was taken out as a risk because it's nowhere near advanced enough to be included.

Private developers have an important role if we are to reach the 200 per cent renewable energy target. TasRex, for example, told us of a plan for up to 5 gigawatts of new capacity, beginning with a 288-megawatt solar farm near Cressy. These projects seem to take a very long time to progress and are still not operational.

Emerging industries - green methanol, green hydrogen, advanced manufacturing, even high-performance computing - use a flexible load - now called data centres, probably - and are attracted to Tasmania precisely because of our renewable credentials. There will be more to say about these projects in a subsequent report, so I won't go into that now.

I do note that virtual power plants and flexible industrial loads could help stabilise the grid and soak up surplus renewable energy. These opportunities don't deliver themselves and, I think many would agree, take a long time and face many barriers. Private projects face complex approvals, limited transmission in the best resource areas and uncertainty about offtake, and they face a challenge the committee heard about repeatedly: securing a social licence. Social licence - we easily throw that around, but we need to be really clear about what we mean. When I spoke at a recent Tasmanian Minerals and Energy Council conference, I did make the point that obtaining a social licence should never be seen as a PR problem. Social licence is almost certainly not just a box to tick; it is earned through early, honest and respectful engagement.

I know there are projects being floated around. The committee also heard from the Office of the Coordinator-General the other day where we were told of a number of approaches on various renewable energy, all new load, particularly data centres or AI infrastructure. The community members get very concerned when they fear that these projects are going to be substantially progressed before they even get a whiff of it. I think if you really want a social licence, you've got to get out early, be honest and respectfully engage with the community.

Project Marinus was the most contested issue before the committee, and I want to be measured about it because the committee's fuller assessment will come in a subsequent report. The evidence before 11 June 2025, before that election was called, revealed two fundamentally conflicting narratives. On one side the government, Marinus Link Pty Ltd, Hydro Tasmania, Tasmania Networks and the business community argued that Marinus is critical infrastructure. They said it will improve energy security, unlock new renewable generation and put downward pressure on prices. Modelling by FTI Consulting commissioned by Marinus Link projected net savings of $25 to $36 a year, for a typical residential customer from Stage One.

On the other side, independent analysts, consumer advocates, major industrial users and community representatives raised serious concerns. Their concern was that the main benefits would flow to mainland customers and to private generators, while Tasmanians bear a significant share of the costs. The committee found that the FTI modelling depends on

significant assumptions about new generation coming online and future market conditions. The committee will have more to say about this and related matters in a subsequent report, so I won't go any further on that one now.

TasNetworks' own modelling projected that the North West Transmission Developments Stage One would increase network charges by about 3.5 per cent for residential and small business customers, and about 15.6 per cent for major industrial customers by 2031-32. That is before any wholesale price reduction. Grange Resources gave evidence of a transmission cost increase of up to 29.6 per cent, based on information TasNetworks had provided it. That's almost a 30 per cent increase in the network charge. You know how Grange's power bill is? Millions of dollars, millions - 30 per cent of millions is lots more millions. It is no wonder they're a bit concerned.

The committee found that the basis for Tasmania's 27.6 per cent share of regulated revenue recovery was not clearly explained. Members should note this share is distinct from Tasmania's equity contribution to this construction.

The public interest question here is a simple one: do the projected Tasmanian benefits and the consumer protections in place justify Tasmanian customers paying that share of the regulated costs? Concessional financing through the Clean Energy Finance Corporation matters a great deal here. The government estimated it would reduce the revenue to be recovered from customers from at least 60 per cent, compared with commercial finance. It reduces the impact on Tasmanians, but it doesn't eliminate it. Again, we'll have more to say on this, because a lot more came out with the signing of the FID and the acceptance of the whole-of-state business case.

History often offers us a caution. After Basslink was commissioned, Tasmanian residential electricity prices grew faster than any other region in the National Electricity Market. The committee found that this experience warranted caution in assessing the projected benefits of Marinus Link. The committee also found there is a potential transfer of benefit from consumers to generators. Generators gain access to a bigger export market, while consumers pay part of the regulated infrastructure costs. Once you're in the NEM, you're in the NEM and the regulated costs are spread right throughout. Grange Resources argued, as many others did, that generators who directly benefit by building new generation, and the additional upgrades or new transmission lines, should contribute to the cost of the transmission they rely on. The committee found that such generators could contribute to that cost.

None of this means the committee concluded that Marinus should not proceed. The report is careful to say that the do-nothing option also has risks: constrained renewable investment, forgone federal funding and longer-term security risks as Basslink ages. Investment in our energy future is needed regardless; it's just a matter of what it looks like.

As I stated, further details relating to this particular project will be the subject of the next report.

What the committee did conclude is that for Marinus to proceed in the public interest, three things were required before a final investment decision: concessional financing had to be finalised, the cost allocation had to be transparently explained, and robust consumer protections had to be in place.

My position on Marinus has been consistent. This is about transparency. Tasmanians are being asked to carry a share of the cost of one of the largest infrastructure projects in our history. They're entitled to understand who pays, who benefits, and why. Whether those conditions were met is a matter the committee will continue to examine.

The north-west coast will host much of this new infrastructure, and I make no apology for banging on about the impacts on my community in this regard. The committee heard that construction of Marinus Link and the North West Transmission Developments will require a workforce numbering in the thousands. We can all talk about jobs and growth, but you have to think about what impact that has, even if they are only there short-term. Such an increase in workforce in our area will put material pressure on housing, roads and community services in a region where housing is extremely tight. TasNetworks permit applications projected 333 construction roles for the transmission works alone, with accommodation most likely provided through a camp. That was the evidence we got back at the time. Workforce accommodation requirements had been built into contractor tendering, which means it's the contractor's job. But when evidence was taken, contractor proposals had not been received, so their adequacy could not be assessed. Again, we'll consider this further in a subsequent report.

The committee also heard from landholders, farmers and community members about route selection, visual and environmental impacts, Aboriginal heritage, land acquisition, and engagement that came too late or felt like a mere formality. That is why the committee recommends that the government strengthens requirements on all proponents of large-scale renewable energy and transmission projects for early and meaningful community and landholder engagement, and to regularly monitor and publicly report on compliance with requirements for new energy projects, including transport, accommodation, workforce planning and Tasmanian industry participation plans. Well, have we seen the workforce planning? No?

Briefly, on some of the other matters raised in the committee, we also received some evidence on the government's prioritisation review, for those who remember that happened. It was announced in the 2025 state of the state address. They were going to look at privatising a number of our GBEs and TasNetworks was front of the line I think, from memory. TasNetworks told us it was informed only days before the announcement that they were on top of the list. Anyway, it was shelved before it even really started in reality. The committee found that Aurora Energy's social and hardship programs are unlikely to be matched to the same degree by a private retailer and as they are our energy retailer of last resort, we do rely on them to support some of our most vulnerable customers.

In closing, I thank everyone who made a submission or appeared before the committee. Many did so, as I said, more than once across three parliaments with remarkable patience. Their evidence is the foundation of this report, and many have continued to engage with the committee, and later evidence will be reported in later reports. I thank my fellow committee members for their constructive and collegial work. We've had quite the revolving door, as you can see from the front of the report, even up to that point in the process. It has been much more settled of late, though I must say we haven't had quite the turnover. Well, yes, we have. We have. It hasn't stopped. Anyway, I thank the Deputy Chair, the honourable member for Pembroke, and the member for Rumney from this House, who stepped into the void.

We recruited the member for Montgomery, so it's been quite an interesting journey. Obviously, there's been a bit of a change in some of the lower House members as well. I would

also like to acknowledge the former member for Huon, who served until May this year, as well as a number of members from the lower House who have come and gone. I would also particularly like to thank committee secretary Michael Barnier for his professionalism and persistence in carrying this inquiry through repeated interruptions. I also note and recognise the expertise and support provided by Prof Magnus Söderberg, Professor of Economics and Director, Centre for Applied Energy Economics and Policy Research at Griffith University, the committee's subject matter expert adviser, for his expertise, assistance and insight that greatly assisted the committee. This is a complex area, and we really valued his input and helping us to get our heads around some of the more complex areas.

The committee will continue its work. Our next report will examine the final investment decision on Project Marinus and the whole-of-state business case and the significant development since June 2025.

In the meantime, I urge the government to act on these six recommendations. They're not contentious, they are practical and they would make a real difference to the 50,000 Tasmanian households who are struggling right now and living in energy poverty. Tasmania's energy system is at a critical juncture. Our renewable advantage is real. Our task at parliament is to make sure it translates into affordable, secure power for every person in Tasmania.

Mr President, clearly there is much more to come, and I'll return to these critical matters in future debates. It's been an interesting journey, and I do commend this particular interim report to the Council.

[9.41 p.m.]

Mr EDMUNDS (Pembroke) - Mr President, considering the time, et cetera, I don't have a hell of a lot to add to the contribution made by the Chair other than to echo all those sentiments and to acknowledge that the genesis of this did come about looking into how it can assist Tasmanian households. Obviously, like a lot of things you can do around here, it's a bit of a cautionary tale at other committees sometimes about how things can snowball, particularly when you involve the other place. However, it has been worthwhile, and it has been a pretty sharp learning curve for us.

I'd like to acknowledge that a lot of the witnesses that we called have been back to see us multiple times and the goalposts on this topic have continued to move since early 2023, I think, when we first established it.

Also, I know this sort of gets taken for granted in this place, the efforts of other members in coming into this committee as it has evolved, particularly of the members for Rumney and Montgomery, I very much appreciate that. Yourself, Chair, and I may be the only OG members of this committee, even since it was formed as a joint committee, I believe -

Ms Forrest - I think you're right.

Mr EDMUNDS - I think I am too. It is amazing to reflect on how much this place has changed.

Ms Forrest - We're the stayers, you and me.

Mr EDMUNDS - We started it, I suppose we should finish it.

Ms Forrest - True.

Mr EDMUNDS - Yes, to acknowledge all that and the witnesses who've come forward and the support of our committee secretary, Michael, he's brilliant and really thorough and really organised, so there's plenty of food for thought.

As the Chair says, there are six recommendations that can be looked at and I'm sure we'll hear about those and plenty of other reports from that committee to tackle in the near future as well, Mr President, but just as speakers, Deputy Chair, to not necessarily repeat anything of the Chair, but just to acknowledge the efforts that come from a lot of different people informing the work that the committee's done.

[9.43 p.m.]

Mr DUIGAN (Windermere - Minister for Energy and Renewables) - I will make some remarks on the interim report of the Joint Select Committee on Energy Matters. Absolutely at the outset I will take the opportunity to thank the Chair and all the members, the revolving door, and acknowledge that this is a committee that has been going on for some period of time and, as has been noted, on a relatively dense subject. There have been quite a few big decisions coming down the pipe, so I acknowledge the committee and the fact that it has outlasted terms of parliament and it continues. I have had the pleasure of attending a number of hearings throughout the inquiry, accompanied by departmental officials. I know our government energy businesses - Hydro, Aurora, TasNetworks - have also attended on multiple occasions. I take the opportunity to thank those people, because it is a substantial effort on their behalf as well, and extend that thanks to other witnesses.

I note this is an interim report, as the title suggests, and the committee has indicated a subsequent report will consider developments after 11 June 2025, which will of course include the government's final investment decision on Project Marinus, the release of the business case and other major developments within the energy sector.

Since the period examined by the reports, a number of significant developments have occurred. As I say, most notably FID has been taken for Project Marinus, and we are now into the construction and delivery phase. This, of course, is a major milestone for Tasmania and one of our most significant infrastructure investments in the history of the state. The interim report contains more than 100 findings, as the Chair outlined, across a very broad range of topics, and there are a number of areas where the report highlights matters that do deserve careful consideration.

One of those is energy security. We are a state that derives all of its energy from the weather, and the committee notes the lessons of the 2015-16 energy crisis and the risks associated with Tasmania's continued reliance on a single interconnector. The report observes that Tasmania's reliance on Basslink represents an ongoing energy security risk and notes the role additional interconnection and generation can play in strengthening our resilience.

The committee further notes that diversification of generation sources, including wind and solar alongside hydro and expanded interconnection, would significantly improve Tasmania's energy security by reducing that dependence on single-source infrastructure.

The final investment decision on Marinus taken since the reporting period represents a significant milestone and gives effect to that project. Of course, that has been subject to much scrutiny over time, and we will talk about that in subsequent reports, as I mentioned.

The committee report notes that the basis for Tasmania's 27.6 per cent share of the regulated revenue recovery required further explanation. Through the negotiations we kept the interests of Tasmanians front and centre. We secured a cost allocation agreement where Victoria will pay the overwhelming lion's share, 72.4 per cent, of Marinus Link's annual transmission costs, and again, furthermore, we secured highly concessional financing from the Clean Energy Finance Corporation alongside a $346 million Commonwealth grant for TasNetworks, which together pass on hundreds of millions in savings to lower infrastructure impact on Tasmanian bills. I should also point to the fact that the government has made a policy decision to shield existing major industrial companies such as Grange Resources and others from transmission links as a result of merit. That's a substantial budget measure as well.

Consistent with its role, the Australian Energy Regulator has scrutinised project costs and determined that only prudent and efficient costs can be recovered from Marinus.

The report also recognises the broader economic opportunities associated with Tasmania's renewable energy advantages. The committee notes that expanding generation, interconnection and storage capacity presents potentially transformative opportunities for Tasmania's future.

It further notes the potential for clean energy exports, economic development and regional growth arising from Tasmania's renewable resources in connection to the National Electricity Market. These opportunities are central to the government's long-term vision for the energy sector. Our objective remains ensuring Tasmanians continue to benefit from our renewable energy advantage, both through affordable and reliable energy and through the economic activity, investment and employment generated by the transition. It is important also to recognise that as part of ministerial charters that have been applied to all of our energy businesses, keeping power prices for Tasmanians as low as they possibly can be is a central tenet of that.

The committee also considered the role of consumer energy resources, and this is an area where Tasmania has made significant progress in recent years. The government's Energy Saver Loan Scheme supported the uptake of solar systems. I know the Chair has spoken extensively about rooftop solar, and that scheme particularly was extremely effective in driving the uptake of rooftop solar in Tasmania. Over the life of the program, almost $70 million, principally in rooftop solar, was supported through interest-free loans. The program assisted the installation of more than 5200 solar systems, more than 600 battery installations and a wide range of energy efficiency improvements. The scheme helped thousands of Tasmanians invest in rooftop solar, household batteries, heating and other energy-saving technologies. Of course, these investments not only help households manage energy costs, but also strengthen Tasmania's energy system by encouraging greater consumer participation and improving resilience. Importantly, these benefits extend beyond individual households. The scheme helped to build quite a bit of capacity in our local businesses, our installers and suppliers, supporting growth of a broader consumer energy resources market in Tasmania.

That program closed in September last year and the department has reviewed its performance and outcomes. The government is considering those findings as part of a broader

piece of work, examining future opportunities to support consumer energy resources in Tasmania, including by considering approaches in other jurisdictions, and to ensure we're complementing federal initiatives such as the Cheaper Home Batteries Program. The interim report places considerable focus on vulnerable consumers and energy affordability. Of course, the government acknowledges those issues.

Tasmania already maintains a range of electricity concession arrangements for vulnerable households, including support for low-income customers and those with particular medical needs. It's important, I guess, to recognise that responsibility for those concessions does rest with the Treasurer. But it is worth noting that the 2026-27 Budget includes provision for approximately $234 million in electricity concession payments over the next four years to ensure that support continues to Tasmanians who do need it.

The government also remains committed to ensuring Tasmania's regulated energy prices remain among the lowest in the NEM. As confirmed, and as noted by the Chair, in the Tasmanian Economic Regulator's most recent price determination Tasmania continues to enjoy some of the lowest regulated electricity prices in the nation. While energy bills can be challenging for many households, particularly during these times of high inflation and cost pressures, it is important to recognise that Tasmania has a low typical regulated tariff. It is important to recognise - and perhaps one of the issues for the member for Pembroke and reason for instigating this inquiry - since 1 July 2014, Tasmania's residential power prices have fallen in real terms by 14.3 per cent, and that is an important metric.

When observations are made about higher total electricity bills faced by Tasmanian households, it's also important to consider the full picture. A straight comparison with the mainland often leads to the mistaken conclusion that our system is underperforming. In reality, it reflects a structural difference, principally in our energy mix because of our very low penetration of residential gas - the vast majority of Tasmanians do not receive a second energy bill for heating or cooking. Mainland households will have a split across two entirely separate dual networks; typically, Tasmanian households have one. But the government does acknowledge that affordability is about more than the printed price on an electricity bill. The committee's report highlights housing quality and energy efficiency as important contributors to affordability outcomes.

The government's work in social housing demonstrates this commitment. Through the Social Housing Energy Performance Initiative, jointly funded by the Tasmanian and Australian governments, thousands of social housing properties are being upgraded through improved insulation, double glazing, heating systems and hot water systems. This work recognises a simple reality: reducing energy consumption is often just as important as reducing energy prices. A well-insulated home with efficient heating can significantly reduce energy use, improve comfort and deliver lasting benefits for households. The committee's report rightly recognises that vulnerable consumers often face multiple challenges at once, including housing quality, energy costs and broader cost-of-living pressures. Addressing those challenges requires more than a single policy response; it requires action across concessions, hardship support, energy efficiency, household housing upgrades and access to technologies that help households reduce their energy consumption over the long term. The government will continue to work with energy businesses, community organisations and other stakeholders to ensure support is available for Tasmanians experiencing energy hardship, and to improve affordability outcomes across the state. I would point to Aurora being particularly active in that space.

Mr President, the committee has also made recommendations regarding community engagement and the delivery of major renewable energy projects. As members would be aware, the government is already progressing work on a code of conduct for renewable energy developers and electricity infrastructure providers, while also developing arrangements relating to community benefits sharing. Tasmania's renewable energy future will only be successful if communities have confidence in both the projects themselves and the way those projects are developed and, of course, sharing in the rewards of those projects. This means meaningful engagement, transparency, and ensuring communities share in the benefits arising from development.

The committee's work remains ongoing and for that reason, it would be premature for the government to provide comprehensive responses to the individual findings and recommendations at this stage. The government will continue to consider the interim report carefully along with any subsequent reports produced by the committee and will provide its considered response once the committee has completed its work. Once again, thanks to all those involved.

[9.58 p.m.]

Ms FORREST (Murchison) - Thanks, Mr President, I do thank the members for their contribution. I appreciate the response from the government. I hope we can remember when we do table the next report and there are recommendations there too, that these recommendations don't disappear off into the ether. There's a temptation not to read them as a collective but as an individual report. So, I will remember, I hope the government does too, that we want a formal response to all recommendations of the committee. I would hope that we might even get a subsequent formal response tabled in the parliament, a response to all recommendations made. I thank members for their contributions.

Motion agreed to.

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS GOVERNANCE REFORMS BILL 2026 (No. 44)

First Reading

Bill received from the House of Assembly and read the first time.

[10.01 p.m.]

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

The second reading of the bill be made an order of the day for Tuesday next.

Motion agreed to.

QUESTION ON NOTICE - ANSWER

No. 59 - Human Resources Transformation Project

Ms RATTRAY (McIntyre - Leader for the Government in the Legislative Council)(by leave) - Mr President, the answer to part of the question on notice No. 59 earlier today referenced a table that was not tabled. So, as part of the answer, I seek leave to table the spreadsheet referred to in the answer to question on notice No. 59.

Leave granted; document tabled.

ADJOURNMENT

[10.02 p.m.]

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

> That at its rising the Council adjourn until 11 a.m. on Wednesday 28 October 2026.

Motion agreed to.

Ms RATTRAY - Mr President, I move -

> That the Council do now adjourn.

The Council adjourned at 10.03 p.m.

DRAFT

Appendix 1

PREMIER OF TASMANIA

QON 59 of 2026

2 OCT 2026

The Hon Ruth Forrest MLC
Independent Member for Murchison
Email: ruth.forrest@parliament.tas.gov.au

Dear Ms Forrest

Please find responses to the questions in relation to the Human Resources Transformation Program dated 11 August 2026.

(1) With regard to the Human Resources Transformation Project (HRTP), that is the re-scoped Human Resources Information System (HRIS) transferred from the Department of Health to the Department of Premier and Cabinet (DPAC):

(a) What is the total number of contracts awarded in connection with the HRTP to date?

From 28 June 2024 to 11 August 2026, 62 contracts have been awarded. Of these:

- 7 contracts relate to the provision of services by a company
- 1 contract relates to specialist IT software
- 54 of these contracts are for employment agencies that provide individual specialist contractors, of which 29 contracts are contract renewals to continue/extend the services of the specialist contractors.

(Note, DPAC commenced management of contracts for the HRTP program under the 2024-25 budget appropriation.)

(b) What is the total value of contracts awarded in connection with the HRTP to date?

Between the period from 28 June 2024 to 11 August 2026:

- $19,327,971 of awarded contract value
- $25,366,377 including the maximum value of potential renewals

(c) What is the total pricing distribution of contracts awarded in connection with the HRTP to date?

GPO Box 123, Hobart TAS 7001 | Telephone: 61 3 6165 7650 | Email: premier@dpac.tas.gov.au

Contract Value	Number
Below $50,000	4
Between $50,000-$100,000	33
Over $100,000	25
Total	**62**

(d) Please provide a full schedule of these contracts including value, award date, contract period, and number of bids received.

Refer Attachment 1: *Contract register - HRTP procurements 2024- 2026*

(2) Of the contracts confirmed:

(a) How many were priced between $50,000 and $99,000 under open-market quoting threshold under the Treasurer's Instructions; and

17 contracts were priced between $50,000 and $99,000.

- 1 of these contracts was a fixed-price contract
- 1 of these was a time and materials-based engagement for a system implementation service sourced through an RFQ/RFI
- 15 of these contracts were a maximum price for a time and materials-based engagement with employment agencies for specialist contractors based on a fixed rate, of which:
  - 5 were a renewal of an existing specialist contractor
  - 3 were a direct engagement due to specialist expertise/experience, and
  - 7 were engaged through a request for quote (RQF) recruitment.

(b) How many were priced between $99,000 and $99,999?

16 contracts were priced between $99,000 and $99,999.

All of these contracts were a maximum price for a time and materials-based engagement with employment agencies for specialist contractors based on a fixed rate, of which:

- 3 were a direct engagement due to specialist expertise/experience, and
- 13 were engaged through a RFQ recruitment.

(3) What procurement method (direct sourcing, panel arrangement, labour hire, single-invite quote, or open tender) was used for each of the contracts awarded to date?

Refer to Attachment 1, column C, for details by contract

(4) Where multiple sub-threshold contracts have been awarded to the same vendor within a short period, does the Premier accept this could constitute contract splitting in substance even where each individual contract complies with the letter of the threshold?

No.

Multiple contracts with one employment agency may occur in a short period of time because different individual resources are contracted through each employment agency. Multiple short-term contracts for the same resource have not been executed by the project other than 3 specific exceptions:

- 2 contractors were re-engaged on short-term contracts in June 2025 following the announcement of a State election and the uncertainty regarding the project funding prohibiting a longer contract engagement under the *Financial Management Act 2016*; and
- 1 contract was renewed on a short-term basis in April 2026 to allow a contractor to complete a specific piece of work. It was determined that this resource would not be required for a longer period and hence a longer contract was not pursued.

A contract below the $100,000 threshold for individual contractors is only entered into for the following reasons:

- The program specifically seeks a short-term contract for an initial engagement following a recruitment process to ensure that there is a strong fit between the program needs and contractor skill set before seeking approval for a longer term contract.
- An individual contractor may occasionally have a specific need for a short term contract to maintain their own flexibility.
- In exceptional circumstances, there has been a need to retain a particular contractor for a short period of time to complete a piece of work, and the project has been unwilling to commit to the individual for a longer period.

(5) Where multiple sub-threshold contracts have been awarded to the same vendor within a short period, does the Treasurer accept this could constitute contract splitting in substance even where each individual contract complies with the letter of the threshold?

In Tasmania, procurement is devolved to Tasmanian Government agencies. Each agency's Accountable Authority is responsible for ensuring adherence to the requirements of the Treasurer's Instructions (TIs) issued under the *Financial Management Act 2016*.

The TIs specifically prohibit contract splitting. TI PP-1 *Valuation* prohibits agencies from dividing a procurement into separate parts for the purpose of avoiding the application of any otherwise applicable procurement threshold. Additionally, a particular method for estimating the value of a procurement must not be applied for the purpose of avoiding the application of any otherwise applicable procurement threshold.

(6) What internal control exists within DPAC to detect and prevent the risk of contract splitting?

Treasurers Instructions require that all contracts in excess of $250,000 are reviewed and endorsed by the Procurement Review Committee of the respective Agency.

Within DPAC, that threshold is reduced to $100,000.

Since February 2024, DPAC has implemented a process to report and assess all contracts between $50,000 and $100,000 to add an extra layer of scrutiny before executing a contract.

This provides visibility for contracts that may be awarded to the same vendor by the procurement function. Additionally, inherent in that process is a requirement that at least 3 quotes are requested and compared.

(7) What internal control exists within Treasury to detect and prevent the risk of contract splitting?

Under TI PF-5 Accountability and Reporting, agencies are required to send awarded contract details to Treasury for publication on the Tasmanian Government Tenders website within 10 working days of awarding a contract.

Treasury does not endorse the practice of contract splitting and, when requested, can support agencies in identifying TI-compliant pathways to meet their individual procurement needs. Treasury regularly reminds agencies of TI obligations when it becomes aware of sub-optimal procurement practices.

(8) Please confirm:
(a) the actual number of bids or quotes received for each of the contracts; and

Specialist Contractors	
- Extensions for ongoing contractors	29
- Direct engagements	6
- New engagements (between 3-27 proposals / bids received)	19
Software / IT Services	
- Direct engagement	2
- Proposals from market / existing panel (2-4 proposals/bids received)	6

Refer to Attachment 1, column K, for details by contract.

(b) In cases where only one bid or quote was received - in each case, what steps were taken to test market pricing given the absence of competitive tension?

Of the 62 contracts, 29 contracts relate to the engagement of individual specialist contractors through employment agencies, including those who commenced with the program in Department of Health and migrated with the project to DPAC. These specialist contractors have extensive established knowledge of the program activities that would be damaging to lose and take significant cost to replace. In these cases, contract renewals adhered to Treasurer's Instructions, and approvals where required were granted by the Accountable Authority. Each ongoing engagement is benchmarked with new rates for comparable specialists.

Where new resources have been required, the first preference has always been to secure internal employees from within Government who could transfer to the project on

a fixed term basis. If internal resources are not available, then contact is made with identified contracting companies specialising in SAP and project personnel contracting.

As routine, 8 specialist contracting companies are requested to provide quotations of potential contractors based on the provided skill set required and the time that the resource will be needed. Each firm then has the opportunity to submit proposals, including submission of CV's and cost details for any proposed resource.

- These submissions are reviewed by the project including for alignment of skills, experience in similar jurisdictions and programs,
- Costs are bench-marked, inclusive of candidate location and potential travel costs.
- Candidates are then short-listed and interviews are held to identify the preferred contractor.
- Individuals are typically engaged on a short term contract initially in order to verify that the individual is a good fit for the project and team.
- After assessment of satisfactory performance and demonstrated ongoing program need, longer contracts are then considered in line with Treasurer's Instructions and with the approval of the Accountable Authority.

In rare occasions, either only a single candidate is proposed, or exceptional candidates are identified and approached directly due to unique expertise or experience. As specialist contractors are generally contracted on a day rate basis and comparison is regularly made of offered rates across these different firms. This regular process has enabled a strong database of expected day rates for different skill sets ensuring that rates proposed are able to be assessed for reasonableness before acceptance.

(9) How many contracts have been awarded above the $100,000 threshold; and

25 contracts from 28 June 2024 to 11 August 2026 were above the $100,000 threshold.

- 23 of these contracts are for services delivered by individual specialists, of which 22 are new contracts to continue/extend their services following new budget appropriation.
- 1 contract relates to IT software
- 1 contract relates to the provision of system implementation services by a company

(a) How many of these contracts have been awarded without open-market tender;

22 contracts were awarded directly without a market approach as they were contracts to continue/extend the services of existing individual contractors following new budget appropriation or expiry of previous contracts.

1 contract relating to IT software was directly awarded following detailed requirements gathering, requests for quotation and vendor demonstrations of product capability against requirements.

1 contract related to the provision of system implementation services was awarded following an extensive market approach, shortlisting and limited tender process.

(b) What was the value of each of these contracts;

Refer to Attachment 1 for details by contract.

(c) For each of these contracts, what specific exemption under the Treasurer's Instructions was relied upon; and

Refer to Attachment 1, Column L, for details by contract.

(d) Was that exemption approved by the appropriate delegate?

Yes. Column C of Attachment 1 notes which contracts were executed under a Treasurer's Instruction exemption. In each case supporting minutes are available to evidence exemption approval.

(10) What verification does DPAC undertake of a supplier's claimed Tasmanian presence, including local employment, before applying Buy Local Policy weighting, and was that verification applied to all contracts?

The Buy Local Policy weighting is applied to all tenders undertaken. All vendors are validated through submission of company information in requested documentation and through direct engagement with company leadership or key contacts.

In addition to the Buy Local Policy application in tenders, for every contract that the program issues, the location of any employees or resources proposed to be engaged on the programs activities is also required to be specified and is considered.

(11) Were four direct-sourced contracts totalling approximately $920,000 executed on 24 December 2025; and

(a) if so, what was the operational reason for awarding contracts on that date specifically; and

4 direct-sourced contracts were executed on 24 December 2025, for a total of $920,395 (inclusive of potential extensions). These comprised:

- Contracts for 3 companies providing 5 contractors where existing contracts were due to expire and needed to be renewed prior to 31 December 2025 to ensure continuity of specialist resources to support the program delivery:
- A further company providing a single contractor was due to commence on 6 January 2026. This was a critical resource contractor who had previously been engaged by the program but stood down until funding and program activities required.

Funding to support the continuation of the engagements required appropriation funding in the 2025-26 budget and could not be actioned until the budget had passed parliament and received royal assent. Due to the timing of the 2025-26 budget:

- 10 December 2025: 2025-26 budget passed in Parliament
- 12 December 2025: Contracts considered and endorsed by Procurement Review Committee
- 19 December 2025: Approval by DPAC Secretary

- 22 and 23 December 2025: Contracts executed by third parties
- 24 December 2025: Contracts executed by DPAC on behalf of Crown

Failure to renew the contracts would have resulted in the loss of knowledge and resources to the project, the need to find alternative resources costing both time and money and ultimately causing delays to the project as new resources are required to get up to speed on the needs of the project.

(b) were normal approval and delegation processes followed in full?

Yes. All normal approval and delegation processes were followed in full.

Yours sincerely



Jeremy Rockliff MP
Premier

Appendix 2

OFFICIAL

QUESTION ON NOTICE

Legislative Council

ASKED BY: Hon Bec Thomas MLC

ANSWERED BY: Hon Bridget Archer MP
Minister for Health, Mental Health and Wellbeing

QUESTION:

Further to the Government's 11 August 2026 responses to my Questions on Notice regarding procurement for the Department of Health's Bluegum Digital Health Transformation:

(1) Did the Department of Health have an overarching procurement strategy or plan for the engagement of contractors and labour-hire personnel under Bluegum?

(a) If yes, who approved it and will the Government table it?

(b) If no, why was a project involving more than $61 million in contracted labour-hire expenditure undertaken without such a plan or strategy?

(2) What roles within the Departments of Health and Treasury were responsible for monitoring the cumulative number and value of Bluegum contracts and what internal controls existed to identify and prevent the risk of contract splitting where multiple contracts below the tender threshold were awarded to the same provider (i.e., awarding more than one contract to the same contractor for the same or overlapping time periods and/or more than one contract to the same contractor to deliver separate but related outputs, resulting in individual contract values coming in below $100,000)?

(3) The Government's answers identified one provider as receiving 86 separate contracts worth more than $6.9 million.

(a) Why was this substantial body of work not aggregated and subjected to an open competitive tender process?

OFFICIAL

(b) Was an open tender ever considered and, if so, why was it not pursued?

(c) Does the Government accept that repeatedly awarding sub-threshold contracts to the same provider may create a risk of contract splitting in substance, even where individual contracts comply with the applicable procurement threshold?

(4) Of the 692 Bluegum contracts valued below $100,000:

(a) how many were valued between $90,000 and $99,999;

(b) how many contractors were provided concurrent contracts (multiple contracts for the same time period) and why was this allowed;

(c) how many involved extensions, renewals or subsequent engagements with the same provider for substantially the same or related work;

(d) how many contracts were renewed within one month following expiry of the previous contract; and,

(e) in determining the appropriate procurement method, was the cumulative or reasonably anticipated value of those related engagements taken into account?

(5) For each Bluegum contract where competitive quotations were required:

(a) how many quotations or bids were actually received; and,

(b) where only one quotation or bid was received, what steps were taken to test market pricing and demonstrate value for money in the absence of competitive tension?

(6) For any Bluegum procurement where the ordinarily applicable competitive procurement requirements were not followed:

(a) what exemption, exception or other provision of the Treasurer's Instructions or procurement framework was relied upon;

(b) how many contracts were awarded under each exemption or provision and what was their combined value; and,

(c) was each use approved by the appropriate delegate?

(7) Has the Department sought advice from Treasury, internal audit, a probity adviser or any other independent source about whether the pattern of repeated sub-$100,000 Bluegum contracts complied with both the requirements and intent of the Government's procurement framework?

(a) If so, what advice was received and will it be tabled?

(b) If not, why not?

(8) In relation to the procurement approach adopted for the Bluegum Digital Health Transformation:

(a) When did the Secretary of the Department of Health first become aware of the number and cumulative value of contracts being awarded below the $100,000 open tender threshold, and is the Secretary satisfied the approach complied with the Government's procurement framework and represented value for money?

(b) When did the Secretary of the Department of Treasury and Finance first become aware of the number and cumulative value of Bluegum contracts being awarded below the $100,000 threshold, and is the Secretary satisfied the approach was consistent with the requirements and intent of the Government's procurement framework?

(c) When did the Treasurer first become aware of the number and cumulative value of Bluegum contracts being awarded below the $100,000 threshold, and is the Treasurer satisfied the procurement approach complied with the Treasurer's Instructions, including their intent?

(d) When did the Minister for Health first become aware of the number and cumulative value of Bluegum contracts being awarded below the $100,000 threshold, and is the Minister satisfied the procurement approach was appropriate, complied with the Treasurer's Instructions and represented value for money for Tasmanian taxpayers?

(9) Will the Government undertake an independent review of procurement practices associated with Bluegum?

(a) If yes, who will conduct it and will the findings be made public?

(b) If no, why not?

ANSWER:

(1) Did the Department of Health have an overarching procurement strategy or plan for the engagement of contractors and labour-hire personnel under Bluegum?

On 22 October 2024, the Secretary of the Department of Health approved the Health ICT Project Workforce Optimisation Plan to reduce Health ICT's reliance on labour hire through the creation of 51 key salaried positions across both Health ICT broadly and the Bluegum Program. The plan envisaged a predominantly salaried workforce, with contract labour used only to provide short-term specialist expertise or address temporary capability gaps. A key objective was to provide opportunities for more than 50 existing contractors across both Bluegum and Health ICT to transition into permanent roles.

Despite an extensive recruitment campaign, conversion and recruitment outcomes were significantly lower than anticipated. As a result, the Department continued to rely on specialist contract labour to fill critical capability gaps, maintain delivery momentum across major digital transformation initiatives, and support the progression of commenced projects.

Programs such as Bluegum require highly specialised skills in areas including digital health, enterprise architecture, cybersecurity, clinical informatics, program delivery, integration, testing and change management. These capabilities are often required for finite periods, fluctuate throughout the program lifecycle, and are not readily available within the existing workforce or local labour market.

To access the specialist capability required, the Department adopted an open-market procurement approach for ICT contract labour. This approach was implemented because the procurement frameworks available at the time were primarily designed for outcome-based ICT services rather than ICT professionals working under the direct supervision of the Department. The Department therefore sourced specialist ICT contract labour through open market competition, supported by contract management controls, delegated approval processes, and publication of awarded contracts in accordance with Treasury requirements.

(a) If yes, who approved it and will the Government table it?

The Secretary of the Department of Health approved the Health ICT Workforce Optimisation Plan.

(b) If no, why was a project involving more than $61 million in contracted labour-hire expenditure undertaken without such a plan or strategy?

N/A.

(2) What roles within the Departments of Health and Treasury were responsible for monitoring the cumulative number and value of Bluegum contracts and what internal controls existed to identify and prevent the risk of contract splitting where multiple contracts below the tender threshold were awarded to the same provider (i.e., awarding more than one contract to the same contractor for the same or overlapping time periods and/or more than one contract to the same contractor to deliver separate but related outputs, resulting in individual contract values coming in below $100,000)?

The Department of Health's responsibility for monitoring Bluegum contractor expenditure rested across the Department's procurement, financial and program governance arrangements, with contract information and cumulative expenditure routinely reported through project steering committees, executive governance forums, monthly accountability meetings, Treasury reporting processes, and official departmental record management systems. Treasury was also regularly advised of contractor expenditure and procurement activity.

The Department maintained a range of controls to support procurement compliance and oversight, including formal approval processes, contract and financial reporting, governance committee review, contractor resource request processes, and regular monitoring of contractor utilisation and expenditure. Throughout 2025 and 2026, the Department continued discussions with Treasury regarding appropriate ICT labour hire procurement arrangements, including consideration of Request for Tender (RFT) processes, which ultimately led to the introduction of revised procurement arrangements and enhanced oversight measures in July 2026.

Please see separate response provided from the Treasurer.

(3) The Government's answers identified one provider as receiving 86 separate contracts worth more than $6.9 million.

(a) Why was this substantial body of work not aggregated and subjected to an open competitive tender process?

The engagements were labour-hire arrangements for individual specialist resources working under the direction and supervision of the Department, rather than outcome-based service contracts for the delivery of a defined scope of work. As such, the Department's assessment was that these engagements did not constitute a single procurement for a common deliverable that could appropriately be aggregated and released to market as one tender.

Since 2021, the Department has consistently advised Treasury and Crown Law that the Technology Services List was designed primarily for outcome-based ICT procurements and did not provide a clear procurement pathway for ICT labour-hire arrangements operating under departmental management and control. To meet resourcing requirements, the Department utilised an open-market

approach that included Request for Resource processes, market testing, delegated approvals and executive oversight.

The cumulative value and utilisation of contractor engagements were routinely reported through established governance and accountability mechanisms, including steering committees, executive governance forums, financial reporting processes, monthly accountability meetings, contract reporting to Treasury, and official departmental record management systems.

As explained in question 2, the Department continued to engage with Treasury regarding appropriate procurement arrangements for ICT labour hire, including consideration of more formal procurement mechanisms and RFT processes. This resulted in revised ICT labour-hire procurement arrangements approved and introduced in July 2026, including Procurement Review Committee oversight, structured quotation processes, and open tender requirements for higher-value procurements.

(c) Was an open tender ever considered and, if so, why was it not pursued?

Yes. The option of an open tender was considered in the context of the procurement frameworks available at the time. However, it was not pursued due to the prevailing ICT procurement arrangements, including the Technology Services Multi-Use List (TSL) and Tasmanian Technology Contract Conditions (TTCC), which were designed for outcome-based service procurements delivered under defined scopes of work, rather than for the engagement of individual ICT specialists working under the direct supervision of the Department.

Treasury had also advised against the establishment of dedicated ICT labour-hire panels through a Request for Tender process. As a result, there was no practical tender-based mechanism available for the procurement of ICT contract labour. In these circumstances, the Department adopted an open-market sourcing approach for ICT labour hire, supported by procurement controls, delegated approvals, contract management arrangements, and reporting requirements, to ensure access to the specialised workforce required to deliver major digital transformation programs while maintaining compliance with procurement obligations.

As previously noted, revised ICT labour-hire procurement arrangements have been implemented, including structured quotation processes and RFT requirements for higher-value procurements, providing a formal pathway for future open tender processes where applicable.

(d) Does the Government accept that repeatedly awarding sub-threshold contracts to the same provider may create a risk of contract splitting in substance, even where individual contracts comply with the applicable procurement threshold?

The Department acknowledges that repeatedly awarding sub-threshold contracts to the same provider may create a risk of perceived or actual contract splitting,

even where individual contracts comply with applicable procurement thresholds. The Department has taken steps to address and mitigate this risk through the implementation of the revised ICT labour hire procurement framework.

The new framework provides enhanced governance and oversight mechanisms, including Procurement Review Committee scrutiny, structured quotation processes for procurements under $250,000, and RFT processes for procurements valued at $250,000 or more.

The Department considers these measures an appropriate response to the risks associated with ICT labour hire procurement and will ensure future engagements are undertaken through procurement pathways that provide greater consistency, oversight, and market competition.

Please see separate response provided from the Treasurer.

(4) Of the 692 Bluegum contracts valued below $100,000:

Bluegum contracts were awarded between 1 July 2021 and 27 July 2026:
692 were valued between $50,000 and $99,999
50 were valued under $50,000
The information below is based on this combined number of 742 contracts.

(a) how many were valued between $90,000 and $99,999;

339 Bluegum-related contracts valued between $90,000 and $99,999 were awarded with a combined value of $32.5 million.

(b) how many contractors were provided concurrent contracts (multiple contracts for the same time period) and why was this allowed;

143 contractors were provided concurrent contracts. Each contract renewal was subject to scrutiny by the program manager to justify the ongoing need for the resource to support commenced projects. All concurrent contracts were submitted to the Chief Information Officer for delegate review and approval prior to execution of a contract. The Department's position was that these engagements represented the engagement of individual specialist resources to meet specific capability needs across the program, rather than a single outcome-based procurement.

(c) how many involved extensions, renewals or subsequent engagements with the same provider for substantially the same or related work;

The 143 contractors with concurrent contracts were awarded a total of 709 contracts. Of these, the majority were extensions, renewals, or subsequent engagements with the same provider for substantially the same or closely

related services. The Department's position was that these arrangements involved the engagement of individual specialist ICT labour-hire resources working under departmental supervision to meet specific capability requirements, rather than the procurement of a single outcome-based work package. Accordingly, contract renewals were based on the continued need for specialist roles, not the specific delivery of a related package of work.

(d) how many contracts were renewed within one month following expiry of the previous contract; and,

Of the 709 concurrent contracts awarded, 704 were renewed within one month following expiry of the previous contract.

(e) in determining the appropriate procurement method, was the cumulative or reasonably anticipated value of those related engagements taken into account?

Yes. In determining the appropriate procurement method, the Department considered the cumulative and reasonably anticipated value of contractor engagements supporting the Bluegum Program.

At the time, there was no established procurement framework specifically designed for ICT labour-hire arrangements of this nature. The existing Technology Services List was primarily intended for outcome-based ICT services rather than individual specialist resources working under the direction and supervision of the Department.

Accordingly, the Department utilised an open-market procurement approach for ICT contractor labour, supported by Request for Resource processes, delegated approval requirements, executive oversight and governance controls. The Department's position was that these arrangements represented the engagement of individual specialist resources to address capability requirements across the program, rather than a single outcome-based procurement that could be sourced through an open tender process.

(5) For each Bluegum contract where competitive quotations were required:

(a) how many quotations or bids were actually received; and,

Candidate submissions received for requests for new specialist ICT resources varied, with a median of 12 submissions per request, and some requests receiving more than 70 submissions. In total, more than 1,300 candidate submissions have been received.

Health ICT's panel comprises more than 80 providers, who are notified when a competitive request for specialist ICT resources is released.

(b) where only one quotation or bid was received, what steps were taken to test market pricing and demonstrate value for money in the absence of competitive tension?

All requests for new specialist ICT resources were undertaken through a market-based process and attracted responses from multiple recruitment and labour-hire agencies. While an individual contractor may ultimately have been sourced through a single provider, the underlying resource requests were exposed to the broader market and generated multiple candidate submissions for consideration.

For each resource request, the number of candidates submitted by agencies typically ranged from 6 to more than 70 individuals. Candidates were assessed against the required capabilities, experience, availability, and rates, providing the Department with a basis to test the market and assess value for money before engagement.

(6) For any Bluegum procurement where the ordinarily applicable competitive procurement requirements were not followed:

(a) what exemption, exception or other provision of the Treasurer's Instructions or procurement framework was relied upon;

No exemptions or exceptions were relied upon, as Bluegum procurements followed a structured and compliant procurement process for contractor engagements that were managed through an open market procurement process, a mandatory Request for Contractor Resource (RFR) process, and delegated authority and executive approval frameworks.

Please see separate response provided from the Treasurer.

(b) how many contracts were awarded under each exemption or provision and what was their combined value; and,

N/A.

(c) was each use approved by the appropriate delegate?

I am advised that each individual ICT labour-hire contract has been approved and executed under the delegated authority of the Chief Information Officer.

(7) Has the Department sought advice from Treasury, internal audit, a probity adviser or any other independent source about whether the pattern of repeated sub-$100,000 Bluegum contracts complied with both the requirements and intent of the Government's procurement framework?

I am advised that yes, the Department has engaged with Treasury over a number of years regarding the limitations of the existing TSL and TTCC arrangements in supporting the engagement of specialist ICT labour-hire resources.

The Department's consistent position was that the Bluegum contractor engagements related to the procurement of individual specialist ICT resources, required to work under departmental supervision, rather than a single, outcomes-based procurement.

Faced with a procurement framework that did not adequately accommodate ICT labour-hire arrangements of this nature, the Department implemented what it considered to be the most transparent and compliant approach available, including open-market competition, contract management controls, publication of contracts in accordance with Treasury requirements, and delegated approval processes.

(a) If so, what advice was received and will it be tabled?

Advice from Treasury primarily concerned the limitations of the existing TSL and TTCC in accommodating ICT labour-hire personnel working under departmental supervision.

Treasury advised that it was working with the Office of the Crown Solicitor on possible contractual solutions and, at that time, advised against establishing a dedicated labour-hire panel through a Request for Tender. This resulted in the Department continuing to source individual specialist resources through open-market processes, supported by delegated approvals, contract management controls and reporting requirements.

Subsequent advice from Treasury was that any proposed specialised ICT labour-hire panel would represent a departure from the prevailing whole-of-government procurement framework and would require consideration by the Treasurer before proceeding.

(b) If not, why not?

N/A

(8) In relation to the procurement approach adopted for the Bluegum Digital Health Transformation:

(a) When did the Secretary of the Department of Health first become aware of the number and cumulative value of contracts being awarded below the $100,000 open tender threshold, and is the Secretary satisfied the approach complied with the Government's procurement framework and represented value for money?

I am advised the Secretary first became aware of the exact number and cumulative value of the contracts in response to an Auditor-General request in May 2026. Prior to that time, while the Secretary was aware of the arrangements around the engagement of specialist ICT labour-hire resources, he had not been directly involved in the recruitment of personnel for Health ICT, including Bluegum, as the Secretary had approved a delegation to the Chief Information Officer to commit expenditure for ICT labour hire contracts, with which the Chief Information Officer was acting in accordance.

The Secretary acknowledges that repeatedly awarding sub-threshold contracts to the same provider may create a risk of perceived or actual contract splitting, even where individual contracts comply with applicable procurement thresholds. The process followed was designed to ensure value for money, which is considered to have been achieved.

Earlier this year the Secretary met with his Treasury counterpart, and this resulted in a new process being put in place. The Secretary is satisfied that the Department has taken steps to address and mitigate this risk through the implementation of this revised ICT labour hire procurement framework.

(b) When did the Secretary of the Department of Treasury and Finance first become aware of the number and cumulative value of Bluegum contracts being awarded below the $100,000 threshold, and is the Secretary satisfied the approach was consistent with the requirements and intent of the Government's procurement framework?

Please see separate response provided from the Treasurer.

(c) When did the Treasurer first become aware of the number and cumulative value of Bluegum contracts being awarded below the $100,000 threshold, and is the Treasurer satisfied the procurement approach complied with the Treasurer's Instructions, including their intent?

Please see separate response provided from the Treasurer.

(d) When did the Minister for Health first become aware of the number and cumulative value of Bluegum contracts being awarded below the $100,000 threshold, and is the Minister satisfied the procurement approach was appropriate, complied with the Treasurer's Instructions and represented value for money for Tasmanian taxpayers?

I first became aware of the volume of Bluegum contracts awarded below the $100,000 threshold in June 2026.

While I do accept the Department's reasoning, acknowledging that a number of important initiatives have been delivered that are already making a real difference to people's lives, it is clear that greater Ministerial and Treasury oversight is needed to ensure the Program remains on track, on budget, and complies with all relevant governance and reporting processes. The Treasurer and I are currently in discussions on the best mechanism to ensure this occurs in a way that does not duplicate existing accountabilities and governance responsibilities, but reinforces them.

(9) Will the Government undertake an independent review of procurement practices associated with Bluegum?

Please see separate response provided from the Treasurer.

(a) If yes, who will conduct it and will the findings be made public?

Please see separate response provided from the Treasurer.

(b) If no, why not?

Please see separate response provided from the Treasurer.

Hon Bridget Archer MP
Minister for Health, Mental Health and Wellbeing

Date:

Attachments:

1 Response from Hon Eric Abetz MP, Treasurer
2 Health ICT Project Workforce Optimisation Plan
3 DOH and Treasury Letters and Emails

Tasmanian Government

Response to Question On Notice

Legislative Council

Asked by: Hon Bec Thomas MLC

Answered by: Hon Bridget Archer MP

Question:

2. What roles within the Departments of Health and Treasury were responsible for monitoring the cumulative number and value of Bluegum contracts and what internal controls existed to identify and prevent the risk of contract splitting where multiple contracts below the tender threshold were awarded to the same provider (ie. Awarding more than one contract to the same contractor for the same or overlapping time periods and/or more than one contract to the same contractor to deliver separate but related outputs, resulting in individual contract values coming in below $100,000)?
3. The Government's answers identified one provider as receiving 86 separate contracts worth more than $6.9 million.
   c. Does the Government accept that repeatedly awarding sub-threshold contracts to the same provider may create a risk of contract splitting in substance, even where individual contracts comply with the applicable procurement threshold?
6. For any Bluegum procurement where the ordinarily applicable competitive procurement requirements were not followed:
   a. What exemption, exception or other provision of the Treasurer's Instructions or procurement framework was relied upon;
8. In relation to the procurement approach adopted for the Bluegum Digital Health Transformation:
   b. When did the Secretary of the Department of Treasury and Finance first become aware of the number and cumulative value of Bluegum contracts being awarded below the $100,000 threshold, and is the Secretary satisfied the approach was consistent with the requirements and intent of the Government's procurement framework?
   c. When did the Treasurer first become aware of the number and cumulative value of Bluegum contracts being awarded below the $100,000 threshold, and is the Treasurer satisfied the procurement approach complied with the Treasurer's Instructions, including their intent?
9. Will the Government undertake an independent review of procurement practices associated with Bluegum?
   a. If yes, who will conduct it and will the findings be made public?
   b. If no, why not?

Answer

2.

The Department of Treasury and Finance is responsible for stewardship of the Tasmanian Government procurement framework, including maintaining the framework and providing guidance to agencies. It does not have a monitoring or compliance function under the Treasurer's Instructions (TIs) or the *Financial Management Act 2016*.

Each agency remains responsible for managing its own procurements. Agencies must maintain accurate records that justify procurement processes and decisions, and those decisions must be able to withstand public scrutiny. An agency is able to seek advice from Treasury at any time, if it needs assistance interpreting and applying the procurement framework.

TI FC-2 (Internal Audit) requires each agency's internal audit function to provide independent assurance to the Accountable Authority on controls, risk management, governance and compliance with the TIs.

TI PF-5 (Accountability and Reporting) requires agencies to publish details of awarded contracts valued at $50 000 or more on the Tasmanian Government Tenders website within the applicable reporting timeframe. Treasury administers the Tasmanian Government Tenders website.

3. (c)

A pattern of multiple related procurements below the relevant threshold may indicate that the procurements should be treated as a single procurement. The circumstances of each procurement would need to be considered against the requirements and principles of the TIs.

6. (a)

Treasury is not aware of any exemption, exception or variation to the TIs in relation to Bluegum procurements.

8. (b and c)

The Treasury Secretary became aware of a volume of Bluegum contracts awarded below the $100 000 threshold in June 2025, following publication of awarded contract notices on the Tasmanian Government Tenders Website. At that time, the Secretary was not aware that the contracts may have comprised multiple related procurements. The Secretary became aware of the latter issue during the Auditor-General's audit in June 2026. Following engagement with Health, Treasury provided advice to the Treasurer in August 2026.

9.

The Auditor-General has carefully reviewed Bluegum procurement practices, through the recent performance audit of procurement of labour hire services by Health. The Bluegum program, including its procurement practices, is now subject to regular oversight by the Secretary of the Department of Treasury and Finance and the Secretary of the Department of Health. Noting these measures, the Government is not currently considering undertaking an independent review of the above.

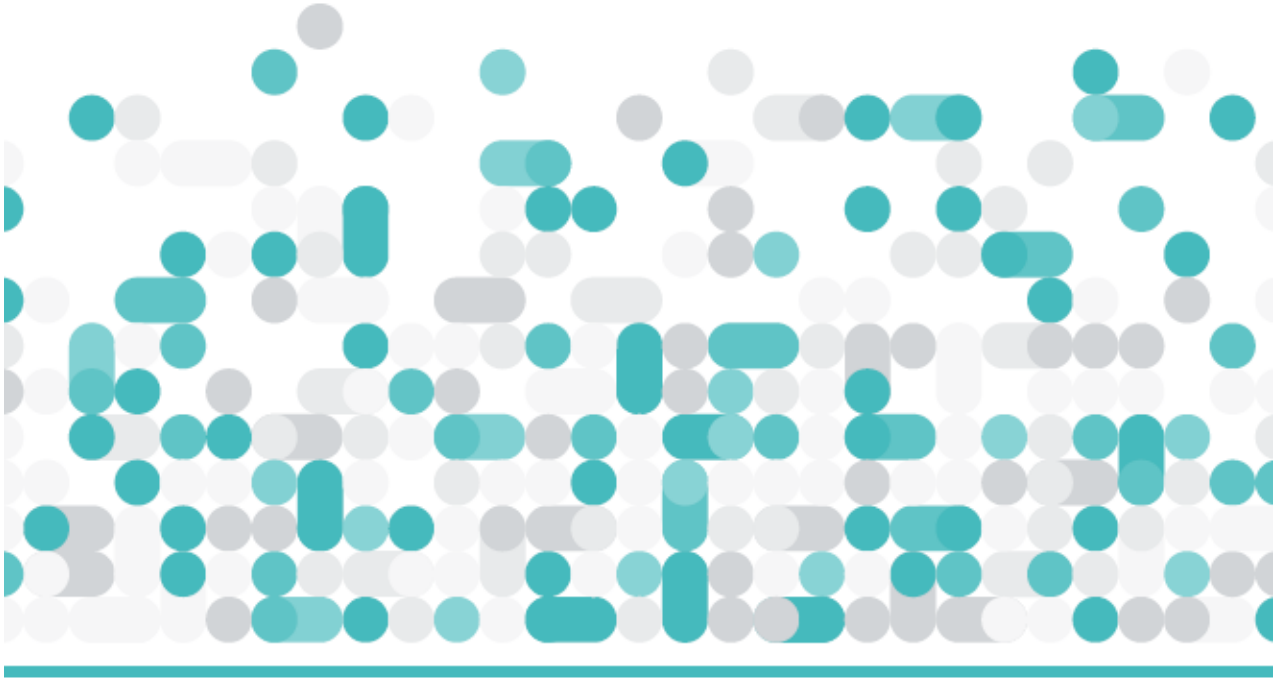
Hon Eric Abetz MP
Treasurer

Date: 25/9/26

Health
ICT

Project Workforce Optimisation Plan

October 2024



Department of Health

Tasmanian Government

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Acknowledgements

Document Acceptance and Release Notice

This is a current version of the Health ICT Project Workforce Optimisation Plan. Changes will only be issued as a complete replacement. Recipients should remove superseded versions from circulation.

Document Development History

Version	Date	Author
1.0	16/10/2024	Sophie Medhurst, Manager - Project Support Services

Distribution

Version	Issue Date	Issued To
1.0	17/10/2024	Brent Feike, CIO Lisa Hagstrom, Director – Digital Health Melanie Tyson, Senior Manager – PMO Shaun Weber, Deputy CIO Liz Waters, Scheduling, Risk and Performance

Document Location

A master copy of this document is located at: Health ICT Project Workforce Optimisation Plan - V1.0 - October 2024.docx

Approvals

This document was approved by:

Name	Title	Signature	Date Approved
Brent Feike	Chief Information Officer		18/10/2024

Executive Summary

Background

Health ICT is facing significant challenges due to an overreliance on contractors, particularly within the Project Management Office (PMO) and the Digital Health Transformation (DHT) Program. Currently, **contractors constitute 47% of the workforce, while salaried employees account for 53%.** This dependency stems from skill shortages and difficulties in filling critical salaried roles. While contractors provide specialised expertise and flexibility, they also introduce considerable financial, operational, and continuity risks. **Contractor costs range from 178% to 263% higher than those of equivalent salaried roles**, and the concentration of critical knowledge among temporary staff poses long-term risks to the Department's project continuity and capability development. In response, the Acting Secretary has requested input from divisions that are more reliant on contract labour to transition towards a more sustainable and cost-effective workforce model. This report outlines Health ICT's opportunities and the CIO's commitment to leading the effort towards establishing a long-term sustainable workforce.

This plan proposes a 6-12 month transition to a more sustainable workforce by increasing salaried employees and reducing contractor reliance, aligning workforce composition with future demands.

Current State

As of October 2024, Health ICT's project-related workforce composition is as follows:

Salaried Employees	Contractors	Total
60	54	**114**

This trend has driven contractor expenditure to $18.2 million in 2023/24, with estimates rising to $19.1 million in 2024/25 if no actions are taken.

Future State

Health ICT aims to transition 54 contractor roles to 51 salaried positions, with potential first-year savings of up to $6.9 million (over 40% in resourcing costs). Key salaried roles will fill critical gaps and ensure long-term stability, while contractors will still be utilised for short-term specialised expertise or to address recruitment gaps, maintaining continuity.

Projected future project-related workforce composition:

Salaried Employees	Contractors	Total
100 - 110	5 - 10	105 - 120

Conclusion

The proposed workforce optimisation plan will reduce costs, mitigate risks, and strengthen Health ICT's internal capabilities. By transitioning contractor roles to salaried positions, investing in talent development, and enhancing leadership structures, Health ICT will achieve a more sustainable and financially viable workforce, ensuring the successful delivery of high-priority projects for the Department.

Background

Health ICT faces significant challenges regarding workforce composition, particularly the imbalance between contractor engagement and salaried employees within the Project Management Office (PMO) and Digital Health Transformation (DHT) Program. This imbalance has been driven by ongoing internal skill shortages and recruitment challenges for key salaried roles.

The reliance on contractors, while providing immediate access to specialised expertise and supporting high-priority projects, introduces significant risks, including:

- **Financial strain:** Contractors incur substantially higher costs, with a median of 98% additional expenditure compared to salaried employees.
- **Knowledge continuity risks**: With critical skills concentrated among temporary staff, the Department faces vulnerabilities in project continuity, knowledge retention, and operational stability.
- **Limited long-term workforce development:** The heavy dependence on contractors impedes on the development of a sustainable internal talent pipeline, essential for long-term organisational capability.

This document outlines the problem, provides a detailed analysis of costs, identifies risks, and proposes a path forward to transition to a more sustainable workforce.

Problem Statement

As of 13 October 2024, contractors represent 47% of the workforce compared to 53% salaried employees, leading to escalating costs and challenges in maintaining a skilled and stable workforce.

Current State

This section outlines the existing workforce model, focusing on composition, cost comparisons, and projected demand.

Workforce Composition

The current distribution of Health ICT project resources is as follows:

Salaried Employees	Contractors	Total
60	54	114

Contractor Median vs. Salary Comparison

The table below outlines the financial impact of contractor reliance, comparing salaries at the highest band levels with median contractor rates for equivalent roles. Contractor costs are significantly higher, ranging from 178% to 263% above salaried positions.

Position	Salary		Contractor Median Per Annum ($)	Variance
	Band	At highest Level ($)		
Business Analyst	6	118,730	312,804	263%
Project Analyst	7	130,905	314,880	240%
Test Manager	8	144,527	338,496	234%
Senior Project Manager	8	144,527	328,134	228%
Change Manager	8	144,527	328,007	227%
Solution Architect	8	144,527	319,800	222%
Senior Project Officer	6	118,730	258,949	219%
Program Manager	9	182,913	336,528	184%
Enterprise Architect	9	182,913	325,950	178%

Note: The listed salary band levels may present higher than what is typical for most Department of Health employees in these roles.

Cost Breakdown

Over the past three financial years, contractor expenditure has increased, and without intervention, this trend will continue in 2024/25.

2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25 (Est.)
$11.8m	$13.6m	$18.2m	$19.1m

Note: Excludes contractor costs for HRIS and HRCMS, which have transitioned to DPAC.

Pipeline Projects and Demand Forecast

Over the next four years, demand for project roles within Health ICT is expected to increase, highlighting the need for a more cost-effective and sustainable workforce model. Currently, Health ICT is delivering 6 large, 12 medium, and 8 small projects, with each project typically supported by a team of four resources.

For further information on HICT Projects, refer to: ICT Projects - ICT Projects - DoH Knowledge Base

Pipeline and BRM Concept Briefs

There are 24 pipeline projects and 3 projects pending initiation. While most will be business-led, Health ICT will support these initiatives through solution design, ICT project coordination, and requirements documentation.

Additionally, 3 projects identified in the past 12 months, intended for PMO and Contract Project Managers, could not proceed due to cost constraints. This highlights that by transitioning to a sustainable salaried workforce will enable Health ICT to deliver more projects for the Department.

Current State Risks and Issues

For more information on the risks and issues associated with the current workforce model in Health ICT, please refer to *Appendix 1 – Current State Workforce Model Risks and Issues.*

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Opportunities and Constraints

This section outlines key opportunities and constraints related to Health ICT's workforce transformation. By leveraging competitive market strategies, improving internal capabilities, and addressing structural challenges, the Department can enhance its position as an employer of choice while transitioning to a more sustainable workforce model.

Opportunities

No.	Category	Description	Expected Outcome	Strategic Action Proposals
1	**Market Competitiveness: Attracting Talent**	To remain competitive, Health ICT must offer salary packages that align with market standards. Allowing market allowances to be negotiated for critical roles can help attract specialised talent, especially in contractor-heavy areas where private sector salaries are higher.	A stronger talent acquisition pipeline with reduced reliance on contractors, resulting in improved project continuity and performance.	1.0: The A/g Secretary to approve the option for skilled candidates to negotiate market allowances during recruitment for key project roles.
2	**Career Development and Upskilling Initiatives**	Investing in training, mentorship, and upskilling programs is essential for building an internal talent pipeline, addressing skill gaps, and reducing reliance on contractors. Collaboration with external training partners will enhance internal capabilities, with a focus on project management and ICT skills.	Enhanced internal capabilities, improved employee satisfaction, and a more skilled workforce capable of handling complex projects, reducing contractor dependence, and boosting project outcomes and productivity.	1.1: Health ICT Senior Leadership to develop a strategy for targeted training, mentorship, and upskilling programs by Q1 2025 and implement them by Q2 2025. Metrics will be in place to assess their impact on capacity and engagement.
3	**Salaried vs Contractor Performance Variability**	There is a notable performance variability between contractors and salaried employees, which can result in project delays and inconsistent outcomes. Addressing these discrepancies is crucial for improving overall project performance and maximising internal capabilities. Regular Performance and Development Assessments (PDAs) and upskilling programs will help bridge these gaps.	Improved performance consistency and project delivery, leading to higher stakeholder satisfaction and successful project outcomes.	1.2: Implement half-yearly performance reviews for salaried employees starting Q1 2025 to align skills development with project requirements.

Constraints

No.	Category	Description	Expected Outcome	Strategic Action Proposals
1	**Structural Changes and Leadership Adjustments**	As Health ICT expands its workforce, adjustments to the leadership structure will be needed to support growth. This includes changes in reporting lines, such as allowing higher salary bands (e.g., Band 9) to report to lower bands (e.g., Band 8), ensuring leadership roles remain effective and responsive to a larger team.	A streamlined leadership structure that supports effective decision-making and operational efficiency.	• 1.3: The CIO to develop new leadership structure by Q4 2024 to ensure organisational agility and efficiency. • 1.4: The A/g Secretary to approve changes allowing higher band staff to report to lower bands where appropriate.
2	**Streamlining Band 9 and Above Role Approvals**	Delays in creating Band 9 and above roles impede the timely hiring of high-level salaried positions. Streamlining this process is crucial to secure the necessary talent to lead projects effectively and maintain organisational momentum. This initiative will involve collaboration with the State Service Management Office (SSMO) to address any hurdles and expedite the process.	Faster hiring timelines for critical roles, enabling Health ICT to meet project demands and maintain service delivery.	• 1.5: The A/g Secretary and CIO to collaborate with SSMO to expedite the approval process for <Band 9 roles by Q4 2024.

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Future State

Health ICT aims to transition 54 contractor roles into 51 salaried positions within six to twelve months to achieve a more sustainable balance. This shift will result in estimated cost savings of $130k per week due to reduced contractor expenditure and a strengthened internal talent pipeline.

Recommended New Salaried Positions

Based on preliminary findings and subject to further analysis, the following permanent positions are recommended for creation:

Position	FTE Required	Level
Business, Test and Data Analyst	8	Band 7
Consultant - Business Analyst	4	Band 7
Senior Project Coordinator	3	Band 7
Project Manager	1	Band 7
Change Analyst	2	Band 7
Senior Project Manager	6	Band 8
Principal Business Analyst	1	Band 8
Technical Specialist	1	Band 8
Enterprise Architect	2	Band 8
Test Manager	2	Band 8
Change Management Specialist	2	Band 8
Senior Solution Architect - Digital Health	3	Band 9
Program Manager	2	Band 9
Specialist Project Manager	6	Band 9
Principal Architect	2	Band 10
IT Officer (Technical)	1	ICT 2
Senior Consultant (Technical)	2	ICT 3
Specialist Senior Consultant (Technical)	3	ICT 4
Total FTE = 51		

Cost Savings

- By transitioning from a contractor-heavy workforce to a salaried employee model, the Department can reduce resource expenditure for Health ICT projects, achieving estimated cost savings of over 40%. These savings will be realised through decreased contractor expenditure and the establishment of an internal talent pipeline, minimising the need for ongoing external recruitment.

Parameters for Contractor Engagement

While reducing contractor reliance is a priority, the following criteria outline when contractors may still be engaged:

- **Project-Based Roles:** for short-term or project-based roles where the demand for resources is temporary or specific to a defined project timeline.
- **Specialised Expertise:** When specialised, non-permanent skills are required (e.g., Quality Assurance, SMEs).
- **Part-Time or Limited Engagement:** in cases where a full-time equivalent (FTE) salaried employee is not required, part-time contractors can be used to meet workload demands without unnecessary full-time commitment.
- **Temporary Coverage:** to cover temporary vacancies such as during recruitment or to cover long-term leave where immediate workforce continuity is needed.
- **Critical Deadlines:** in high-profile projects with tight deadlines, contractors may be retained if transitioning roles could jeopardise timely project delivery.
- **Recruitment Gaps:** if recruitment of salaried employees takes longer than expected, contractors should be retained to avoid disruptions.

Contractor Engagement Controls

To minimise contractor reliance, the following measures will be implemented:

- Contractor engagements will require Chief Risk Officer (CRO) approval, with endorsement from the CIO.
- Justification for contractor use must be provided, detailing efforts to recruit salaried employees.
- Contractor rates will be reviewed and must fall within approved ranges to be accepted.
- Regular progress updates on recruitment activities during contractor engagement will be required to the CIO.

Attachments:

- *Appendix 2 - Future Workforce Model Risks*
- *Appendix 3 - Appendix 3 - Draft Implementation Plan*

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Appendix 1 – Current State Workforce Model Risks and Issues

The table below outlines the risks associated with the current state workforce model within Health ICT:

Category	RAID Category	Description	Potential Impact	Mitigation/Treatment Strategies	Rating
Financial Sustainability	Issue	High contractor costs compared to salaried employees increase operational expenses.	Limits budgetary flexibility for critical projects or allocated project scope, jeopardising financial stability and/or the ability for the Department to deliver its strategic priorities.	• Submit Health ICT Project Workforce Optimisation Plan to the A/g Secretary for approval. • Transition to a sustainable workforce model by reducing contractors and increasing salaried positions.	Extreme
Knowledge Continuity	Risk	Contractors often leave without adequate knowledge transfer to salaried staff due to: • short contract terms • contract termination • sudden redeployment to other projects or priorities.	Loss of critical knowledge impacts project delivery, causes delays, and increases dependency on contractors for future work.	• Develop formal knowledge transfer processes to ensure key information is captured and passed on to salaried staff before contractor departure.	High
Skill Retention Challenges	Risk	Persistent internal skill gaps, especially in areas reliant on external contractors.	Long-term gaps in essential skills can slow down project execution, reduce innovation, and increase reliance on costly external contractors.	• Invest in upskilling and professional development for salaried employees. • Develop a talent pipeline and recruitment strategy for critical roles.	High
Variable Quality and Performance of Contractors	Risk	Inconsistent contractor skills can lead to varying work quality and unmet project expectations.	Inconsistent delivery timelines, potential budget overruns, and increased strain on salaried employees to manage project quality and completion.	• Implement strict evaluation criteria for contractor selection. • Conduct regular performance reviews based on defined metrics to ensure quality and accountability.	Medium

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Appendix 2 - Future Workforce Model Risks

Subject to approval of this plan, the following table highlights the potential risks associated with the future workforce model:

Category	Description	Mitigation Strategies	Rating
Impact on Project Timelines	Transitioning key roles mid-project could delay timelines or affect quality.	• Plan transitions around project milestones to minimise disruption. • Retain contractors in critical phases until deadlines are met.	High
Continued Contractor Reliance	Delays in recruitment or insufficient talent pipeline may lead to extended contractor use, increasing costs.	• Develop a proactive recruitment strategy and establish an internal talent pipeline. • Review and optimise recruitment timelines.	High
Knowledge Transfer Challenges	Critical knowledge might be lost if contractors leave before effective transfer to permanent employees.	• Retain critical contractors until their replacement staff are fully operational. • Mandate structured knowledge transfer sessions for all transitions. • Establish robust onboarding and offboarding protocols.	High
Short-term Budget Pressures	Overlapping periods of contractor offboarding and new employee onboarding may temporarily strain budgets.	• Closely monitor budgets and allocate contingency funds for the transition period. • Adjust project budgets for flexibility.	High
Recruitment Delays	Extended hiring processes could disrupt project continuity and cause delays.	• Streamline and prioritise hiring for critical positions. • Expedite high-level role approvals via Secretary and SSMO.	Medium
Resistance to Change	Long-term contractors and teams may resist the transition to salaried employees, causing morale or productivity issues.	• Clearly communicate the benefits of transitioning to salaried roles. • Offer key contractors the opportunity to apply for internal roles.	Medium

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Appendix 3 - Draft Implementation Plan

Timeline, Key Milestones, and Deliverables for Contractor Reduction

The draft implementation plan outlines a phased approach to reduce reliance on contractors in Health ICT over 6 to 12 months. It aims to ensure seamless project delivery and workforce continuity by prioritising critical roles, facilitating knowledge transfer, and recruiting salaried employees, all while mitigating risks and minimising disruptions to key projects.

Phase 1 (within 3 months)

Focus: Planning, approvals, recruitment initiation, and initial contractor transition.

Actions	Deliverables/Outputs	Key Milestones	Timeline
Approval of Workforce Optimisation Plan	• Health ICT Project Workforce Optimisation Plan finalised and approved by A/g Secretary.	• Health ICT Workforce Model approved. • Phase 1 initiated.	Weeks 1 - 2
Health ICT Org Structure Finalised	• Updated Health ICT organisational structure reflecting new positions and reporting lines.	• Future state leadership and project team structures completed, with reporting line adjustments.	
Job Design & Structural Changes	• Collaboration initiated with Job Design to adjust workload and reporting lines. • Structural changes aligned to transition plan.	• Approved reporting structure, allowing Band 9 to report to Band 8 where needed. • Workload adjustments outlined.	
Establishment Cleanup	• Review and cleanup of existing DHT and PMO Establishments.	• Updated establishment report. • Cleaned-up structure implemented.	Weeks 2 - 5
Creation of New Positions	• Bulk PTVE raised for new positions. • Generic SoDs (Statements of Duties) created and approved.	• New positions and SoDs finalised and ready for recruitment.	
Approval for Band 9+ Roles by SSMO	• Band 9 and higher positions approved by SSMO. • Positions ready for recruitment.	• Band 9+ roles approved and prepared for recruitment initiation.	
Contractor Cohort Transition Plan	• Contractor roles identified by project priority for transition to salaried employees. • Transition schedule aligned with key project milestones.	• Transition cohorts, contingency plans, and timeline for contractor replacement finalised.	

Actions	Deliverables/Outputs	Key Milestones	Timeline
Communication Strategy	• Internal Staff: CIO email detailing rationale, transition timeline, and feedback invitation. • Contractors: Formal communication on knowledge transfer expectations and recruitment timeline.	• Internal and contractor communication completed. • Feedback loop initiated to address concerns.	Weeks 5 - 6
Bulk Delegation Minute Submission	• Bulk delegations Minute submitted for Secretary's approval of relevant positions.	• Delegations approved to support recruitment of new roles.	
Cohort 1 - Recruitment Initiation	• Recruitment advertisements go-live for critical roles in Cohort 1.	• Key roles in Cohort 1 advertised, recruitment underway.	Weeks 6 - 12
Knowledge Transfer Plan	• Knowledge transfer plans created for transitioning roles from contractors to salaried employees. • Documentation of key project knowledge completed.	• Knowledge transfer plans in place. • Documentation for continuity completed.	

Key Milestones:

- **15% reduction in contractors** achieved by the end of Month 3.
- **New organisational structure** implemented, aligned with the creation of new positions and recruitment.
- **Clear communication strategy** executed to both internal staff and contractors, ensuring transparency and managing transition expectations.
- **Knowledge transfer plans** in place to ensure a smooth handover from contractors to permanent staff, minimising disruption to projects.

Additional Notes:

- **Risks and Issues Management:** Proactive monitoring of recruitment progress and potential delays, ensuring the impact on project timelines is minimised.
- **Feedback Mechanism:** Continual collection of feedback from internal staff and contractors throughout the transition phase to adjust strategies as needed.

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Phase 2 (3-6 months)

Focus: Continued Contractor Transition, Further Recruitment, Knowledge Transfer Execution.

Actions	Deliverables/Outputs	Key Milestones	Timeline
Health ICT Upskilling Strategy	• Health ICT Senior Leadership to develop a targeted upskilling strategy.	• Develop and approve upskilling strategy.	Weeks 12 - 16
Cohort 2 - Contractor Exits and Recruitment	• 50% of contractors transitioned to salaried roles. • Recruitment for critical positions continues.	• Achieve 50% reduction in contractors. • Continuity of critical projects ensured.	Months 3 - 6
Continued Knowledge Transfer	• Knowledge transfer completion for remaining roles.	• All key knowledge transfer plans executed.	
Staff Performance and Development Assessments	• Implement half-yearly performance reviews for salaried employees starting Q1 2025.	• Implement half-yearly performance reviews.	Month 3 onwards

Key Milestones:

- **50% reduction** in contractors by the end of Month 6.
- **Upskilling strategy** finalised and approved by end of Month 5 to prepare internal teams for future projects.
- **Begin staff performance reviews** by Month 6, aligning development with project needs and evaluating progress in transitioning to salaried roles.

Additional Notes

- **Risk Management:** Continuous monitoring of recruitment progress and potential delays to ensure project timelines remain unaffected.
- **Feedback Mechanism:** Ongoing feedback collection from staff and contractors, with adjustments made to strategies as needed to manage transition smoothly.

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Phase 3 (6-12 months)

Focus: Final Contractor Transition, Full Implementation of Salaried Workforce.

Actions	Deliverables/Outputs	Key Milestones	Timeline
Cohort 3 - Final Contractor Exits and Recruitment	• Transition finalised for remaining contractors roles to salaried positions. • Recruitment for remaining critical positions continues.	• Achieve 80% reduction in contractors. • All critical positions filled with salaried employees. • Continuity of critical projects ensured.	Months 6 - 12
Ongoing Monitoring and Reporting	• Periodic monitoring of performance and recruitment progress. • Final workforce stability report.	• Workforce stability report submitted to CIO.	

Key Milestone:

- **80% reduction** in contractors by the end of Month 12, with all critical ongoing roles filled by salaried employees

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Tasmanian
Government
Health ICT
Department of Health
Phone:
(03) 6166 1360
Email:
hict.pmo@health.tas.gov.au
www.health.tas.gov.au

Department of Treasury and Finance

The Treasury Building
21 Murray Street HOBART TAS 7000
GPO Box 147 HOBART TAS 7001 Australia
Telephone (03) 6166 4444 Facsimile (03) 6173 0219
Email secretary@treasury.tas.gov.au Web www.treasury.tas.gov.au

Tasmanian Government

Doc reference: 25/122679

Dale Webster
Secretary
Department of Health

Compliance with Treasurer's Instructions

As you are aware, each Accountable Authority is required to comply with the requirements of the Treasurer's Instructions, issued under section 51 of the *Financial Management Act 2016* (the Act). As detailed in the Act, Treasurer's Instructions have the effect of written law. Any non-compliance with the Treasurer's Instructions is therefore considered to be a failure to comply with legislative requirements.

For all procurement contracts valued at $50 000 or more, Treasurer's Instruction PF-5 *Accountability and reporting* requires that notices detailing awarded contract information be submitted to the Department of Treasury and Finance for publishing on the Tasmanian Government Tenders website within 10 working days of the contract being awarded.

Treasury has recently been advised that the Department of Health, specifically Health ICT, has a backlog of over 350 procurement contracts for which it has not submitted an awarded contract notice to Treasury within the timeframes required by TI PF-5. It is understood that it is Health's intention that these notices be published on the Tenders website by 30 June 2025 to support annual reporting activities.

In addition to fulfilling the legislated requirement to provide public disclosure of all Tasmanian Government contracts awarded with a value of $50 000 or more, the Tenders website provides reporting functionality for agencies, including producing information which assists in the preparation of annual reports. Data from the Tenders website is also used for a range of whole-of-government reporting functions delivered by Treasury, including Buy Local Policy quarterly procurement statistics released publicly by the Treasurer and information provided to Cabinet.

Given the volume of notices, I advise that Treasury will not be able to complete its usual review of each notice, to ensure accuracy in reporting. Instead, Health will need to ensure all notices are subject to an appropriate quality assurance process prior to submitting the notices to Treasury. Treasury officers will be in contact with your purchasing area to discuss this expectation in more detail.

Apart from representing non-compliance with legislative requirements, the volume of outstanding Health ICT notices will also impose a significant unanticipated impact on the small team at Treasury who undertake the Tenders website functions, including processing and publishing notices. Treasury cannot guarantee that all notices will be able to be captured by the Tenders system by 30 June 2025. If your Department ordinarily relies upon Tenders website reporting to inform its annual report preparation, I recommend that

you consider alternative data capture and assurance activities to ensure Health's reporting requirements for 2024-25 are adequately met.

Please also note that, given the extent of Health's non-compliance with TI PF-5, it will be necessary to specifically identify this reporting failure in the next iteration of the quarterly procurement statistics provided to the Treasurer and Cabinet, once appointed. This disclosure will be necessary to explain the significant uplift in awarded contract data and the distortion it will cause for prior period data that will be reflected in the next publicly available report.

Finally, I note that based on the information available to Treasury currently, a significant portion of the awarded contracts relate to the engagement of ICT professionals. I take the opportunity to remind you of the importance with complying with the provisions of:

- TI PF-3 *Policies impacting on procurement: Goods and services*, in relation to use of the Technology Services List for the procurement of in-scope technology services valued at $100 000 or more; and
- TI PP-1 *Valuation*, in relation to appropriately valuing procurement activity so as to not circumvent any otherwise applicable procurement requirements or thresholds.

If your Department requires additional support to understand its reporting obligations under the Treasurer's Instructions, Treasury is available to provide additional information and guidance as required.

Should you have any queries or require any further information regarding this matter, please contact Penni Wakefield on (03) 6145 5017 or email Penni.Wakefield@treasury.tas.gov.au.

Gary Swain
Secretary

24 June 2025

Department of Health

GPO Box 125, HOBART TAS 7001, Australia
Web: www.health.tas.gov.au

Tasmanian Government

Contact: Office of the Secretary
E-mail: ots.mailbox@health.tas.gov.au
File: SEC25/1421

Mr Gary Swain
Secretary
Department of Treasury and Finance
secretary@treasury.tas.gov.au

Dear Mr Swain

Subject: Compliance with Treasurer's Instructions

Thank you for your correspondence dated 24 June 2025 (your reference: 25/122679) regarding compliance with Treasurer's Instruction PF-5 and the reporting of awarded procurement contracts on the Tasmanian Government Tenders website.

The Department of Health acknowledges the serious nature of the non-compliance identified, particularly the backlog of around 230 procurement contracts within Health ICT that were not submitted within the required 10 working day timeframe. We recognise that this represents a failure to meet legislative obligations under the *Financial Management Act 2016* and sincerely regret the impact this has had on Treasury's operations and broader government reporting.

A breakdown in internal processes was identified as the root cause of this issue. This has now been fully investigated and remediated. The Department has implemented a revised and robust contract reporting workflow, including:

- a dedicated compliance and reporting team within Health ICT to oversee contract notice submissions
- automated tracking mechanisms to flag upcoming and overdue reporting deadlines
- mandatory quality assurance checks prior to submission to ensure data accuracy and completeness
- regular internal audits to monitor ongoing compliance with TI PF-5.

We are committed to supporting Treasury in rectifying this issue and will provide all necessary assistance to facilitate the processing and publication of the outstanding notices. Our team is working diligently to ensure all required notices are submitted by 30 June 2025, and we will coordinate closely with Treasury officers to meet expectations and minimise disruption.

Furthermore, we understand the implications this backlog may have on whole-of-government reporting, including the Buy Local Policy statistics and Cabinet briefings. We will cooperate fully with Treasury to ensure that the reporting failure is transparently addressed in the next quarterly procurement statistics and that any data distortions are clearly explained.

Additionally, we wish to clarify that all contract labour engagements within Health ICT are managed through an open market procurement process, ensuring transparency, competitiveness, and compliance with TI PP-1. This approach supports the principles of fair and equitable procurement and ensures that all engagements are appropriately valued and sourced in accordance with applicable thresholds and policies.

Clarification on the Application of the Technology Services List (TSL) and TTCC Framework

In reference to Treasurer's Instruction PF-3 and the mandated use of the Technology Services List (TSL) for technology service procurements valued at $100,000 or more, the Department of Health seeks to provide the following clarification:

In August 2021, the Department raised concerns with Treasury regarding the limitations of the TSL and TTCC framework in facilitating the engagement of ICT professional services that operate under the Department's direct supervision. As defined within the TTCC framework, such services fall outside the scope of the TSL, which is intended for outcome-based engagements delivered under a defined scope of work, typically at a fixed price.

Although Module 7 of the TTCC framework references ICT professional services, Section 8 explicitly excludes services provided under the customer's direct supervision. Treasury acknowledged these limitations and advised that:

- It was collaborating with the Office of the Crown Solicitor (OCS) to explore adjustments to the TTCC framework to better accommodate ICT contractor engagements via the TSL.
- As an interim measure, OCS would draft supplementary provisions to be used alongside the General Contract Details and Part 8 of the TTCC.

This issue was escalated in September 2021 to the Secretaries of Treasury and Health, the Crown Solicitor, and the Tasmanian Government CIO, recognising that the Department of Health was not alone in requiring labour-hire arrangements for ICT professionals working under departmental supervision. Treasury also explicitly prohibited the establishment of a labour-hire panel via Request for Tender, necessitating individual procurement and contracting for each engagement—resulting in the current volume of contracts.

Despite Treasury's offer to collaborate on resolving the concerns raised, the matter remains unresolved since 2021.

The Department has continued to pursue resolution through discussions with Treasury, Crown Law, DPAC's State Service Management Office, and the Data and Digital Committee (DDC). In September 2024, the Department's Deputy CIO, CIO, and Special Counsel (ICT & Complex Procurement) met with Treasury's Procurement team to again advocate for a dedicated ICT labour-hire panel. Concurrently, the Department began working with OCS to develop a tailored TTCC framework to address this gap. In November 2024, the DPAC Deputy Secretary for Community and Government Services, on behalf of DDC and all State CIOs, formally requested Treasury's support for establishing such a panel.

The Department emphasises that the effective operation of ICT functions across the Tasmanian Government relies heavily on the ability to engage ICT professionals through contract labour arrangements. These professionals are typically required to work under departmental supervision, rather than deliver predefined outcomes under fixed-price contracts. This model is essential for maintaining ICT operations, addressing urgent technical needs, and ensuring continuity across complex systems and services—needs that

are not adequately supported by the TSL and TTCC frameworks.

Recruiting ICT professionals through standard public sector employment channels remains challenging due to the disparity between Tasmanian Government wage structures and market rates for specialist technical skills. This misalignment significantly hampers the ability to attract and retain the necessary expertise. Contract labour arrangements offer the flexibility required to engage skilled professionals promptly and effectively, ensuring continuity of critical ICT services.

Treasury's introduction of the TTCC and TSL frameworks, coupled with the directive against establishing a labour-hire panel via RFT, has necessitated the Department's reliance on individual procurements and contracts. The Department continues to work closely with Crown Law and DDC members to resolve this issue and respectfully urges Treasury to reconsider its procurement processes and Treasurer's Instructions to better support departments in engaging ICT contractors under direct supervision.

In light of the longstanding challenges associated with ICT sourcing and labour hire—particularly the limitations of the Technology Services List and TTCC framework in supporting departmental supervision arrangements—the Department proposes convening a whole-of-government summit on ICT sourcing and labour hire. This forum would bring together key stakeholders, including Treasury, Crown Law, DPAC, and State CIOs, to collaboratively explore practical reforms, share operational insights, and develop a consistent and compliant approach to engaging ICT professionals. We believe such a summit would be a constructive step toward resolving systemic procurement issues while supporting the continuity and effectiveness of ICT services across government.

We appreciate Treasury's ongoing support and reaffirm our commitment to full compliance with all Treasurer's Instructions.

Yours sincerely



Dale Webster
Secretary

30 June 2025

Department of Treasury and Finance

The Treasury Building
21 Murray Street HOBART TAS 7000
GPO Box 147 HOBART TAS 7001 Australia
Telephone (03) 6166 4444 Facsimile (03) 6173 0219
Email secretary@treasury.tas.gov.au Web www.treasury.tas.gov.au

Tasmanian Government

Doc reference: 25/132613
Your reference: SEC25/1421

Dale Webster
Secretary
Department of Health

Compliance with Treasurer's Instructions and the Tasmanian Technology Contract Conditions framework

Thank you for your correspondence dated 30 June 2025.

I acknowledge the ongoing efforts made by the Department of Health to submit the relevant awarded contract notices to Treasury for publishing on the Tasmanian Government Tenders website and note that revised processes have been established to facilitate compliance with Treasurer's Instruction PF-5 *Accountability and Reporting* in the future. I confirm that, at time of writing, Treasury has received approximately 160 of the outstanding awarded contract notices for publication on the Tenders website.

In addition, I note your comments in relation to the Technology Services List (TSL) and Tasmanian Technology Contract Conditions framework in the context of ICT professional services.

As you are aware, the TSL was established in 2021 and requires agencies to undertake a procurement, rather than purchase from a panel, for relevant technology services. In 2021, following substantial engagement with the Tasmanian ICT industry, the then Treasurer approved the establishment of the TSL to replace the previous panel arrangement. This decision reflected the Government's underlying policy intent; to enhance supplier access to Government technology services purchasing opportunities.

While it is generally acknowledged that panel arrangements can provide efficiencies for an agency, it is also the case that a panel arrangement can create barriers to entry for new suppliers; does not support open and effective competition; and does not align with the Government's broader policy position of enhancing access to purchasing opportunities.

Notwithstanding, Treasury acknowledges that the TSL may require some modifications over time to ensure it continues to meet the needs of stakeholders, including agencies.

You have proposed a whole-of-government summit on ICT sourcing and labour hire to address current issues affecting Health ICT professional services contracts. Following the conclusion of the current caretaker period, it would be prudent for Health to undertake initial consultations with the State Service Management Office in relation to Health's intended labour hire arrangements, as well as with Treasury in relation to the scope of the TSL. This approach will ensure that the concerns raised are considered appropriately and

any solution identified is considered in a manner that ensures the integrity and intent of the ICT procurement framework is maintained.

Should you have any queries or require any further information regarding this matter, please contact Penni Wakefield on (03) 6145 5017 or email Penni.Wakefield@treasury.tas.gov.au.

Yours sincerely



James Craigie
Acting Secretary

16 July 2025

Department of Health

GPO Box 125, HOBART TAS 7001, Australia
Web: www.health.tas.gov.au

Tasmanian Government

Contact: Office of the Secretary
E-mail: ots.mailbox@health.tas.gov.au
File: SEC25/1421/5

Mr Gary Swain
Secretary
Department of Treasury and Finance
secretary@treasury.tas.gov.au

Dear Mr Swain

Subject: Compliance with Treasurer's Instructions

Thank you for your correspondence dated 16 July 2025 regarding the Department of Health's compliance with Treasurer's Instructions and the Tasmanian Technology Contract Conditions (TTCC) framework.

We appreciate Treasury's acknowledgment of the Department's efforts to address the backlog of awarded contract notices and confirm that we remain committed to full compliance with Treasurer's Instruction PF-5 *Accountability and Reporting*. We are pleased that approximately 160 of the outstanding notices have now been received for publication on the Tasmanian Government Tenders website.

In relation to the Technology Services List (TSL) and the broader ICT procurement framework, we acknowledge the Government's policy intent to enhance supplier access and foster open and effective competition. However, we wish to formally advise Treasury of a recent development that has implications for our ICT labour sourcing strategy.

At a meeting held on Wednesday, 30 July 2025, chaired by the Deputy Secretary, Community and Government Services (Department of Premier and Cabinet), and attended by senior representatives including the Chief Information Officer of the Department of Health, the Tasmanian Government Chief Information Officer, Crown Law, and the State Service Management Office, the Department of Health advised that it intends to initiate a Request for Tender (RFT) to establish a specialised ICT labour panel. This course of action reflects the Department's assessment that, given the persistent limitations of the current TTCC and TSL frameworks and the urgent workforce demands associated with the Electronic Medical Record implementation, it has no practical alternative to meet its operational and strategic obligations. Meeting participants acknowledged that this approach is warranted given the scale and complexity of current workforce challenges and agreed that there are compelling operational and strategic factors supporting the proposed panel arrangement.

This decision is driven by the Department's urgent and significant workforce requirements in preparation for the implementation of the Electronic Medical Record (EMR) contract. As Treasury is likely aware, the EMR is a cornerstone of the Tasmanian Government's Digital Health Transformation Strategy 2022–2032, which aims to modernise healthcare delivery through digital innovation. The current phase, led by the Bluegum Health Transformation Program, focuses on deploying a statewide EMR system, enhancing tools that support patient flow, and ensuring that digital health services are secure, accessible, and consistently available to all Tasmanians.

Despite significant investment in a targeted recruitment campaign to support the rollout of the Electronic Medical Record and broader digital health initiatives, market response has fallen short of expectations. Of the 40 ICT roles advertised, only two external candidates were deemed appointable after interviews. Alarmingly, several critical roles, including Senior ICT Architect, Senior Test Manager, and Project Managers yielded no suitable hires. These results underscore the difficulty in sourcing the specialised skills required to deliver critical digital health infrastructure and highlight the urgent need for a more adaptable and effective labour sourcing approach.

The Department wishes to reiterate that the current TTCC and TSL frameworks do not adequately support the Department's need to engage a highly skilled ICT workforce. As previously raised with Treasury and documented in our correspondence and meetings since 2021, the TTCC framework—particularly Module 7 and Section 8, excludes ICT professional services provided under direct departmental supervision. This exclusion, combined with the prohibition on establishing a labour-hire panel via RFT, has resulted in a burdensome reliance on individual procurements and contracts for each engagement that do not provide certainty to attract the right skilled people.

This model is not sustainable given the scale and urgency of the EMR implementation and broader digital health initiatives. The Department has consistently advocated for a more fit-for-purpose procurement mechanism, including through formal requests from the Tasmanian Government CIO on behalf of the Data and Digital Committee and all agency CIOs. Despite these efforts, the matter remains unresolved. The Department also recognises that the workforce challenge is multifaceted, encompassing issues such as attracting and retaining suitably skilled staff to Tasmania, inconsistencies in role banding across agencies, and limitations in current procurement mechanisms.

In response, the Data and Digital Committee has committed to prioritising this issue on its workplan and will progress advice to the Secretaries Board to support a whole-of-government strategic solution.

The Department continues to work closely with Crown Law, including the Office of the Crown Solicitor, to develop a tailored TTCC framework that better accommodates ICT contractor engagements. However, in the interim, the establishment of a dedicated ICT labour panel via RFT is essential to ensure the Department can meet its operational and strategic obligations.

We bring this matter to Treasury's attention in the spirit of transparency and collaboration and will continue to engage with both Treasury and the State Service Management Office to ensure alignment with the Government's procurement principles and policy objectives, noting that the scope of any future arrangement must be carefully defined to ensure that contract engagements do not displace roles that are, and should be, appropriately filled by public servants.

Should you have any queries or require any further information regarding this matter, please contact our Chief Information Officer, Brent Feike, on 0429 905 693 or email brent.feike@health.tas.gov.au.

Yours sincerely



Dale Webster
Secretary

13 August 2025

Department of Treasury and Finance

The Treasury Building
21 Murray Street HOBART TAS 7000
GPO Box 147 HOBART TAS 7001 Australia
Telephone (03) 6166 4444 Facsimile (03) 6173 0219
Email secretary@treasury.tas.gov.au Web www.treasury.tas.gov.au

Tasmanian Government

Doc reference: 25/165532
Your reference: SEC25/1421/5

Dale Webster
Secretary
Department of Health

Attention: Brent Feike

Compliance with the Tasmanian Technology Contract Conditions framework

Thank you for your further correspondence dated 13 August 2025.

I acknowledge the current challenges experienced by the Department of Health in relation to its demand for ICT professional services, particularly in relation to the Electronic Medical Record (EMR) program of work. In addition, I note your intention to initiate a Request for Tender (RFT) to establish a specialised ICT labour panel.

As previously advised, the Department of Treasury and Finance remains willing to engage with Health and the State Service Management Office regarding Health's proposed arrangements and the scope of the TSL, to ensure the integrity and intent of the ICT procurement framework is upheld and value for money is achieved.

Notwithstanding the challenges you have outlined, Health's proposal represents a significant departure from the Government's current policy position to enhance supplier access to ICT purchasing opportunities. In this context, it will require consideration by the relevant Minister, in this case the Treasurer. It follows that the RFT process should not commence until advice has been provided to the Treasurer. I can confirm Treasury will endeavour to prioritise this matter as much as is reasonably practicable. Your assistance in this is appreciated.

Noting the above, it would be appreciated if you could provide further detail to Treasury regarding the RFT, including a proposed timeline and details of the scope of the RFT. It would also be useful to provide details of written advice Health has received from the State Service Management Office and the Office of the Crown Solicitor, if this has been received.

Should you have any queries or require any further information regarding this matter, please contact Penni Wakefield on (03) 6145 5017 or email Penni.Wakefield@treasury.tas.gov.au.

Gary Swain
Secretary

1 September 2025

From: Craigie, James (Treasury)
Sent: Friday, 10 September 2021 6:02 PM
To: Feike, Brent (Health)
Cc: Westwood, Josephine (Treasury)
Subject: RE: ICT professional service panel

Hi Brent,

Further to your discussions with Treasury's Procurement team, Treasury is working with the Office of the Crown Solicitor to ensure the TTCC framework appropriately provides for ICT contractors to be engaged using the Technology Services List.

- As a short-term measure, the OCS will draft additional provisions to be used with the General Contract Details, in conjunction with Part 8 of the Details (ICT Professional Services). Agencies should contact Stephen Bendeich at OCS with any questions.

- Treasury is working on a Tenders website solution that will enable TSL Quotations to be published and distributed on a daily basis, in recognition of the timeframes associated with the way agencies engage ICT contractors.

- Regarding witness requirements, Penni Wakefield at Treasury can outline existing system flexibility that is currently available to agencies using the Tenders website.

As previously outlined, any alternative market approach to procure ICT Professional Services directly contravenes the Treasurer's Instructions. In particular, the recent changes to the Tasmanian Government information technology procurement framework preclude the establishment of a panel for technology services that are within the scope of the TSL. Such a panel will create barriers to entry to new suppliers who seek to do business with the Tasmanian Government.

Extensive communication around the change from the ICT Professional Services Panel to the TSL has been undertaken by Treasury, including recognising that the TSL introduces some additional process requirements by agencies seeking ICT professional services. The TSL does not allow for contractors to be engaged without a TSL tender or TSL quotation process being undertaken.

Treasury acknowledges that the TSL may evolve over time, to ensure it meets the needs of stakeholders. The Minister for Finance has also acknowledged this in discussions with industry. Please continue to raise any issues about the new framework directly with Treasury and encourage other agencies and industry to do the same. This will ensure Treasury can address any issues raised in a manner that maintains the integrity and intent of the new framework.

I hope Treasury has provided clarification around the intent of the TSL and a way to resolve the issues raised by the Department of Health.

Regards
James

From: Feike, Brent <brent.feike@health.tas.gov.au>
Sent: Thursday, 9 September 2021 4:06 PM
To: Craigie, James <James.Craigie@treasury.tas.gov.au>
Cc: Ferrall, Tony <Tony.Ferrall@treasury.tas.gov.au>; Morgan-Wicks, Kathrine L (Health) <kathrine.morgan-

wicks@health.tas.gov.au>
Subject: RE: ICT professional service panel

Hi James,

I have now met with Treasury as your email has inferred actions or assumptions that were not correct.

I contacted Treasury yesterday to advise and discuss the following:

- The TSL/TTCC does not support procurement for professional services (provided under the direction, control and supervision of the Department).
    - TI's are specific in this regard, as is the TTCC framework.
        - The TSL is to allow for the engagement of pre-qualified Suppliers, through a statement of work or TTCC Module Order Form (depending on the value), to deliver on a defined scope of work (i.e. an outcome) typically for a fixed price. That is, not under the direction, control and supervision of the Customer.
    - While the TTCC Framework provides for ICT Professional Services (Module 7 – ICT Professional Services), Section 8 of Module 7 (Definitions) states that;

      ICT Professional Services means the information, communications or technology related services described in the Module Order Form. For clarity, ICT Professional Services do not include services provided under the direction, control and supervision of the Customer, or any other service the Supplier will provide to the Customer under the Contract under another Module.
- Industry have approached me for advice (confusion regarding the TSL specifically related to professional services)
- Other departments have approach me for advice (regarding same)

No minute or exemption has been requested of Kath yet, nor have we agreed to run an RFT/Panel on behalf of other Departments.
To be clear, I contacted Treasury to ensure any process we do run is compliant with TI's, Crown Law advice and industry expectation and will not compromise intentions of the TSL or TTCC.

What I have identified is general misunderstanding of the intent of the TSL. Further, although the TTCC appears generally well received by both government and industry, is also misunderstood (we can't use the TTCC for professional services akin to labour hire).

Rightly or wrongly, the previous Professional Services Panel managed by Treasury, together with the GITC framework, has been used extensively by government and industry as way of procuring professional services (provided under the direction, control and supervision of the Customer – i.e. professional services labour hire). The TSL is not a replacement for this.

Recruitment in Government is not competitive for ICT related professional services (especially short-term roles) and we are unable to recruit for key positions. If we don't address this issue, a large number of projects at the Department of Health will soon be at risk as a result of this situation and hence my proactive attempt to resolve. One way to treat this risk is to undertake an RFT for Professional Services (under the direction, control and supervision of Health staff), as has been undertaken by other departments (but prior to the TSL).

Given we are unable to make use of the TSL/TTCC, and (and I agree) an RFT for Professional Services may cause market confusion of the intent of the TSL/TTCC, can Treasury please advise a way forward (which was the trigger for the conversation with Treasury yesterday).
This is an immediate issue for the Department of Health.

Regards,

Brent Feike | Deputy Chief Information Officer/Director HRIS Program
Health ICT
Level 4, 1 Franklin Wharf, Hobart, 7000

Department of Health
Mobile: 0429 905 693
email: brent.feike@health.tas.gov.au
web: www.health.tas.gov.au



From: Craigie, James <James.Craigie@treasury.tas.gov.au>
Sent: Thursday, 9 September 2021 8:38 AM
To: Feike, Brent <brent.feike@health.tas.gov.au>
Cc: Ferrall, Tony (Treasury) <Tony.Ferrall@treasury.tas.gov.au>; Morgan-Wicks, Kathrine L <kathrine.morgan-wicks@health.tas.gov.au>
Subject: ICT professional service panel

Hi Brent,

I understand you had a conversation yesterday with Jo Westwood from our Procurement team and that you are seeking Kath's approval for the Department of Health to establish an ICT professional services panel, for use by DoH and potentially other agencies.

This proposal directly contravenes the recent changes to the Tasmanian government ICT procurement framework announced by the Minister for Finance/Science and Technology. The Treasurer's Instructions preclude the establishment of a panel for technology services within the scope of the TSL.

The new framework is a part of the Digital Futures Strategy and also aims to embed the Buy Local Policy in ICT purchasing decisions.

Over the last two years, Treasury in consultation with the Minister for Finance and the Treasurer, has consulted extensively with agencies and suppliers about the design of the TSL and the broader framework. Treasury is disappointed that you did not raise your issues during the consultation process, or with our procurement team prior to the launch of the new framework less than three weeks ago. Many of the issues you raise can be addressed by working with Treasury, without undermining the new framework or the Government's policy objectives.

The TSL requires agencies to undertake a procurement, rather than purchase from a panel for procurements valued at over $100 000. Agencies have more flexibility to engage directly for procurements below $100 000. We understand that the requirement to undertake a competitive procurement for services valued over the $100 000 threshold creates additional effort by agencies. The policy intent is to give a greater number of Tasmanian suppliers access to Government purchasing opportunities. A panel creates barriers to entry to new suppliers who seek to do business with the Tasmanian Government. This is why the Minister and Treasurer endorsed the TSL, notwithstanding some additional process requirements by agencies when undertaking a procurement from the TSL.

Treasury has worked with Crown Law to create more streamlined documents and processes for procurements from the TSL. We are happy to work with you and agencies to make these processes even easier for suppliers and agencies.

I understand that some of your concerns relate to DoH internal governance decisions about procurements (for example, approvals, delegations, the role of the PRC). Again, there are a number of options within the TI framework that you can consider to make these approvals more streamlined.

Treasury is happy to work with you about TI issues, governance and process requirements, and potential improvements to the tenders website.

Regards
James

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Appendix 3

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QUESTION ON NOTICE

Question No. of 2026
Legislative Council

ASKED BY: The Hon. Bec Thomas MLC Member for Elwick

ANSWERED BY: Leader for the Government in the Legislative Council, the Honourable Tania Rattray MLC

QUESTION:

1. What were the reasons for TasTAFE's decision to discontinue delivery of its laboratory technology qualifications?
2. What financial modelling was undertaken comparing:
    a. the cost of continuing delivery through TasTAFE; and
    b. the cost to State Government of subsidising laboratory technology qualifications through private RTOs?
3. Did this modelling consider the value of existing TasTAFE facilities and equipment, local teaching expertise, industry relationships, work placements and graduate employment outcomes?
4. For each private RTO currently subsidised to provide laboratory technology qualifications to Tasmanians:
    a. which qualifications are subsidised;
    b. through which funding program;
    c. what is the subsidy per student; and
    d. how much State Government funding was provided to it in each of the past five years?
5. For each of the past five years, for the Certificate IV in Laboratory Techniques and Diploma of Laboratory Technology delivered by TasTAFE:
    a. what was the total annual cost of delivery;
    b. how much of that cost was met through TasTAFE's Deed funding;

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c. how much was met through student fees; and

d. what was the student fee for each qualification?

6. Why has a decision been made to subsidise students through private interstate-based RTOs when Government previously provided no subsidy to students to receive the exact same training through TAFE for the Diploma IV course?

7. What consultation occurred with laboratory managers, schools, pathology and health services, industry employers and professional associations before TasTAFE decided to discontinue these courses?

8. The Minister has advised that the decision followed a TasTAFE review undertaken in 2025. Will the Government provide or table that review, including the enrolment, withdrawal, completion, cost and employment outcome data considered?

9. What are the annual enrolment, commencement, completion and graduate employment figures for each TasTAFE laboratory technology qualification for each of the past ten years?

10. How many prospective students sought to enrol or expressed an interest in enrolling in the TasTAFE Certificate IV or Diploma for 2026 after the decision was made not to accept a new intake?

11. What evidence supports Skills Tasmania's conclusion that the current private RTO arrangements will meet Tasmania's expected demand for laboratory technicians?

12. Will the Government provide or table the workforce analysis undertaken by Skills Tasmania in reaching that conclusion?

13. What assessment has been undertaken of current and projected demand for laboratory technicians in:

a. Tasmanian schools;

b. pathology and health services;

c. biosecurity;

d. food production; and

e. environmental and other scientific industries?

14. What changes have been observed in DECYP's capacity to recruit laboratory technicians in northern Tasmania since local delivery of laboratory technology courses in the north ceased several years ago?

15. Given the current private RTO model relies on online learning combined with workplace-based training and assessment, how will people who are not already employed in a laboratory obtain the practical experience necessary to enter the industry?

16. Have any providers indicated an intention to offer a pre-employment laboratory technology training option? If so, which provider/s, when will it commence, where will it be delivered and how many places will be available?

17. What does TasTAFE intend to do with:

    a. existing laboratory facilities and equipment; and

    b. staff currently employed to deliver laboratory technology qualifications?

18. What is the estimated cost of decommissioning TasTAFE laboratory facilities?

19. Did TasTAFE consider retaining laboratory technology delivery before deciding to redirect resources to other priority training areas and, if so, what factors led it to conclude those areas represented a higher priority?

20. In light of Tasmania's ongoing need for laboratory technicians, will the Government and TasTAFE reconsider continuing the delivery of laboratory technology qualifications if the private RTO model does not demonstrate sufficient enrolment, completion and employment outcomes?

ANSWER:

1. In late 2025, TasTAFE conducted a review of qualifications being delivered, as part of this process a number of courses were identified as having low enrolment and completion rates over several years.

   Taking this into account, together with the availability of alternative delivery options through other training providers, it was determined that these qualifications would no longer be delivered by TasTAFE from 2026 onwards

   This decision allows TasTAFE to focus its resources on priority training areas that support Tasmania's workforce needs, in line with the Tasmanian Skills Plan.

2.
   a. TasTAFE undertook financial modelling of the direct and indirect costs associated with delivering the Certificate IV in Laboratory Techniques and Diploma of Laboratory Technology. This included teaching salaries, materials, utilities and associated support costs.

      The modelling looked at how many fee-paying students would be needed to cover the cost of delivering the courses without funding through the Deed of Purchasing Agreement.

   b. Private Registered Training Organisations have delivered subsidised laboratory technology qualifications in Tasmania since 2018, with historical funding and delivery information available to Skills Tasmania.

      As existing subsidised delivery arrangements were already established, separate financial modelling of private RTO delivery costs was not undertaken.

3. TasTAFE's financial modelling considered the direct and indirect costs of delivering these qualifications, including teaching salaries, materials, utilities and support costs.

   The modelling focused on the financial viability of continuing delivery without funding through the Deed of Purchasing Agreement.

4.

a.

RTO NAME	QUALIFICATION
Labtech Training Victoria Pty Ltd	MSL30122 - Certificate III in Laboratory Skills MSL40122 - Certificate IV in Laboratory Techniques MSL50122 - Diploma of Laboratory Technology
ABC Training and Consulting	MSL30122 - Certificate III in Laboratory Skills MSL40122 - Certificate IV in Laboratory Techniques MSL50122 - Diploma of Laboratory Technology
Melbourne Tech Institute Pty Ltd	MSL30122 - Certificate III in Laboratory Skills MSL40122 - Certificate IV in Laboratory Techniques

b.

RTO NAME	QUALIFICATION
Labtech Training Victoria Pty Ltd	Apprentice and Trainee Training Fund and Train Now Fund
ABC Training and Consulting	Apprentice and Trainee Training Fund
Melbourne Tech Institute Pty Ltd	Apprentice and Trainee Training Fund

c.

QUALIFICATION	SUBSIDY
MSL30122 - Certificate III in Laboratory Skills	$5,265*
MSL40122 - Certificate IV in Laboratory Techniques	$9,727*
MSL50122 - Diploma of Laboratory Technology	$11,265*
MSL50122 - Diploma of Laboratory Technology	$13,000**

*Skills Tasmania base subsidy rate
**Labtech Training Victoria Pty Ltd Subsidy

d.

Amount Paid by Calendar Year, All RTOs, All Superseded Courses								
RTO Name	**Code**	**Qualification**	**Calendar 2022**	**Calendar 2023**	**Calendar 2024**	**Calendar 2025**	**Calendar 2026**	**Grand Total**
ABC Training and Consulting	MSL30118	Certificate III in Laboratory Skills	$1,130.42	$14,688.87	$3,717.15			$19,536.44
ABC Training and Consulting	MSL30122	Certificate III in Laboratory Skills			$4,952.09	$7,759.56	$4,158.19	$16,869.84
ABC Training and Consulting	MSL40118	Certificate IV in Laboratory Techniques		$20,983.50	$46,056.56			$67,040.06
ABC Training and Consulting	MSL40122	Certificate IV in Laboratory Techniques			$17,349.19	$19,639.78	$31,656.56	$68,645.53
Labtech Training Victoria Pty Ltd.	MSL30122	Certificate III in Laboratory Skills			$8,942.32	$24,311.71	$1,698.76	$34,952.79

Labtech Training Victoria Pty Ltd.	MSL40118	Certificate IV in Laboratory Techniques		$393.74	$288.73			$682.47
Labtech Training Victoria Pty Ltd.	MSL40122	Certificate IV in Laboratory Techniques			$16,458.60	$36,051.93	$10,682.94	$63,193.47
Labtech Training Victoria Pty Ltd.	MSL50122	Diploma of Laboratory Technology					$9,001.34	$9,001.34

5.

a. Costs are not directly tracked against individual courses, noting financial modelling undertaken indicates the cost of delivering each course sits between $910k - $1.1m per annum that includes direct costs for teaching salaries, materials and indirect costs.

b. The majority of the costs were met by the Deed funding.

c. Tasmanian student fees covered $25-30k per annum in costs for each course with international fees covering approximately $140k over both courses combined.

d.

Certificate IV in Laboratory Techniques					
	2021	**2022**	**2023**	**2024**	**2025**
Deed	$3,242	$3,324	$3,540	$3,734	$3,835
Concessional	$370	$370	$390	$390	$400
Commercial	$15,638	$16,029	$17,070	$18,008	$18,495

Diploma of Laboratory Technology					
	2021	**2022**	**2023**	**2024**	**2025**
Deed	$10,342	$10,342	$11,014	$11,619	$11,935
Concessional	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Commercial	$18,109	$18,109	$19,286	$20,346	$20,900

6. The Tasmanian Government has previously subsidised both the Certificate IV in Laboratory Techniques and Diploma of Laboratory Technology through TasTAFE.

Eligible students have been able to access subsidised training through TasTAFE's Deed of Purchasing Agreement, while private RTOs have also delivered government-subsidised laboratory training in Tasmania.

Private RTOs have delivered the subsidised Certificate IV since 2018 and the Diploma since 2025.

7.

The decision followed a review of the financial viability of continuing to deliver the courses without funding through the Deed of Purchasing Agreement.

This review focused on historical enrolments, delivery costs and whether there would be sufficient demand from fee-paying students to continue offering the courses on a commercial basis.

After Meeting with Department of Health and Department of Education, Children and Young People, Skills Tasmania advises that the available training options can continue to meet workforce needs. The Government will continue monitoring enrolments, completions and industry feedback to ensure Tasmanian learners and employers retain access to appropriate training pathways.

8. **See Attachment 1 - Course Subsidy Review Briefing Document**
See Attachment 2 - Briefing Tasmanian Training Subsidies

9. TasTAFE's annual enrolment, withdrawal and completion figures for the Certificate IV in Laboratory Techniques and Diploma of Laboratory Technology are outlined in the tables below.

TasTAFE does not hold graduate employment outcome data for these qualifications.

Note: All Enrolments Commenced

Certificate IV In Laboratory Techniques	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Enrolled	49	63	38	30	20	23	22	22	19	20	24
Withdrawn	30	29	12	14	6	7	7	5	6	12	7
Completed	19	34	26	16	14	16	15	17	13	8	17

Diploma Of Laboratory Technology	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Enrolled	39	29	21	7	13	11	15	9	11	8	9
Withdrawn	20	8	8	3	0	3	1	3	3	3	3
Completed	19	21	13	4	13	8	14	6	8	5	6

10. TasTAFE is not aware of any prospective students who sought to enrol or expressed an interest in either the Certificate IV in Laboratory Techniques or Diploma of Laboratory Technology following the decision not to accept new enrolments for 2026.

11. Private Registered Training Organisations have been delivering subsidised laboratory qualifications in Tasmania since 2018.

    After Meeting with Department of Health and Department of Education, Children and Young People, Skills Tasmania advises that the available training options can continue to meet workforce needs. The Government will continue monitoring enrolments, completions and industry feedback to ensure Tasmanian learners and employers retain access to appropriate training pathways.

    The Apprentice and Trainee Training Fund allows funding to respond to increased demand, while other contestable grant programs are available to support training for jobseekers and existing workers where needed.

12. Skills Tasmania considered a range of factors when reviewing TasTAFE's proposed changes to the qualifications delivered under the Deed of Purchasing Agreement.

    These included enrolment demand, withdrawal and completion rates, the availability of other training providers, and discussions with private RTOs about their capacity to accommodate additional students if required.

13.

    Skills Tasmania has engaged with the Department for Education, Children and Young People regarding laboratory technician training needs in Tasmanian schools.

    TasTAFE does not undertake specific workforce demand forecasts for individual industries.

    Skills Tasmania considers available information about training demand and industry needs when determining funding priorities and training arrangements.

14. TasTAFE and Skills Tasmania are Advised that the Department for Education, Children and Young People is not aware of any current Laboratory Technician workforce shortages across our government schools and colleges.

15. Practical experience is an important part of laboratory technician training, and the Government recognises the need for pathways for people who are not already working in the industry.

    Private RTOs have established relationships with Tasmanian employers and can work with industry to explore opportunities for workplace-based training and practical experience.

    There are also government funding programs available to support training for jobseekers, including proposals for pre-employment training where there is an

identified need.

16. Labtech Training Victoria Pty Ltd is now funded to deliver Certificate IV in Laboratory Techniques and Diploma of Laboratory Technology to existing workers under the Train Now Fund.

At this stage, no commencement date, delivery location or number of training places has been confirmed.

17.

a. TasTAFE's existing laboratory facilities and equipment will remain in place until the current students complete their training in December 2026.

TasTAFE will assess the future use of these facilities and equipment in 2027, including whether decommissioning is required.

b. Affected TasTAFE staff have been part of the TasTAFE's consultation process in relation to the cessation of delivery and will become redundant at end of "teach out" phase.

18. No decision has been made to decommission TasTAFE's laboratory facilities, and detailed planning or costings have not been undertaken. Preliminary estimates suggest that decommissioning could cost between $60,000 and $120,000, should it be required.

19. As part of its review in late 2025, TasTAFE considered whether to continue delivering laboratory technology qualifications alongside its broader training priorities.

The review identified consistently low enrolment and completion rates over several years, along with the availability of alternative training options through other providers.

Taking these factors into account, TasTAFE determined that its resources could be better directed towards priority training areas identified in the Tasmanian Skills Plan, where there is greater demand for training to support Tasmania's workforce needs.

20. The Government's priority is to ensure Tasmanians continue to have access to laboratory training that meets the needs of industry and employers.

Skills Tasmania will continue to consider training demand and the capacity of existing providers to meet Tasmania's workforce needs.

Should circumstances change, the Government will consider what further training arrangements may be needed to ensure these skills remain available in Tasmania.

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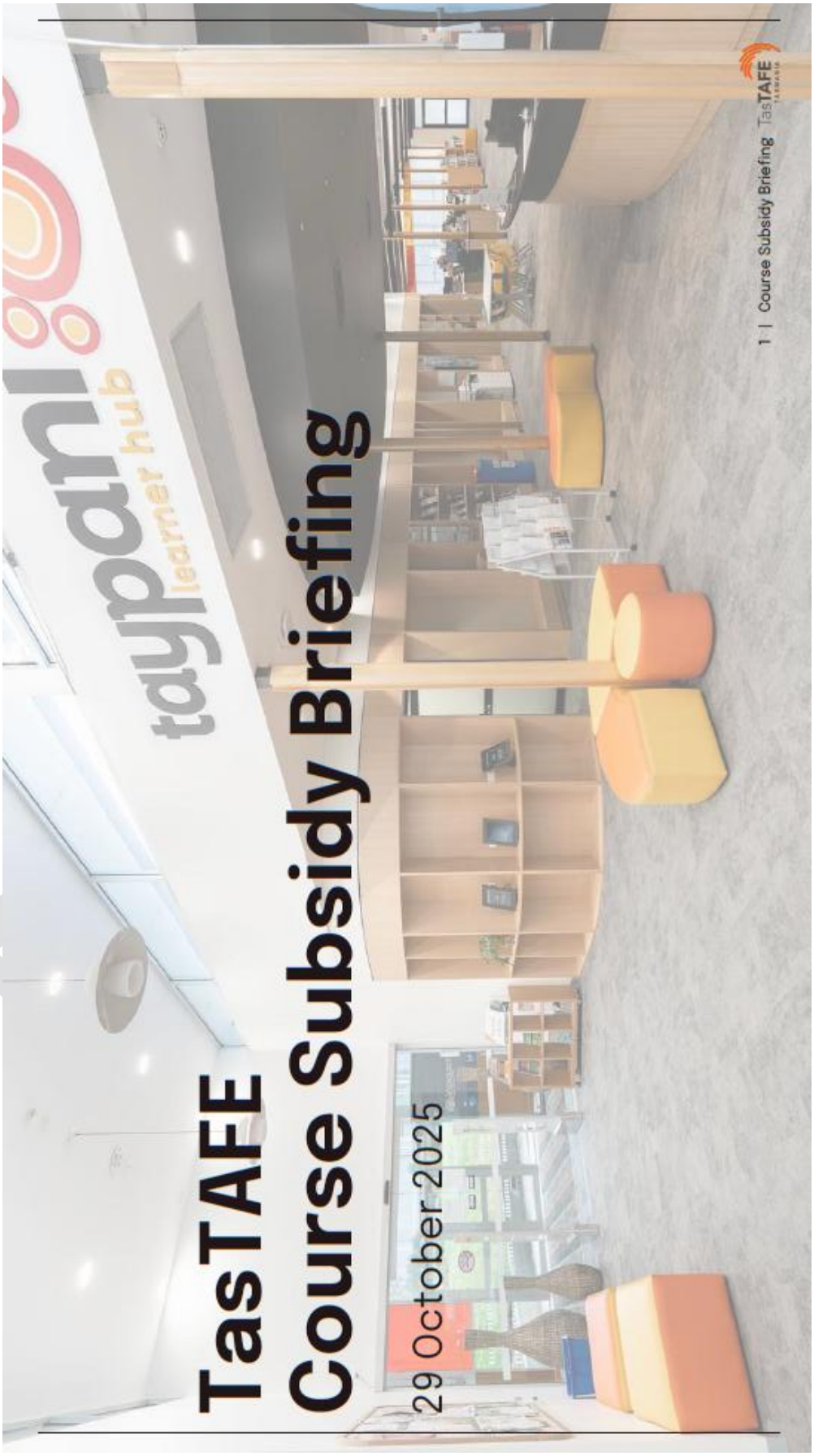
APPROVED



Felix Ellis MP
Minister for Skills and Jobs

Date: 27/10/2026

OFFICIAL: Sensitive


TasTAFE
Course Subsidy Briefing
29 October 2025
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Overview on TasTAFE Funding

TasTAFE entered a process with Skills Tasmania in line with the Deed of Purchasing Agreement principles

- TasTAFE entered a discussion with Skills Tasmania on consideration of a review Government subsidized qualifications delivered by TasTAFE under the Deed pursuant to a framework outlined in the Deed itself.
- The primary purpose was to review qualifications not considered a priority training area outlined in the Deed given new qualifications being delivered or likely to be delivered in priority areas.
- Skills Tasmania and TasTAFE undertook a review of the qualifications set in consideration of:
  - Persistently low enrolments relative to capacity
  - Consistently high withdrawals and by therefore, low completion rates.
  - Qualifications not explicitly included as a priority training area in the Deed.
- The list to the right was the outcome of this analysis.
- Information pertinent to the qualifications was provided to Skills Tasmania for consideration, including enrolment data, completion rates, analysis with justification, market information and transitional arrangements. Skills Tasmania subsequently formally communicated that these qualifications would no longer be covered by the Deed.

AMP30316	Certificate III in Meat Processing (Meat Safety)
CUA30720	Certificate III in Design Fundamentals
CUA31020	Certificate III in Screen and Media
CUA31120	Certificate III in Visual Arts
CUA40720	Certificate IV in Design
CUA40920	Certificate IV in Music
CUA41220	Certificate IV in Screen and Media
CUA41320	Certificate IV in Visual Arts
CUA50720	Diploma of Graphic Design
MSL40122	Certificate IV in Laboratory Techniques
MSL50122	Diploma of Laboratory Technology
MST31022	Certificate III in Apparel, Fashion and Textiles

Course Background

Enrolment Data, Withdrawals, Completion Rates noted below

	Enrolments				Withdrawals				Completion Rates		
Course Description	**2022**	**2023**	**2024**	**2025Q2**	**2022**	**2023**	**2024**	**2025Q2**	**2022**	**2023**	**2024**
Certificate III in Meat Processing (Meat Safety)	11	11	7	0	7	8	3	0	36%	27%	57%
Certificate III in Design Fundamentals	35	74	68	37	22	49	37	18	37%	34%	46%
Certificate III in Screen and Media	0	0	0	50	0	0	0	15	0%	0%	0%
Certificate III in Visual Arts	33	39	63	61	22	24	37	10	33%	38%	41%
Certificate IV in Design	29	41	45	26	11	25	24	9	62%	39%	47%
Certificate IV in Music	12	15	24	24	6	8	18	3	50%	47%	25%
Certificate IV in Screen and Media	19	28	33	20	12	16	21	1	37%	43%	36%
Certificate IV in Visual Arts	30	29	26	52	21	22	19	9	30%	24%	27%
Diploma of Graphic Design	7	7	7	7	0	4	1	0	100%	43%	86%
Certificate IV in Laboratory Techniques	22	19	18	23	7	8	10	4	68%	58%	44%
Diploma of Laboratory Technology	9	11	6	9	5	5	2	3	44%	55%	67%
Certificate III in Apparel, Fashion and Textiles			28	32			15	6			46%
	207	**274**	**325**	**341**	**113**	**169**	**187**	**78**	**45%**	**38%**	**42%**

- A summary of the key information pertaining to the courses no longer subsidized by the Deed of Purchase are noted in the table.
- This table includes pertinent details for these courses with enrolment information, withdrawals and associated completion rates.
- This information does not include completion information for 2025 given this year has not yet completed.

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2025 Course Background

Capacity information further informs this analysis

	Number of places available	Enrolments	Withdrawn	Remaining available places before withdrawals	% Enrolment to Capacity
Certificate III in Design Fundamentals	80	37	18	43	**46.3%**
Certificate III in Screen and Media	120	50	15	70	**41.7%**
Certificate III in Visual Arts	140	61	10	79	**43.6%**
Certificate IV in Design	52	26	9	26	**50.0%**
Certificate IV in Music	25	24	3	1	**96.0%**
Certificate IV in Screen and Media	20	20	1	0	**100.0%**
Certificate IV in Visual Arts	65	52	9	13	**80.0%**
Diploma of Graphic Design	30	7	0	23	**23.3%**
Certificate III in Apparel, Fashion and Textiles	52	32	6	20	**61.5%**
Certificate IV in Lab Techniques	25	23	4	0	**92.0%**
Diploma of Laboratory Technologies	20	9	3	11	**45.0%**

- Noting enrolment, withdrawal and completion data on the prior slide, this slide presents the 2025 TasTAFE capacity for enrolments and the extent any qualifications are oversubscribed.
- Capacity is designated by TasTAFE delivery teams on the basis of space and teacher capacity.
- Most Creative qualifications are below half full, whilst Laboratory Operations vary depending on the qualification.
- Information on withdrawals are preliminary as these are expected to have many more withdrawals recorded between now and Dec as per experience from past years,

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Consultation

Consistent with the Enterprise Agreements, TasTAFE commenced a consultation process.

- Following the decision to no longer have these qualifications covered under the Deed of Purchase, on 25 September TasTAFE informed impacted staff that TasTAFE will no longer be able to support the subsidised or concessional delivery of the qualifications and the qualifications would instead be offered at a commercial price from 2026.
- 10 October 2025 TasTAFE opened formal consultation with impacted team members consistent with requirements in the Enterprise Agreement for Teachers as well as General Staff, which require a proposal that becomes the subject of consultation. It should be noted the industrial instrument requires consultation prior to a final decision being made and implemented, hence this is proposal and not the decision.
- The proposal is that TasTAFE no longer offer impacted qualifications from 2026 as it is likely that they will be unviable when not subsidised by the Deed of Purchase. Noting that there will be a need to teach out Laboratory Qualifications in 2026. The impact of the proposal is that positions will become redundant.
- For clarity, this consultation process is not about whether these qualifications should or should not be subsidized by the Deed of Purchase.
- The consultation process is planned to nominally conclude on 31 October 2025. The change team will prepare a report of the change consultation, and the Executive Director Education will make a recommendation to the TasTAFE Executive for endorsement. The TasTAFE CEO hopes to be in a position to decide on the change by 13 November 2025, with decision to be communicated shortly thereafter.

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Realignment of TasTAFE Resources

TasTAFE resources will be utilized for new courses now and in the future as well as bolstering priority areas

- Per the decision to no longer subsidize these 12 qualifications, TasTAFE will look to refocus resources towards the following:
  - The recently opened Community Health Hub expansion at Alanvale which requires both operational resources and staffing.
  - TasTAFE will soon establish the Clean Energy Centre of Excellence in Burnie which will similarly necessitate operational resources and a staffing compliment that does not currently exist.
  - Remaining funding to be provided to bolster high demand qualifications such as electrotechnology, plumbing, construction, community care and nursing.

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Impact on Current Learners

Qualifications vary in terms of length of qualification, with many finishing at the end of 2025 and some in 2026

- Current learners completing their qualification in 2025 will not be impacted.
- In the event a decision is made to not offer the 12 nominated qualifications as commercial products in 2026, this would naturally impact upon any potential learners wishing to enrol in these qualifications for 2026 onwards if there are not enough enrolments to financially justify operating.
- Notwithstanding the outcome, there remains a small number of learners in the Laboratory Operations qualifications that will be taught out in 2026 which TasTAFE is committed to.