



PARLIAMENT OF TASMANIA

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

REPORT OF DEBATES

Tuesday 31 May 2022

REVISED EDITION

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Tuesday 31 May 2022

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

QUESTIONS

Wage Review - Submission to Fair Work Commission

Ms WHITE question to PREMIER, Mr ROCKLIFF

[10.01 a.m.]

Have you made a submission to the Fair Work Commission's upcoming wage review?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I thank the member for her question. Our Liberal Government has used its balance sheet through COVID-19 to shield Tasmanians, to protect jobs and the economy. The 2022-23 Budget and forward Estimates provide for wage indexation of 2.5 per cent for a total cost of salary increases, allowances and other employment conditions for all industrial agreements. This reflects a 0.5 percentage point increase from indexation provided in the 2021-22 Budget which was 2 per cent.

The 2.5 per cent level of wage indexation is an assumption for the purposes of developing the Budget. It is not a government wages policy. Unlike those opposite and the unions, we will not pre-empt the outcomes of negotiations. I have said consistently -

Ms WHITE - Point of order, Mr Speaker, under standing order 45, relevance. The Premier is going nowhere near answering the question. It was a very straightforward, simple question: has the Government made a submission to the Fair Work Commission about the upcoming annual wages review?

Mr SPEAKER - I am sure the Premier will connect the relevance to his statement. He is allowed an opportunity to answer the question in full. I remind the Premier about relevance to the question and ask him to continue.

Mr ROCKLIFF - Thank you. As I was outlining, we are responsible for state wages and I have not made a submission to Fair Work -

Ms White - You haven't?

Mr ROCKLIFF - No, not as Premier. We are responsible for state wages. As I have said before, unlike those opposite and some industrial advocates and unions, we will not pre-empt the outcomes of negotiations. The Government will negotiate all new enterprise bargaining agreements in good faith. When negotiating new EBAs, we will also be mindful of the impact the wage outcome will have on the Budget position. It is important that all wage negotiation outcomes are fiscally sustainable within the capacity of the Budget and the forward Estimates. Wages account for some 48 per cent of budgeted expenditure and an increase in the

wages above indexation provided in the Budget will no doubt have an impact on the net operating result.

Wage Review - Submission to Fair Work Commission

Ms WHITE question to PREMIER, Mr ROCKLIFF

[10.04 a.m.]

Tasmania is the only state whose government has not made a submission to any of the last four annual wage reviews by the Fair Work Commission. Given average wages in Tasmania are \$11 000 lower than on the mainland and our cost of living is no longer any lower, there is no state that would benefit more from a wage increase for the lowest-paid workers than Tasmania. Why have you not ensured that Tasmania's voice is included in this critical decision-making process?

Recognition Of Visitors

Mr SPEAKER - Honourable members, as the Premier is coming to the lectern, we have here with us today in the Gallery students from grades 5 and 6 of Blackmans Bay Primary School. Welcome to parliament.

Members - Hear, hear.

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I thank the member for the question. The member mentioned cost-of-living pressures, as I understand it. They are very real and have been seen across Australia and the world, driven by the pandemic, the Ukraine crisis, and wider supply issues. Tasmania is not immune to those challenges. Pleasingly, the most recent ABS inflation data shows that the increase in the consumer price index in the March 2022 quarter is less than seen nationally; CPI grew 2 per cent in the quarter, which was less than the national growth of 2.1 per cent. Wages are responding in our tight labour market, as evidenced by the wage price index data.

Annual growth rate is 2.8 per cent, the highest in the country for the fifth quarter in a row, including the private sector at 2.9 per cent and the public sector at 2.6 per cent. Job advertisements are some 129 per cent higher than pre-pandemic levels, and this trend looks set to continue. There is no greater supporter of workers in this state than this Government and I will tell you why. Since we came to government there have been 24 000 more jobs than when Labor-Greens government was in power. Do not come in here crying crocodile tears and pretending you support Tasmanian workers, because between 2010 and 2014 thousands of jobs were lost because of your policies.

Opposition members interjecting.

Mr SPEAKER - Order.

Mr ROCKLIFF - Do not come in here crying crocodile tears pretending you support workers. This is a government that builds a strong economy and employs more people. Some 26 000 more people have been employed over the course of the last eight years because we have had sound fiscal management, we have consistently been investing in infrastructure and, as the Budget demonstrates, we will continue that infrastructure spend and continue that employment growth.

Our unemployment rate is some 3.8 per cent in Tasmania: record levels. Who would have thought we would have an unemployment rate of some 3.8 per cent? It is because we do value Tasmanian workers in both the private sector and the public sector. We have created an environment over the course of the last eight years, and continued to as a result of the Budget released on Thursday, where we are maintaining that momentum in our economy. We expect some 11 000 extra people over the course of the next four years to be employed as a result of our sound fiscal management.

Government members - Hear, hear.

Budget 2022-23 - Affordable Housing Strategy

Ms O'CONNOR question to TREASURER, Mr FERGUSON

[10.08 a.m.]

In handing down your first Budget, Treasurer, you claimed:

This Government is implementing the most comprehensive and ambitious affordable housing strategy in Tasmania's history.

The available data makes a falsehood of this claim. In the past eight years, according to the Productivity Commission, only 578 additional properties have been delivered. In 2016-17 your predecessor promised 941 new homes but only 186 were delivered. In 2017-18, the data shows a net loss of 212 public and community homes. In 2018-19, Tasmanians were promised 1500 new homes, but so far only 697 have been reported as finished.

We have since been promised 10 000 new homes within a decade, but the only new money in the Budget for housing starts the year after next, and a total of \$31 million out of \$1.1 billion, just 3 per cent, is allocated. It is not comprehensive and ambitious; it is a con. How is this first Budget of yours anything but a failure to understand and respond to the depth of Tasmania's housing crisis?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I thank the member for Clark, Ms O'Connor, Leader of the Greens, for her question. One thing that Ms O'Connor is consistent in is her position that we need more housing. The other thing that Ms O'Connor is consistent in is that I know she will deliver an alternative budget this week. The Greens will indicate their priorities. They will show how they will pay for them. Importantly, they will identify what their priorities are as different from the Government's, and no doubt we will debate that in the order of the day today or tomorrow.

However, I must arrest the claims that are being made by Ms O'Connor. We are delivering significant new housing supply in previous budgets, and in this Budget as well. Ms O'Connor, I am aware of your statements in the press. I invite you to speak to housing providers who are partnering with Government to deliver new housing supply.

In last year's budget, we doubled down on our commitment to 1500 additional homes by the end of June of next year, and added to it a new target of an additional 2000, out to 2027. The Leader of the Greens is referencing only the additional \$35 million in the new housing package. She is being misleading in those public statements. It is open to Ms O'Connor to correct the record, if it was an inadvertent misleading. She has failed to acknowledge the other half a billion dollars, that is also allocated in the housing package, including \$204 million in the coming financial year 2022-23.

It is simple maths. We are taking out to 2023 our total package of support to \$1.5 billion. We could not be clearer about that. We accept that there is always more to do. That is why we have not just short-term targets, medium targets and the most ambitious target of 10 000 homes by 2032, it is exactly what Tasmanians are prioritizing. They are our priorities and we are strengthening Tasmania through this Budget. I am extremely grateful for the incredible support that our Government has received from stakeholders since last Thursday.

I want to also correct Ms O'Connor's - I believe - inaccurate statement in the prelude to the question. Our Government is building 1169 homes this year. We will meet our target of 1500 by June 2023, and that does rise to the new targets that I have outlined already. I am surprised that Ms O'Connor would go to other sources of information which are contrasting to ours.

One thing Ms O'Connor may be doing, but I will examine the record and come back if need be, is making the same mistake that Ms Haddad has been making: you are only counting government-sponsored and owned homes. You are not prepared to count our partnerships with the non-government housing providers who, as far as the ABS is concerned, are not considered government, and yet without those partnerships, it would not be plausible to deliver 1500 additional homes by June of next year.

We are finding that by creating these partnerships with the non-government sector community housing providers we are getting great outcomes. Ms O'Connor, I invite you to have another look at that. I am more than prepared to be transparent about that, and I can provide you, or Mr Barnett may provide you with that detail. We are getting great outcomes. When I held the portfolio before, I told the House about St Joseph's affordable homes, which is the most exciting social enterprise in the state right now. They are building homes for people through Centrecare Evolve Housing. They are not considered government houses, but we are sponsoring them. We are putting in the cash and often the church is putting in the land; those are partnerships. Ms O'Connor, I invite you to have another look at that. Those partnerships are creating homes for people who need them, people who are eligible for social housing. They need those homes. St Joseph's is creating jobs and opportunities for some disadvantaged kids in our state.

Mr SPEAKER - If you could wind up please, Treasurer.

Mr FERGUSON - I could not be prouder of the work they are doing. I will conclude on this point: last year we saw 4000 approvals for dwellings in Tasmania. It is an indication of

the pipeline that is being sponsored not just by Government but by mums and dads around Tasmania who are investing in their new homes. It is a great time to be Tasmanian, and we will continue to meet these challenges with a Budget that supports a stronger Tasmania.

Budget 2022-23 - Public Reaction

Mr ELLIS question to PREMIER, Mr ROCKLIFF

[10.15 a.m.]

Can you update the House on how the 2022-23 state Budget has been received?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I thank Mr Ellis for his interest in this matter. It was fantastic to see Mr Ellis on Friday night in Burnie when the Treasurer, Mr Ferguson, and I were there outlining the state Budget and the benefits of the state Budget for all Tasmanians. What the Treasurer delivered last week is about strengthening Tasmania's future and delivering for all Tasmanians. It is about ensuring that Tasmanians priorities are our priorities.

We are taking action on the cost of living, keeping Tasmanians safe, and investing more into health and mental health, education, and housing than ever before. Despite the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Tasmanian economy remains strong. Responsible budget management has been a hallmark of this Government and the 2022-23 Budget is built on this foundation.

I was asked about what others are saying about the Budget. It has been well received. Business and community leaders can see many positives in this Budget. For example, the CEO of Tasmanian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Michael Bailey has said, 'After two years of COVID chaos, it is terrific to see, not just a way out of COVID, but also how well the economy is travelling'. It is also pleasing to see that there is no need for business support this year, which reflects how well businesses are going across Tasmania.

Matthew Pollock, the CEO of The Master Builders, Tasmania, said, 'Tasmania's Government has, again, made good on its pledge to put building and construction at the centre of the state's economic recovery plan. The Budget put forward a pragmatic approach to ongoing support for the construction industry, with a focus on building a fair housing market and continued support for skills and workforce development'.

Luke Martin, the CEO of Tasmania's Tourism Council, said, 'The budget delivers where it matters, and comes on top of an extraordinary support the state Government has given our industry over the past two years as we have battled through COVID-19'.

Robert Mallett, the CEO of The Small Business Council of Tasmania, said, 'The budget handed down by the Tasmanian Treasurer provides consolidation in key areas of health and housing, and an air of quiet confidence as we all regroup from the COVID crunch'.

Community advocates have also endorsed the budget. Shelter Tasmania's CEO, Pattie Chugg, said, 'We welcome the state Government's continued investment in affordable housing'.

The Council of The Ageing, Tasmania, CEO Sue Leitch has said, 'It is pleasing to see the state Government's continued acknowledgement of older Tasmanians via the ongoing funding for these important projects undertaken by COTA'.

The Secretary of Health and Community Services Union, Tim Jacobson, said, 'Good news. Additional paramedics, mental health dollars, expanding the PACER program: primary health services are extremely important'. The Australian Medical Association said, 'In relation to our funding for an improving patient care digital strategy, there is quite a number of areas where there is going to be a lot of positive outcomes'.

The Police Association of Tasmania has also been positive. Colin Riley has said, 'All of the Budget commitments will help protect the Tasmanian community, assist in the safety of our members, and make the state of Tasmania safer'.

Strong endorsements, Mr Speaker, from a number of business and community representatives. I am very proud of the budget. It reflects the times and the difficulties we have had over the course of the last two years of the pandemic. It builds on the strong foundation we have created over the last eight years, and also supports our economic recovery while ensuring that we value all Tasmanians, particularly vulnerable Tasmanians. Housing, health and education commitments reflect that.

I will be very interested today to listen to the Budget reply from the Leader of the Opposition. It is important that after eight years the Opposition finally provides an alternative budget. The Greens often have done. We do not always agree with much. I can provide examples of what alternative budgets look like. I have not seen one for eight years. I reflect on our 2011-12 alternative budget, the 2012-13 road map to recovery and growth; much needed at that time. Clear ideas and a way forward. There was some investment in health there as well in our budget of 2013-14.

You are sensitive about not having produced an alternative budget in almost nine years. Now is your opportunity. This particular alternative budget has great interest from the Deputy Leader, who has been quoting from it in this House. Unable to quote from an alternative budget of their own for the last eight years, they have had to draw on an alternative budget to quote from. We expect the Opposition to outline an alternative plan. That is what the Tasmanian community expects of an opposition. I will be very interested in the Leader of the Opposition's budget reply today.

Budget 2022-23 - Wages and Conditions for Health Workers

Mr O'BYRNE question to PREMIER, Mr ROCKLIFF

[10.22 a.m.]

Your Treasurer's self-described budget with a heart, assumes a 2.5 per cent wage increase for workers, which would mean a pay cut in real terms given the increase to the costs of living in Tasmania. Last week in question time, in response to my question raising the issue of inadequate recognition for our health workers through their wages and conditions, you celebrated that your Government had just finalised negotiations around a COVID-19 allowance.

The cynical reality is that your Government effectively starved health workers into submission. Emily Shepherd from the ANMF said, 'Most of our members will never see the payment'. Lucas Digney from HACSU said the offer was unfair. Meanwhile, health workers across the state are taking industrial action because of the hospital, staffing and resourcing crisis as nurses and allied health professionals flee to the mainland for better pay and conditions. You know your current treatment of health workers, combined with your wages position, will drive our already crumbling hospitals and health system further into chaos.

Will you, for the sake of public health, abandon this bloody mindedness and take real steps to value our health workforce?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I thank the member for the question. The greatest asset in the health system is our people. A major focus of the Government is on recruiting and maintaining health staff across the state to ensure that our hospitals and health facilities are well equipped, to deliver a quality health service to the community. There is evidence of this in the fact that the number of FTEs has increased in our health system over the past couple of years. Between 1 July 2020 and 30 June 2021, we saw an increase of 655 paid FTEs across the department. We have increased FTEs overall by 604 this financial year. That is 1259 new health FTEs from 1 July 2020 to early March 2022. That works out to almost two additional people being recruited every day in the health system for the past 20 months.

It has been much needed, given that we have been through a pandemic and the increase in demand on our health system which I often speak. The last budget reflected some investment in improving culture across our health system. In the 2021-22 budget indexation was 2 per cent. This Budget reflects a 0.5 per centage point increase from the indexation provided in last year's budget, so 2.5 per cent.

Mr O'Byrne - Why are they taking industrial action, if everything is rosy?

Mr SPEAKER - Order.

Mr ROCKLIFE - I am a strong believer in working with our industrial advocates and unions. I am not going to pre-empt the outcomes of those negotiations, Mr O'Byrne. The Government will negotiate all new enterprise bargaining agreements in good faith. I do not accept the premise that this Government does not value our health workforce. Clearly we do, because we are investing more and more into health and employing more and more people, much needed as a result of the pandemic and the rising demand for our health system, as well as the system improvements we are making in our health system.

For example, the significant investment of \$475 million over the next 10 years, \$150 million over the forward Estimates, in a digital health strategy, which our health advocates, especially AMA, have been calling for.

That will ensure that more time by our clinicians and our valuable health professionals can be spent on our patients and less on paperwork. This has been roundly endorsed by many people within the health sector. I thank the honourable member for his question, but there is no government stronger on valuing their health workforce than this Government. I remind the

member that it was not too long ago when you were in government, cuts were made to the health workforce, where you sacked a nurse a day for nine months. We are different.

Ms Butler - For 10 years you have been using that line. Get some new material. Your first budget cut \$260 million out of health, mate.

Mr SPEAKER - Order.

Mr ROCKLIFF - They have not forgotten it, Ms Butler. We will always stand up for our health workforce and investing in the right areas to ensure patient care in the right place at the right time.

Annual Wage Review for Lowest Paid Workers

Ms WHITE question to PREMIER, Mr ROCKLIFF

[10.28 a.m.]

Will you formally support the federal Labor Government's submission to the annual wage review and back a pay rise for people on the minimum wage that at least keeps pace with the soaring cost of living?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, the new Prime Minister, Mr Albanese, who I look forward to meeting in person in the not too distant future, after first committing to a wage increase of 5.1 per cent during the election campaign for Australia's lowest paid workers, has now walked away from that and instead is asking Fair Work for an increase without specifying a particular number.

It appears that our new Prime Minister understands the need for responsibility in wage setting, and that any wage increase needs to be both affordable and sustainable for the private sector as well as the public sector. If you are asking me will I work constructively and sit down with the Prime Minister, the answer is yes. I have had a discussion with the then Prime Minister elect on the Sunday following the election. In many respects we share similar aspirations for both the country and Tasmania. We will work constructively together.

Ms WHITE - Point of order, Mr Speaker, under standing order 45. Again, it was a very simple question and you have positions where you have ruled on this in this past. Could you please ask the Premier to direct his attention to the question: will he join the federal government's submission to the Fair Work Commission? I ask you to ask him to address the question; it is a very simple yes or no answer.

Mr SPEAKER - The Premier is allowed to answer as he sees fit. I cannot direct the Premier to do anything except to maintain the point of relevance, and I believe the Premier had made that connection.

Mr ROCKLIFF - I did, absolutely. I am always willing to work with the Prime Minister in a constructive way for the benefit of workers, both public and private, in Tasmania. I am looking forward to the Prime Minister delivering commitments that were made to Tasmania at the last election that frankly are welcome; good commitments in health, for example, urgent

care centres and other investments, and I believe we will have a very constructive working relationship with the new federal government.

Calvary Hospital, Lenah Valley - Accident and Emergency Department

Ms JOHNSTON question to MINISTER for HEALTH, Mr ROCKLIFF

[10.31 a.m.]

It has been over two months since Calvary Lenah Valley Hospital closed its accident and emergency department on weekends. This has put the public health system, already stretched to breaking point, under more pressure, as the Royal Hobart Hospital must absorb these weekend admissions. This is a highly undesirable situation. What discussions have you had with Calvary and what is your plan to return their emergency department to full operation so that Tasmanians can access emergency health services when they need them?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I thank the member for the question. Since Calvary signalled the closure of their ED we have been working closely with them. They announced on 25 March this year that due to medical staffing resource constraints the emergency department at the Lenah Valley campus would temporarily reduce its hours of service from Monday 7.30 a.m. to Friday 4 p.m.

Since that time, I am advised there has not been any discernible change in the Royal Hobart Hospital ED attendance that can be attributed to the Calvary closure. The other private hospital ED in Hobart has advised of an average increase of six attendees a day, seven days a week since the Calvary ED closure. The Royal Hobart Hospital has standing processes in place to manage patients who present to the Royal Hobart ED, undergo a clinical assessment, require admission and elect to be admitted as a private patient. The new private-public liaison nurse position began at the Royal's integrated operations centre on 7 February this year, with coverage seven days per week. The aim of the liaison nurse includes reviewing private patients with a view to transfer them to private facilities if clinically appropriate.

Calvary Hobart is a very important strategic partner of the Tasmanian Health Service and plays a vital role in delivering activity for public patients to ensure delivery of the state Government's elective surgery targets outlined in the statewide elective surgery four-year plan. Our department continues to work closely with the Calvary hospital, which is actively recruiting for additional staff to enable a return to normal emergency department operating hours on weekends.

Budget 2022-23 - Public Reaction

Mr WOOD question to TREASURER, Mr FERGUSON

[10.34 a.m.]

Can you update the House on how the Budget has been received in the community? Are you aware of any alternative plans or, indeed, alternative budgets?

Ms White - You got the same question. The Premier didn't do a good enough job, so the Treasurer wants a go.

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I thank the member for Bass, Mr Wood, for his question. I noticed it immediately seemed to get under the skin of the Opposition Leader, because the feedback around the community has been really positive and favourable. I thank members of the Tasmanian community, particularly those from stakeholder organisations, for their great interest and the expressed support for our Budget, as we have been speaking with Tasmanians.

This Budget is about strengthening Tasmania's future and making sure we are delivering on our vision for Tasmania to be a place where everybody can feel supported, included and encouraged to be the best they can be. The Budget seeks to harness our comparative advantages, and Tasmania has significant advantages over other places around the world to live.

As we saw from the community presentations, particularly with the business community on Friday, we were able to outline the very strong position that our economy is in right now and how we are seeing, as a result of our partnerships across government with business and not-for-profit organisations, we are able to see our unemployment rate go down to 3.8 per cent. As the Premier has outlined, 26 000 more people are in jobs today and we are seeing the number of people in full-time employment also growing.

The Budget deals with those areas of public concern as well and we are building stronger public services. We are seeing now a record of \$11.2 billion into Health, \$8.5 billion into Education, Skills and Training and \$538 million into Housing, capital and services: part of our record \$1.5 billion investment over the next 10 years, which I spoke about earlier.

Importantly, this Budget is providing a new landmark in infrastructure investment with a total \$5.6 billion -

Opposition members interjecting.

Mr FERGUSON - upsetting Dr Broad greatly, but this is an investment at a time where interest rates are low. Government is able to borrow at very competitive rates and build infrastructure that we should have been doing decades ago, so we are catching up on the legacy and building infrastructure that our growing state needs into the future. The Labor Party is very upset about our record on infrastructure but we need it. We have to have better hospitals and more and better schools. We need the Bridgewater bridge, one of my personal favourites. We need to have a safer Midland Highway, we need the irrigation schemes, we need to have contemporary rail, but Labor is not happy about it. That is the feedback I have had from Labor, but that is not the feedback from the community.

With all the good news and the very hard work, I have to say, of this Government over the last eight years, it has not been easy. We have at times found it very hard to progress our economic agenda, normally because of the opposition from the Labor Party who would rather hold Tasmania back.

Stakeholders outside of politics have spoken glowingly of the Budget that I delivered last Thursday. Master Builders CEO Matthew Pollock said, "The Rockliff Government has again -

Ms White - You've already said that. We've already heard that.

Mr FERGUSON - Well, I am going to say it again because I do not think it registered.

Opposition members interjecting.

Mr SPEAKER - Order.

Mr FERGUSON - Mr Pollock said:

The Rockliff Government has again made good on its pledge to put building and construction at the centre of the state's economic recovery plan. The Budget put forward a pragmatic approach to ongoing support for the construction industry with a focus on building a fair housing market and continued support for skills and workforce development.

Mr Pollock would be disappointed to hear the reaction from members opposite to what are very wise words about one of the singular strengths that we have been able to harness in last year's budget and in this year's Budget - building more homes and supporting jobs through an exciting industry of construction, whether it is the civil, residential or commercial building sectors.

Civil Contractors Federation CEO Rachel Matheson said Tasmania's economy would continue to be strengthened in coming years by the civil sector. The feedback I was provided with on Friday was remarkable. Dr Broad will agree with me on that. He might not be allowed to say he agrees but I know he does.

Ms O'CONNOR - Point of order, Mr Speaker, under standing order 48. We have had to listen to the Treasurer congratulate himself for five minutes and we are not even halfway through question time.

Mr FERGUSON - I will accept the chastisement from the Greens defending Dr Broad. I know he agrees with me, because he followed me all day on Friday, like a stalker. He was on my tail all day, hoping for a nugget of negativity. He will not have found it.

The support we have received from the stakeholders at the Friday breakfast, the Launceston lunch and at the Burnie dinner was something that makes us very grateful.

In terms of an alternative, I am not a bit obsessed about Labor, but if they are a serious opposition they would produce an alternative budget. Until they do, I think Ms O'Connor is not only member for Clark, Leader of the Greens, but also, potentially, the unofficial leader of the Opposition.

Budget 2022-23 - Environment Budget

Dr WOODRUFF question to MINISTER FOR ENVIRONMENT and CLIMATE CHANGE, Mr JAENSCH

[10.41 a.m.]

At a time of biodiversity crisis, with endangered species hanging on by beak and claw and waste pollution ballooning, you decimate the environmental management budget. After removing the fund to separate the EPA, your cut is nearly \$50 million over the forward Estimates. The extra money for threatened species assessment and recovery is a drop in the ocean compared to the number and complexity of pressures these animals and plants face. Tasmanians who understand the mountain of waste we produce will be outraged you killed off funding to become a plastic-free state with a circular economy.

As Environment minister, do you agree this is a slap in the face for people working to protect species? How can we possibly keep our suburbs and wild places free from unchecked waste without significant investment?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I thank the member for Franklin for her question. The Tasmanian Government has taken important steps to progress the structural and organisational separation of the Environment Protection Authority. Dr Woodruff in her question acknowledged that significant changes have been made there for the better. The separation of the EPA from the Department of Natural Resources and Environment created a new, independent state EPA. This change has reaffirmed the independence of the EPA. Our Government believes that independent and robust environmental assessment and regulation is an essential part of Tasmania's planning and approvals system through the resource management and planning system.

The new model will ensure public confidence in environmental regulation in Tasmania and promote certainty for proponents. The Budget commitment includes an increase of \$2 million per year, ongoing, for additional resources to increase the rigour and integrity of environmental assessments.

The additional funding will also allow for an increase to the number of environmental regulatory and compliance staff for the broader regulatory requirements and environmental management of the finfish industry. This includes an additional senior compliance officer, Director of Finfish Compliance, and Director of Environmental Regulation.

Dr WOODRUFF - Point of order, Mr Speaker,, standing order 45 on relevance. I did not ask about the EPA. I asked about the \$50 million cut to the rest of the Environment budget.

Mr SPEAKER - I cannot put words into the minister's mouth. They will answer the questions the way they see fit.

Mr JAENSCH - Thank you very much, Mr Speaker. Dr Woodruff's question really did include reference to the EPA budget allocation. I have no hesitation in responding to that. Also, the Budget includes \$500 000 per year to support new independent accommodation for staff of the EPA after separation from NRE Tasmania.

This is a Government with integrity and heart, one that is courageous and accountable and delivers on its commitments. We have proposed legislative amendments to confirm the separation of the EPA and to provide for increased transparency. Our bill remains open for public consultation.

Claims that funding for environmental management drops significantly over the forward Estimates are simply not true. The reason for the decrease in funding listed against environmental management is the reallocation of funds to the EPA now established as an independent state authority. We have increased funding for the EPA, including \$2 million for additional resources and \$500 000 for new independent accommodation. The EPA's budget is now included in volume 2 of the Budget papers. I encourage members to take a look at this, to see the increased investment our Government is providing.

Budget 2022-23 - Wages and Conditions for Health Workers

Ms DOW question to PREMIER, Mr ROCKLIFF

[10.45 a.m.]

The Treasurer has described the wages policy outlined in your Budget as a reality check. What your wages policy means is a real wage cut of more than 3 per cent for all the nurses, paramedics, doctors, public health staff and other workers across Tasmania's health system. These hardworking Tasmanians have given so much to their fellow Tasmanians over the last two years. Isn't it you who needs a reality check if you think they deserve a real pay cut?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I thank the Deputy Leader of the Opposition for her question. I look forward to the Leader of Opposition putting a number on what the Opposition would say in their alternative budget when it comes to a wage increase. Clearly you have a number to say today? I asked a simple question, and it has never been so quiet in about 45 minutes over there.

The Budget as delivered by the Treasurer on Thursday provides for a wage indexation of 2.5 per cent for the total cost of salary increases, allowances and other employment conditions.

This reflects a 0.5 per cent increase from the indexation provided in last year's budget. I reject the premise in the honourable member's question that we do not value our workforce. Of course we do. We are employing more in the health workforce since July 2020: 1200 more within our health system to support better health care and better delivery.

I thank our health workforce for the challenges they have experienced, the disruption not only in the workplace but the enormous efforts they have made to keep Tasmanians safe during what has been an extraordinarily difficult time. We want to work with our workforce on system improvement, ensuring we are investing in the right areas, which I believe we are; investing in ensuring we are improving the culture across the health workforce. We have commitments in the Budget and, as announced in last year's budget, that would reflect that. We will sit down and negotiate in good faith with all unions. That is the best way to do it. We are not pre-empting the outcomes of negotiations. The Government will negotiate all new enterprise bargaining agreements in good faith.

Budget 2022-23 - Wages and Conditions for Health Workers

Ms DOW question to PREMIER, Mr ROCKLIFF

[10.49 a.m.]

Our health workers need more than your hollow offer of thanks: they need action from the Government. Day after day, night after night, Tasmania's nurses, paramedics, doctors and other staff work in our health system that is falling apart at the seams. They do so for less pay than what they would get anywhere else in the country. As the ANMF's Emily Shepherd has said, morale among our health staff is hanging by a thread and your Budget shows that you clearly have no insight into the major risks the Tasmanian health system is facing when it comes to having a workforce to deliver health services.

How can Tasmania expect to retain, let alone recruit, the healthcare workers we need if you are going to cut their pay by more than 3 per cent in real terms?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I thank the Deputy Leader of the Opposition for her question. Our health workforce will recognise in this state Budget some \$11.2 billion of health expenditure allocated over the next four years, \$500 million more than last year. As I said before, working with our commissions, nurses, GPs, and health professionals to build an improved health system, investing, yes, but also system improvement as well.

You mentioned Ambulance Tasmania looked at the secondary triage, the PACER initiative, which has also been welcomed. There is investment into digital health - almost half a billion dollars' worth of investment over the course of the next 10 years. There is health infrastructure improvement: we are including \$654 million in funding to deliver health infrastructure projects over the next four years and one-and-a-half billion over the next 10 years to improve our health infrastructure, which no doubt would be very welcomed by our workforce.

When it comes to sitting down and working with our health professionals, we have done that with the Health Recruitment Taskforce, where we had the AMA, HACSU, the ANMF and departmental representative working on the challenging issue worldwide and nationwide, in terms of recruiting health professionals to our public service. We will continue to work alongside our health professionals. There are many good examples of where we are doing that. Our elective surgery plan, \$196.4 million; statewide four-year elective surgery plan; a commitment in last year's budget but aimed to reducing our elective surgery waiting lists; and a clinician-led patient focus and it is working. Over 12 000 elective surgery waiting list in January 2021, down now to almost 9700, coming down, needs to go further.

We have been very upfront and honest with the Tasmanian community. Those waiting lists are too high, particularly when it comes to the number of people outside the clinically recommended time frames. We need to work harder on that and that is why we sit down with clinicians and invest in the appropriate areas to bring those waiting lists down. We will continue to not only listen to our workforce, but also value the work they do.

Budget 2022-23 - Housing Strategy

Mr TUCKER question to MINISTER for STATE DEVELOPMENT, CONSTRUCTION and HOUSING, Mr BARNETT

[10.53 a.m.]

Can you update the House on additional measures being put in place to provide more accommodation for homeless Tasmanians, as well as how we will work with building, construction, housing and the homelessness sectors on a collective response to the current challenges facing Tasmanians?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I thank the member for his question and his special interest in this very important matter. I can say the Budget last week provides an incredibly firm foundation for the most ambitious and comprehensive investment in housing and homelessness that a state government has ever seen.

There is a capital investment over the next four years of \$538 million. In this year alone from 1 July through to 30 June next year, \$204 million. For those who have difficulty in reading the budget papers, it is there in black and white. If anybody either here in this place or elsewhere wants some assistance in reading the budget papers, please contact me directly or my office.

Opposition members interjecting.

Mr SPEAKER - Order, Member for Franklin, order.

Mr BARNETT - That is almost 36 per cent of the 10 000 homes -

Mr SPEAKER - Order, member for Bass. Order.

Mr BARNETT - we plan to build over the next 10 years through to 2032. \$1.5 billion. That is all new capital funding.

We are investing a whole lot more. There is a lot of clamour on the other side. They do not appear to be interested in the housing and homelessness issues and the initiatives we have to support those vulnerable Tasmanians.

We know and accept it is very challenging and why we are not denying that. We have partnered with the building and construction industry. Yesterday, Mr Jaensch and I signed, together with the building and construction industry key stakeholders, a memorandum of understanding to collaborate, to work on accessing the 6500 extra skilled workers we will need into the future, on top of the 24 000 we already have in the building construction sector. I thank those stakeholders for their terrific support and minister Jaensch for spearheading the Hi Vis Army to help address those supply chain and other demands to get that pipeline of work happening.

Members interjecting.

Mr SPEAKER - Order.

Mr BARNETT - We announced \$6.85 million for Safe Space in Hobart, Launceston, and Burnie. That is very important because it is supporting the vulnerable, those sleeping rough. Mrs Alexander, my parliamentary secretary, and I had a round table soon after I was appointed. The feedback from that round table in Launceston is that there is more needed and there is a demand. I wanted to announce today that I have recently approved an expansion of our Safe Spaces in Hobart, Launceston and Burnie.

I have announced funding support for a further 22 spaces statewide during this winter period, during this time period: \$71 000 for additional 11 beds per night for the Launceston Safe Space; \$54 000 to provide an additional increase of 5 beds per night for the Hobart Safe Space; and \$20 000 for an additional six beds per night for the Burnie Safe Space program.

Members interjecting.

Mr SPEAKER - Order.

Mr BARNETT - This is really important and the opposition does not seem to be interested in vulnerable or homeless Tasmanians with the incessant interjecting and they do not seem to be interested in this initiative. It is quite rude.

In addition, I have announced earlier, a plan for a special ministerial reference group to address the gaps, challenges, and the opportunities to work with Government and I am pleased to advise today that will happen. On 11 July, with my parliamentary secretary, together with the Premier, we will be meeting with those stakeholders, the first reference group meeting.

Opposition members interjecting.

Mr SPEAKER - Order, I have had enough this morning of continually interjecting on the minister. The next person that interjects, look out.

Minister, if you could wind up now, please.

Mr BARNETT - Thank you. To those reference group members, I say thank you for participating in that very important group to assess the challenges, the opportunities and provide that feedback to Government. It is looking at the building construction sector, the housing sector, homelessness sector, and community services. We are looking at the wrap-around services and the challenges. In addition, as an update, in terms of the Housing Authority, we are working at speed to ensure that Housing Authority is set up and that legislation will be released for public consultation in the not-too-distant future.

We are very serious about this top priority in terms of housing and homelessness. Nothing could be more important. We factored it into the Budget and recognise there is much more to do. We are going to do that with the support of our plan, with the support of our Budget, and we of course, will await the alternative budgets from the Opposition.

TasWater Charges

Mr WINTER question to PREMIER, Mr ROCKLIFF

[11.00 a.m.]

Yesterday, TasWater chairman, Dr Stephen Gumley wrote to Tasmanian councils, telling them that TasWater's end of year underlying profit projections are ahead of budget and the company will now pay a \$4 million special dividend to councils this week. Given TasWater's profitability, how can you justify a coming average \$450 hit to Tasmanian households and businesses over the next four years, as directed by your Government's 2019 memorandum of understanding?

ANSWER

Mr Ferguson - Were you one of the mayors who opposed our takeover?

Mr SPEAKER - Order, the Premier has the call, order.

Mr ROCKLIFF - Thank you, Mr Speaker, and I thank the member for his question. As members know, the Government became a 5 per cent shareholder in TasWater with a view to reducing price increases and investing in much-needed capital upgrades. The remaining 95 per cent of TasWater is held by local government. Contrary to what you like to claim, TasWater is not a GBE and the Government does not have the ability to control or direct the operations of the business, nor does it receive a dividend in return.

However, through the MOU, agreed between the Government, TasWater, and its local government owners, our investment secured a price freeze for TasWater customers during the 2019-20 financial year, an agreement of a future cap on increases at no more than 3.5 per cent. The price freeze was subsequently extended to the 2020-21 financial year as part of the COVID-19 support package. A price increase of 3.5 per cent was required from 1 July 2021, the first increase, as I am advised, since 2018.

The Tasmanian Economic Regulator has recently released the 2022 Water and Sewerage price determination final report, for the period from 1 July 2022 to 30 June 2026. In its determination, the regulator has allowed for a maximum annual price increase, as I am advised, of 3.71 per cent, compared to an annual increase of 3.5 per cent contained in the TasWater proposed plan. TasWater has the flexibility to set prices below that level, I am advised.

Thanks to the MOU negotiated by the Government, prices are capped by agreement at 3.5 per cent through to 2024-25, lower than the maximum allowed by the regulator. The TasWater board has proposed annual price increases of 3.5 per cent consistent with the MOU and including the additional year of 2025-26.

This is about state governments working together with TasWater and local government to protect our Tasmanian customers.

Budget 2022-23 - Education Infrastructure Investment

Mrs ALEXANDER question to MINISTER for EDUCATION, CHILDREN and YOUTH, Mr JAENSCH

[11.03 a.m.]

Can you update the House on how the 2022-23 budget will secure the future of Tasmania by investing in education infrastructure?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I thank my colleague, Mrs Alexander, for her question and her interest in strengthening Tasmania's future. Education is the single most powerful driver for improving economic and social outcomes in Tasmania including health and life expectancy, happiness and productivity. The Government is strengthening Tasmania's future with record funding for education, skills and training in the 2022-23 State Budget of \$8.5 billion over the forward Estimates.

In 2022-23, the department will continue its focus on building a high-quality, equitable education system that supports the engagement of all learners. I have already spoken in this place about our investment of \$36.4 million over four years and \$12 million ongoing for safeguarding children and young people in our schools.

We are also delivering the largest state investment in education infrastructure across the budget in forward Estimates in more than 20 years. The Tasmanian Government's current allocations for capital works totals \$250 million over the forward Estimates, including \$69.7 million in 2022-23 alone.

In terms of new capital initiatives announced in this budget, our Government is committing an additional \$20 million over four years for a number of key projects. The budget includes \$10 million in 2022-23 to enhance outdoor learning spaces at schools as part of our ongoing response to COVID-19, bringing the total investment to \$12.8 million. Further, \$2.8 million has already been invested last financial year for the first tranche of schools that have identified opportunities to develop outdoor learning spaces. An additional \$10 million is now committed as part of the 2022-23 budget for more schools to develop their outdoor learning spaces.

We know that breaks from being inside can help manage the risk of spreading COVID-19. We also know that innovative learning spaces can also support development in teaching and learning and provide new ways of engaging students. Again, I pay tribute to our dedicated teachers, who, faced with the challenges of COVID-19, have turned adversity into opportunity and created innovative learning opportunities for our kids.

This investment in developing outdoor learning spaces in our schools is for the long term. We will hold on to the innovations created out of necessity to enrich our schools and learning for future generations of students. This budget is about strengthening Tasmania's future and that is why we are adding to our significant track record of investment in education through investing in outdoor learning spaces.

The electrical infrastructure in our schools is also ageing and effective asset management requires ongoing upgrading of infrastructure. In this budget, \$2 million per year has been allocated for a total of \$8 million over four years to ensure the electrical switchboards in our schools are upgraded in a timely manner. With this investment, we can be assured that our schools can continue to deliver safe and modern learning facilities. I commend our Department of Education for maintaining a comprehensive preventative maintenance program to keep our schools safe and cater for changing needs.

Ms O'Connor - When are you going to provide the answer to the question we asked the other day?

Mr SPEAKER - Order.

Mr JAENSCH - We are committed to developing projects that ensure schools across the state have high quality education facilities that support improved learning and increased student engagement. Our current capital works program includes exciting new builds at Legana and Brighton, and for the North West Support School and major redevelopments at schools such as Penguin District School, Sorell School, Hobart City High School, Cambridge Primary School, Exeter High School, Lauderdale Primary School, Montello Primary School and Cosgrove High School.

The construction of six new Child and Family Learning Centres, including East Tamar, Waratah, Wynyard, Glenorchy, Kingston, Sorell, and West Ulverstone. We are supporting the development of facilities for agriculture in schools at Bothwell District School and Campbell Town District School, renewing and upgrading outdated classrooms to develop contemporary learning spaces in schools across the state, delivering a renewable energy schools program that will rollout solar panels in over 100 government schools.

The upgrading of toilets at 42 high schools and district school sites, improving the safety of student bathrooms and upgrades to other school assets and facilities that add to the life of the school and the options available to students, including upgraded school ovals at Mount Nelson and Woodbridge schools. I thank the school communities who have written to me in support of their schools and their students' needs and priorities.

This budget is about making Tasmanians priorities our priorities, and that is why we are adding to our significant track record of investment in education.

Cost of Living in Tasmania

Ms WHITE question to PREMIER, Mr ROCKLIFF

[11.09 a.m.]

Tasmanians are in the grip of a full-blown cost of living crisis. Rents are at record levels, petrol prices are at record levels, and groceries are up. Water and electricity are about to go up, and council rates are going up, thanks to your new bin tax. Other state governments are providing as much as \$400 to support their people with utility bills, yet instead of doing anything to support Tasmanians, you sent your Treasurer to try to mislead them. Last week, he told *The Examiner* that:

To assist with the cost of living pressures, the budget would contain concessions, valued at \$305 million.

He failed to mention that this was less than in the Budget last year. Premier, why are you cutting cost of living support in the middle of a cost of living crisis?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I thank the member for her question. I will be clear: there has been no cut to concessions in this budget.

Dr Broad - There has, absolutely there has.

Mr ROCKLIFF - Dr Broad, you are shadow treasurer and you have not asked a single question all day, so pipe down.

Dr Broad - You are misleading the House, Premier.

Mr SPEAKER - Order.

Mr ROCKLIFF - The value of concessions has increased in line with the Government's commitment to assist low income Tasmanians with the impact of increases in the cost of living.

Dr Broad - Come on, chain saws.

Mr ROCKLIFF - Wrong, Dr Broad. You said, on 26 May - and to rub it in - 'the \$305 million of cost of living relief Mr Ferguson bragged about is actually a cut compared to last year's budget'. Wrong. The Government provides to eligible Tasmanians, a range of concessions and discounts and the cost of important services provided by Government businesses and local government. This includes support in relation to council rates, water and sewerage costs, electricity costs as well as travel on the TT-Line vessels.

Over the 2022-23 Budget and forward Estimates period, the Government will provide approximately \$305 million in concessions and this includes: \$79.2 million for council rate remissions; \$39.1 million for water and sewerage concessions; \$185.8 million for electricity concessions; and the 2021-22 electricity concession included \$12 million for the winter energy supplement. When this is taken into account, the value of the electricity concession has increased by more than \$5 million in the 2022-23 state Budget.

Council rates remission and the water and sewerage concessions are also increased annually, as they are indexed and in accordance with the Hobart CPI. The electricity concession is revised annually to reflect any increases in price approved by the Tasmanian Economic Regulator.

The state Opposition once again is peddling falsehoods -

Dr Broad - Wrong again.

Mr ROCKLIFF - Wrong again? If you are so worried about all of this Dr Broad, you would be asking a question on your Budget reply day, and you are not allowed to. They will not allow you to ask a question. Why?

Opposition members interjecting.

Mr SPEAKER - Order.

Ms WHITE - Point of order, Mr Speaker. To relevance, standing order 45. There is not a more serious issue than cost of living at the moment for Tasmanians. The question to the Premier was 'can he confirm there has been a cut'? He has confirmed that there is. He is now misleading the House by claiming otherwise. He needs to be truthful.

Mr SPEAKER - The Premier has answered the question.

Dr Broad - You should join UAP, mate.

Mr SPEAKER - Order, Dr Broad.

Mr ROCKLIFF - All jurisdictions - worldwide and across our nation - are seeing costs of living rise. We have some \$305 million in concessions across the forward Estimates, as I have said.

Dr Broad - Which is less than the year before. He is misleading the House.

Mr SPEAKER - Order.

Mr ROCKLIFF - I will not repeat myself: \$39.1 million water and sewerage indexed as well.

Members interjecting.

Mr SPEAKER - Order. The Premier is about to conclude his answer. I am sure you want to listen to it. For the benefit of the next group of children from Grade 5 Blackmans Bay Primary School, I am sure you will show some respect to the Premier.

Mr ROCKLIFF - When it comes to delivering the lowest, or among the lowest, regulated electricity prices in the nation, we saw the price hikes. That is why this Government takes it seriously. We saw the damage created by your Government when there were enormous price hikes of some 65 per cent. We capped prices for four years. Last year, we delivered a \$125 winter energy supplement for 93 Tasmanians, and we froze water prices for two years and capped them going forward. During COVID-19, I remember as Minister for Education, we waived school levies at a cost of some \$14 million in relief to families and we also waived all school debts for 2019.

We do listen to Tasmanians, we take costs of living very seriously, and that is backed up by our actions.

Time expired.

PETITION

Housing Crisis

[11.16 a.m.]

Ms O'Connor presented a petition signed by approximately 816 citizens of Tasmania, requesting that the House:

- (a) support legislation that will permanently restrict short term stay to the primary residence of any homeowner.
- (b) support legislation to permanently cap rents at a maximum of 30 percent of the income of tenants.
- (c) support legislation that will permanently ban the eviction of any tenant without good reason.
- (d) support legislation to build or repurpose a minimum of 10 000 dwellings for public housing by 2030.
- (e) support legislation that will guarantee housing for all and secure housing as a human right

Petition received.

RETAIL LEASES BILL 2022 (No. 30)

ELECTORAL DISCLOSURE AND FUNDING BILL 2022 (No. 25)

ELECTORAL MATTERS (MISCELLANEOUS AMENDMENTS) BILL 2022 (No. 26)

First Reading

Bills presented by Ms Archer and read the first time.

SITTING TIMES

[11.22 a.m.]

Mr STREET (Franklin - Leader of the House) - Mr Speaker, I move -

That for this day's sitting the House shall not stand adjourned at 6.00 p.m.
and that the House continues to sit past 6.00 p.m.

I received a request from the Manager of Opposition Business yesterday afternoon that we not bring on the local government bill until 5.00 p.m. to allow the Labor Party to get some amendments drafted to that bill. We are more than happy to meet that request so we will not bring the bill on until 5.00 p.m. There is no intention to go back to the budget bills after the

local government bill tonight. The House will adjourn once the local government bill has been through every stage, noting that we need to get it through this House today to meet the time lines I have laid out previously.

[11.23 a.m.]

Mr WINTER (Franklin) - Mr Speaker, I acknowledge and thank the Leader of the House for agreeing to that timetable and allowing us to take the time to ensure our amendments have been through the OPC. There is quite a process to go through for the Opposition to get access to that and I appreciate the Leader being willing to work with us through that issue.

Motion agreed to.

TABLED PAPER

Public Accounts Committee - Report

Mr Tucker tabled the following report of the Parliamentary Standing Committee of Public Accounts:

Review of Selected Public Works Committee Reports - Midland Highway, Mangalore to Bagdad Stage 1 and Midland Highway, Kempton to Melton Mowbray Stage 1 - No. 27 of 2015; and Midland Highway, Perth to Breadalbane Duplication - No. 28 of 2015.

Report received.

RETAIL LEASES BILL 2022 (No. 30)

ELECTORAL DISCLOSURE AND FUNDING BILL 2022 (No. 25)

ELECTORAL MATTERS (MISCELLANEOUS AMENDMENTS) BILL 2022 (No. 26)

Bills presented by Ms Archer and read the first time.

SITTING TIMES

Mr STREET (Franklin - Leader of the House) - Mr Speaker, I move -

That for this day's sitting the House not stand adjourned at 6.00 p.m. and that the House continue to sit past 6.00 p.m.

Motion agreed to.

MATTER OF PUBLIC IMPORTANCE

Valuing Health Workers

[11.24 a.m.]

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

That the House take note of the following matter: valuing health workers.

The last two years have been very difficult for our healthcare workers and the situation is only getting worse as we move into winter and see increasing pressures on our health system. Each day, donned in full PPE, it is hard to even get a drink break for some of our hardworking healthcare workers managing increased patient loads and endless staff shortages. They are overworked and underpaid.

The pandemic should have been a wake-up call and reality check for this Government. Our essential workers and healthcare workers continue to keep us safe, day in and day out. If you reckon you have had a tough day in this place, try working in the Department of Emergency Medicine at the Royal, or as a paramedic out on the run, or as a community nurse on the west coast. Do a shift at the Royal Hobart Hospital or your local hospital on the medical ward. I have not for a long while, but I can clearly remember what it was like and I can only really imagine how bad it has become now. Managing COVID-19 outbreaks, emergency care and bed capacity, all whilst providing outstanding patient care to Tasmanians is what our healthcare workers do each and every day.

The care economy is an intrinsically important part of our economy, particularly in regional areas, and is important when people decide to live here or raise their family here. It is linked directly to productivity and health, in my mind, and good health outcomes. A respected, properly remunerated and valued health workforce is critical to productivity growth right across Tasmania.

Education and training are critical to this too, but to date there has been a very poor link between training and workforce preparedness and planning across the healthcare system in Tasmania. We are suffering the consequences of this, and as more people choose to walk away from health as a profession, given the strain of the last two years and the fact that they are not adequately remunerated here in Tasmania, and as they do in other states as well, it is going to be really difficult for us to attract health professionals to work in Tasmania. We need to look at new ways to incentivise, support and provide opportunities for Tasmanians to upskill and become part of our healthcare workforce across Tasmania. Our demographic is such that we will need to increase our workforce and prioritise the Health budget and health services that we provide to Tasmanians.

The minister and Premier proudly espouses the increase in staff and beds included in the Budget. There is \$50 million in this Budget that was handed down on Thursday, but then the funding stops. The demand will not stop though, Premier, so why is that funding not continued in the out-years? At this time we need actions. Actions speak louder than words. You say you are negotiating with the health unions in good faith, so why are they considering or undertaking industrial action right now across Tasmania? That is not a good sign of their good faith in that process.

Do you agree, Premier, that our healthcare workers and public sector workers need to take a reality check, as your Treasurer suggests? The 2.5 per cent wage increase in your Budget is a slap in the face to our healthcare workers. They deserve better from this Government.

I will read from the media release that the ANMF put out post the Budget, and it was interesting to note that the Government did not read anything from this in their Dorothy Dixers today before the House. Emily Shepherd said:

Unfortunately, what we have seen is a government that clearly has no insight into the major risks the Tasmanian health system is facing when it comes to having a workforce to deliver health services. Across Australia, we are seeing other states aggressively recruiting precious nurses and midwives with incentives and excellent conditions. This will leave Tasmania out of the competition for resources which we desperately need and are in short supply. What the budget needed was a crisis taskforce for the nursing and midwifery workforce that would result in 600 additional full-time equivalent nurses, 50 full-time equivalent additional midwives, scholarships for midwifery students so they can be paid in their first year ...

and to encourage more nurses to take up midwifery:

and a range of incentives to attract and retain members in the highest risk areas such as emergency departments, intensive care and midwifery.

where we see the highest risk to Tasmanians when there are staff shortages.

Unfortunately, this Budget has been another blow to nurses and midwives, who were holding onto hope that the Budget would deliver the critical resources required to support a workforce whose morale is hanging by a thread. If action is not taken soon, the current staffing crisis is likely to worsen, placing the Tasmanian Health Service and our community at risk.

The ANMF will now consult with members about escalation of industrial action, given that this Budget is likely to further reduce the goodwill of members that the Tasmanian Government are continuing to rely on to run the health system.

It could not be any clearer than that. It even goes to the fact that the Government has been reluctant to provide a COVID-19 allowance, and that has been described as unfair by the health unions. Premier, I wrote to you about the COVID-19 allowance late last year and have only just received a response. You have still failed to deliver that for our Tasmanian health workers. You are very quick to continue to thank our healthcare workers, as we should, and today I again put on the record my thanks to them, but what we need is action.

You are very quick to say you are concerned at the state of the health system. What we need is action. The current way of doing things, Premier, is just not working. There is a systematic flaw in this Budget, and that is workforce development. Nowhere is that more important right now than across our healthcare workforce.

How many vacancies are there across the health system, Premier? What is the cost of ramping and chronic bed block? How can you expect to attract healthcare workers if you offer them a 2.5 per cent pay rise? How do you expect them to stay and want to work for you? It is an incredibly serious problem that we are not going to have enough healthcare workers to provide the services that we need into the future in Tasmania.

Premier, it is time your Government took a reality check. If we do not increase the pay of our healthcare workers, improve the culture, fix the ramping and bed block, and invest appropriately in primary and preventive healthcare, Tasmanians are going to continue to suffer. Your economic management is not working for Tasmanians.

[11.31 a.m.]

Mr ROCKLIFF (Braddon - Premier) - Mr Speaker, I thank the member for bringing the matter of public importance to the Chamber today. Our Government has delivered more funding, more staffing, and more health services than any previous government. That is evidenced by our budget: \$11.2 billion to Health over the next four years.

The greatest asset to our health system is our people. I will continue to say it. I am quick to say it and I say it often because as I visit various health settings across Tasmania, I see the hard work of our health professionals in our Eds, in our wards and other hospital settings across Tasmania.

I want our Tasmanian health service to be a workplace of choice where everyone feels valued. As Minister for Mental Health and Wellbeing, I am a big believer in supportive work environments which recognise and empower individuals to make positive changes and provide opportunities for growth.

The Government's major focus is on recruiting and retaining health staff across our state to ensure our hospitals and health facilities are well-equipped to deliver quality health services to the community. The Department of Health has had a considerable increase in paid FTE since the beginning of the pandemic. Between 1 July, 2020 and 30 June 2021, we saw an increase of 655 paid FTE across the department. I am advised that we have increased FTE overall by 604 this financial year.

That is a total of 1259 new health FTE from 1 July 2020 to early March this year. That works out to nearly two additional people being recruited every day in our health system for the past 20 months. A considerable proportion of FTE growth in the Department of Health is in direct frontline patient care. That means more nurses, more doctors, paramedics and allied health professionals in our health facilities.

At the end of March this year, paid FTE for the Department of Health was 12 175. With a workforce of this size, vacancies will continue to occur. The department has implemented a number of strategies to fill roles across the entire service. Along with recruiting additional staff, we are also implementing new innovative programs across the health service aimed at managing the workload of our dedicated professionals.

The member mentioned the COVID-19 allowance. An agreement has been reached with the unions to pay health employees after 30 consecutive days of their health facility experiencing COVID-19 escalation level three or above. The Royal Hobart Hospital, the LGH, and the statewide mental health services have been at this escalation level since 30 April, 2022,

so health employees working in these workplaces will receive the allowance from 30 April until the escalation level reduces. Work is now in place to implement this payment over the next six weeks.

We are not only investing in our health workforce, valuing our health workforce, we are also investing in infrastructure and innovation. There is no greater example than our digital health strategy. Our Budget has allocated \$150 million over the next four years to upgrade our digital health infrastructure. That will transform for the better the way we deliver patient care across Tasmania.

This investment will see the launch of a new statewide fully integrated care platform that will enable our hospitals, our GPs, our community health, allied health and other specialist providers to seamlessly communicate and share information with each other to enhance clinical decision making.

I welcome the comments made by Dr Helen McArdle, the former Tasmanian president of the AMA, about our investment in digital health. She noted that there are a number of areas where there are going to be a lot of positive outcomes, such as getting patients into clinics, getting patients into hospital, but also ensuring that GPs are fully informed of what has happened while they have been in hospital and can pick up their patients, much quicker once they are discharged. Patients will see greater equity in health outcomes across Tasmania's dispersed population and improved experience with less time waiting for services, less duplication of care, and advanced scheduling of appointments.

It was great to be at the Mersey hospital on Sunday. We are investing \$4.7 million over two years to implement a bedside medication management program. Pharmacy technicians will be assigned to hospital wards to manage the process of ordering and administering medicines for patients. It was great to get a firsthand look at practical examples of how this will work when I was at the Mersey Community Hospital just a few days ago talking to pharmacy technicians. It means that nurses and midwives spend less time chasing administrative tasks, freeing up hundreds of hours each week. This initiative will allow our staff to focus on the patients' safety, as patients will get their medication on time and will not spend longer in hospital than is necessary. This will free up beds for people who need them.

Digital health strategy, bedside medication program, PACER, secondary triage - we are making many innovations across our health systems, not only investing in more staff, but also investing in innovation and infrastructure. I want to thank all of our dedicated staff across the health service for the care they provide to members of the community every single day. Our Government is committed to supporting you, to ensure Tasmanians get the right care, at the right place, at the right time.

[11.38 a.m.]

Ms BUTLER (Lyons) - Mr Speaker, it is important that we value our health workers in Tasmania. I come from an HR background. I have a Masters in Human Resource Management and worked many years as a human resource manager. One of the biggest things we learnt in HR, which I thought this Government had its head around, was that your people are your best assets. Without them you cannot function properly. You will not be productive and you will not be able to achieve the outcomes which are desired.

Without paying, without proper retention, without proper means to address insufficiencies in staffing, the Tasmanian health system will not improve. The Government will need to understand that. I do not understand, and I will never understand, why you are not giving Tasmanian health workers a proper pay rise. I do not understand why, when we can see a mass exodus of Tasmanian health specialists leaving our state to move to other places, nothing is being done to address that. The first way to address that would be to pay people properly. We all remember the Tasmania of old, where we had cheap rent, we had cheap housing, where we had cheaper power, and where the cost of living was pretty cheap, compared to living on the mainland. Those were things that gave us a certain strength in keeping people here and also attracting new people here. Not only did we have the world's most beautiful place to live in, fabulous community connections and a safe place to bring up our children, but we also had a lower cost of living, so having low wages compensated for that. People made their decisions based on that.

Our young people thought, 'Hang on, I can buy a house if I stay and live in Tasmania', or 'I can buy a block of land if I stay and live in Tasmania', or 'I can pay the rent here in Tasmania as a university student because it is affordable, it is cheap, I can get through', but now we are in a situation where none of those advantages are there anymore.

We have to face the fact, and this Government has to face the fact, that things have changed here in Tasmania. If you want to attract the best workers, if you want to hold on to your talent, if you want Tasmanian kids with the talent, brains, drive, motivation and initiative to stay here, you have to be able to pay them properly. You have to give them an incentive to stay here in Tasmania.

What we are seeing, especially in this Budget, is the Government is just either unable or completely out-of-touch to understand that people are leaving in droves. We can all name probably five or six people we know, people we love, who have left Tasmania in the last five to 10 years, especially in the last five years, to move interstate because they have access to better wages, better access to health care and better access to education if they live in another state. We even have members of our families, parents, our ageing population, who are leaving Tasmania because they know that the health systems in other states are better than the health system here. They know that they do not have the long waiting lists. People who have spoken to me have said they believe that moving interstate actually saved their lives because they were able to access much shorter waiting lists to be able to get the treatment they require.

I do not understand why this Government is not focusing on valuing our health workers. If we look at the crisis we have at the moment, especially in the aged care sector, we do not have enough people to look after our older Tasmanians. That is a fact. We know that untrained workers are being used in some of those facilities because we just do not have them, and there is no proper strategy around retaining and training those aged care workers.

We know in our disability services we have huge problems. We cannot find enough specialists and people trained in disability care. We know that the NDIS systems are really lacking in ability to meet the demand. We have to meet the demand and the way to do that is to pay people properly, to give people a real wage rise. The way to do that is to comprehensively look at strategies that will increase our capacity to train and retain health sector workers. It is very important.

We also know that in our Tasmanian hospitals we cannot meet the staffing demands. When you have the ANMF, the AMA, HACSU, the mental health sector and the disability sector all crying out to pay their staff properly, I think you need to listen. That is your reality check, because that is actually what is going on outside these walls.

It does not take someone with a human resources background to understand that your people are your best assets. We want to keep Tasmanians here and we want to meet this demand that is going to continuously grow. We have an ageing population. We have 120 000 Tasmanians that are now living in poverty. That is one in five Tasmanians, one in five children who are going to bed hungry in Tasmania.

We have huge problems. The cost of living is out of control and we really must address the problems that we are finding in our health sector. If we do not do that we are going to see even more of a mass exodus. As a government that is your job and it is your job to listen to what all the experts are saying. We even have the Health and Community Services Union's Robbie Moore saying that the Budget was a letdown for the health system and its workers. We have the Australian Medical Association's Dr John Saul saying he held concerns for the state's ability to attract staff. It is time to act. Take your head out of the sand. This is your reality check.

Time expired.

[11.45 a.m.]

Dr WOODRUFF (Franklin) - Mr Speaker, we were very surprised to read the Budget and see the underinvestment in Health this year. There is no doubt that the Premier and Minister for Health has made some very significant contributions in a number of areas and they are welcome, but what is missing is the sort of investment that very important healthcare worker organisations like the ANMF have been calling for, for a number of years now.

As other members have spoken about, those areas are especially in valuing the work and properly compensating the workers who every day care for us when we are in the greatest need. Nurses and midwives are currently working overtime and double shifts on a regular basis because there are not enough permanent staff in the nursing pool and working with ratios which, according to the best national healthcare standards we have, are too high to ensure the best possible health outcomes that can be provided to patients if the proper ratios are met.

We have an enduring situation in Tasmania. It has been going on for a long time, but under this Government, over the last eight years, nothing has improved. This Government came into office in 2014 scorning the Labor-Greens government during 2008 following the global financial crisis for having, in their words, created a broken health system, but they have taken the health system of the state they were in charge of in 2014 and ground it into the ground even further.

The situation with paramedics in Ambulance Tasmania and the situation with nurses turning up for shifts and making them stay on for double shifts is absolutely unsupportable. This is not news to the Minister for Health and it was not news to the previous minister for health, Michael Ferguson, but what is very disappointing and incredibly insulting to nurses is that the Health minister and now Premier has not taken the opportunity, on the back of the good work in goodwill that has been done by the ANMF and other health organisations, to look at investment in the workforce.

The recommendation that has been clearly made is that we are desperately failing in Tasmania and we need to have a long-term pathway for recruitment and for retaining the excellent healthcare workers we have. At the moment we are totally reliant on overtime and agency staff. It is affecting morale terribly and COVID-19 has made the pressures graver than they were.

The Greens widely consulted with stakeholder groups before the 2021 election and what they told us was that unless we have a plan for recruitment and training and retention of staff that has to include appropriate pay and other incentives, we will never be able to keep our beautiful staff here in Tasmania. I believe the minister mentioned before that the department has been recruiting two staff a day for the last two months -

Mr Rockliff - Twenty months.

Dr WOODRUFF - Twenty months. That is in a workforce of 12 175 and the point is how many people have left? We want to know what the actual increase is in the pool. The evidence of nurses and midwives, who are on the wards every day, is that it is not having any effect at all on their working conditions; the ratios of nurses to patients; the amount of overtime that is still being required; and the casualisation of the nursing pool.

We clearly do not have a plan that is supported by our nurses and midwives' union, the ANMF, which is threatening industrial action. The Greens showed that it was possible to prioritise the funding and the investment that is required for our long-term future. We did that last year in our alternative Budget. We listened to the ANMF, and funded 25 clinical educators and 50 clinical coaches because these are the people that are needed to support early graduate nurses and midwives and to continue to upskill existing ones.

We also funded 600 new graduate nurses and 120 permanent pool staff of nurses and midwives, so there is no requirement - except in extreme circumstances - for double shifts or working overtime. These are the sorts of conditions that states on the mainland are increasingly employing in their state hospitals. That means there will be a gradual erosion in our nursing pool, as people, given the cost of living and price of housing in Tasmania, will understandably need to move interstate to be able to support themselves, for their own survival and their family's survival.

When 120 000 people are living in poverty in Tasmania, and you have nurses and midwives not being well paid for the work that they do, it is understandable that we will be losing people if we do not increase the amount of support that we give. It is critical that the Government rethinks the investment into nurses and midwives.

Time expired.

[11.52 a.m.]

Mrs ALEXANDER (Bass) - Mr Deputy Speaker, I welcome the opportunity to add my thoughts on this very important topic, which is improving the workplace environment in the hospital. This is a major focus for the Tasmanian Government, especially in the situation where there is a strong desire to support a patient centred care environment. Obtaining that patient centred care environment hinges on a number of factors, and that includes the workforce and the capacity to support that workforce.

There is no doubt that improving staff satisfaction and engagement is the way forward to support, attract and retain staff. In the 2021-22 Budget, there was a commitment for \$5 million over four years, which focuses on implementing a cultural improvement program with the aim of supporting staff to collaborate and solve problems, and empower and respect each other. This program is called the One Health Cultural Improvement Program. Over the next five years, the Health Department is undertaking activities to improve in five focus areas: leadership and accountability; leadership and management capability; workplace values and behaviour; health; and safety and wellbeing systems and processes.

A number of other programs need to be mentioned, including: the Speaking Up for Safety cultural change program; a pathway to excellence; hospital accreditation processes; and the staff surveys. It is very important to also mention in that context that the Government is committed to supporting the health workforce, by ensuring that the workforce meets the needs of Tasmanians, not just for now, but also into the future. I refer to Workforce 2040, which is our Department of Health long-term strategy to shape the health workforce. Investing \$15.7 million over four years to implement the Department of Health Workforce 2040 strategy, which was actually released in September 2021, this strategy has been developed through extensive consultation with the clinicians, various stakeholders, education providers and consumers. It aims to improve the workforce with strategies to develop staff with a targeted recruitment and building of a positive workplace environment. Implementation of the strategy action items has begun and it is led by the Health Workforce Planning Unit. These actions include the shaping of the workplace, education and training, fostering innovation, optimising recruitment and working arrangements, and planning to build capability and capacity.

To help with recruitment and retention of staff, we also established a Health Staff Recruitment Taskforce. Most importantly, the taskforce brought together health stakeholders such as AMA, HACSU and the ANMF to work collaboratively on strategies to support a more stable and permanent workforce, including looking at options such as incentives for hard to fill positions and how we can improve retention. The task has already delivered on a number of key outcomes, which is recruitment processes that have been streamlined. A review of national-base salaries and remuneration structures has commenced. Recommendations to shorten time frames for review of selection decisions and improve time to fill vacancies.

It is important to mention that we are building the allied health workforce for the future. In recognition of national shortages across the allied health professions, our Government is partnering with the University of Tasmania to develop the Allied Health Expansion Program, creating new opportunities to better support the allied health labour force needed in Tasmania. Again, we are collaborating with health professionals, industry and local Tasmanian communities to increase the allied health education, training and research opportunities in Tasmania in areas like physiotherapy, occupational therapy, speech pathology and clinical psychology.

We are also working on establishing a new rural medical workforce centre at the Mersey Community Hospital to support the recruitment and retention of permanent doctors for the region with a total investment of \$4.3 million. This new unit works collaboratively with the Tasmanian Rural Generalist Pathway coordinating unit to recruit, train and retain the future rural generalist workforce for the state. Part of that includes \$1 million for the establishment of the centre, which is being planned for use alongside the North West Masterplan for incorporation into works at the Mersey Community Hospital. The other part of it - which is the important part - is the \$3.3 million for staffing, which has already commenced in 2022.

Three rural generalist resident medical officers have been employed with THS North West, and are completing rotation in paediatrics, anaesthetist and through additional funding. Recruitment will also occur to continue the training roles and expand the programs in 2023 to include community rural generalist register roles and a mental health additional skills training post.

As the Premier has mentioned, to improve our health workforce we are employing more workers. There is no doubt that there are domestic and international workforce shortages in the health industry, which have been widely reported. The Department of Health has a considerable increase in paid FTEs since the beginning of the pandemic. In a considerable proportion of the FT growth in the Department of Health is direct from light patient care, nurses, doctors, paramedics and allied health professionals.

There has been an intense discussion about FT numbers, and what is going on with those numbers, whether they are sufficient or not. Again, referring to that health workforce 2040 program, there is actually quite interesting sort of going through that to note that nurses and midwives are the largest health workforce in both public and private sectors. There are actually over 8500 employed across Tasmania than there were at 2019, but the number obviously has increased. Compared to Australia as a whole, Tasmania -

Time expired.

Matter noted.

APPROPRIATION BILL (No. 1) 2022 (No. 23)

Second Reading

Continued from 26 May 2022 (Page 44).

[12.00 p.m.]

Ms WHITE (Lyons - Leader of the Opposition) - Mr Speaker, this is a government that has completely lost its way, a government that has destroyed the trust placed in it by the Tasmanian people, a government that just 12 months ago went to an early election promising to be a stable government, delivering a strong economy, strong financial management and strong leadership for our state.

What we have instead is chaos and weakness. A third of the Cabinet has resigned under clouds of scandal, three MPs have quit parliament altogether, and there have been four Cabinet reshuffles. Michael Ferguson is now the Treasurer and Deputy Premier. Overseeing the whole mess is a weak, new Premier who no-one voted for.

It is the Premier's weakness and his failure of economic leadership that has led to this train wreck of a budget, with new taxes when they promised Tasmanians that there would not be any, the housing crisis extinguishing young Tasmanians dream of ever owning their own home, and record debt increasing each and every year into the future. What do we have to show for it? Health waiting lists at record levels, ambulance ramping out of control, education outcomes going backwards, and a budget that is blind to the fact that it has abjectly failed not only the people who rely on these services but also the people who deliver them as well.

Teachers, nurses and firefighters are dismissed by this Government for asking for a pay rise that will help them keep up with the cost of living.

Infrastructure projects promised two elections ago are now being sold to Tasmanians as something new. They are not new; they are just twice the price. The Premier must think Tasmanians are stupid. The cost of living is rising more than twice as fast as wages, making life harder and harder for families. Tasmanians are going backwards at a record rate, which means that Tasmania is going backwards, and this new Premier, through this Budget, has destroyed the faith that Tasmanians put in his party to manage the economy. When it comes to the economy, this new Premier is not getting the basics right.

The rising cost of living has blown a hole in household budgets, fuel prices are now back at \$2 per litre and are set to go back up another 10 per cent once the fuel excise returns to its usual level. There is still no sign of the legislation that this Liberal Government promised two years ago. Groceries have never cost so much. Back in 2014 you could get a kilo of mince for \$5, now it is more like \$15. Coffee and tea have gone up 8 per cent, and vegetables by nearly 10 per cent. Other basics and essentials are going through the roof too, with insurance up 10 per cent, gas up 18 per cent, transport up 20 per cent, and housing up more than 8 per cent, with the cost of new builds up nearly 20 per cent in just one year.

This is wrecking household finances. I doubt it is what many people expected when they voted for Peter Gutwein. I do not think it is what many business owners voted for either, because the cost-of-living crisis is creating unprecedented risks for businesses and their owners, particularly in the building industry but across the economy, who do not know whether the price they quote today will send them broke when they have to honour it in six months' time.

It is also forcing business owners to choose between absorbing increased supply costs or passing on increased costs to customers, which means either lower margins or risk lower turnover. Predictability, stability and certainty are the basic ingredients for business success. It is what people thought they would get under Peter Gutwein, but it is not what they are facing under this new Premier. To make matters worse, and perhaps given current prices another sign of just how reckless the Liberals have become with public money, the new Premier and his Government are pouring petrol on this cost-of-living wildfire with a new bin tax, cheered on by the Greens and the Greens-looking independent that will cost households up to \$70 a year, when they promised there would be no more new taxes.

New water charges, signed up to by this Government in their MOU with TasWater, will cost households \$450 over the next four years. This is the cost of chaos in the Liberal Party, this is the cost of weak economic leadership, this is the cost of broken promises, of dropping the ball on the basics of economic management, and it is not what Tasmanians voted for.

It is not as if this cost-of-living crisis has come out of the blue. We warned the Government about this in our response to last year's budget, but instead of taking action this new Premier, who was then the acting Premier, spent two months trying to convince anyone who would listen that I was making it all up, and the man who is now the Treasurer backed him in every step of the way.

Faced with a real problem, a crisis in the cost of living, you both chose cheap personal politics over the substance of the issue. That is your choice, but if you are not going to listen

to what I have to say about the cost-of-living crisis - which this Budget is making worse, by the way - how about you at least listen to what Tasmanians are saying?

Listen to Brenda, who works in our health system and who says this about the cost-of-living crisis:

It has pushed us to the limit. Everything has gone up, which means less treats for the kids, kids stay home on the weekends, can't take the car out due to petrol. The whole family is suffering. I have to buy cheaper products at the supermarket, less meat, less dessert, yoghurt, et cetera. The kids suffer the most and we cop the guilt and feel frustrated.

Listen to Julie, who goes without so her loved ones can get by:

You pay rent and power, then any other bills. You have hardly any money for food. You go without medical assistance so that you can make sure your loved ones have what they need. You have to live in private rental because there is nothing available in public housing, especially when you have disabilities. You don't drive and public transport is hard because you have disabilities. The only family you have doesn't drive. You do what you can for the ones you love, which means going without.

Listen to Sharon, who is forced to choose between putting fuel in her car and taking the medication she needs:

Can't buy the things you want to buy foodwise. Fuel prices are just shocking so I'm staying home more. Some days I have to choose between fuel, food and medication. I need the medications because they are for blood pressure and mental illness, so one has to go, normally fuel. Rent is absolutely ridiculous.

Listen to Belinda, who had to give up the family dog:

I pay almost \$1000 rent a month for a tiny unit which does not allow enough space for myself and growing son, and we had to rehome our dog which has had a huge impact on both our mental and physical wellbeing. This is not even including the continuing rising costs of absolutely everything, from fresh food and groceries, petrol, medications and medical appointments.

Listen to Tiana about the terrible choices she faces:

It's difficult and depressing when some fortnights you have to choose between feeding your family, having a roof over your head, putting fuel in the car, buying your medication, choosing whether you pay for your dental bill, your power bill, car registration. There are no bulk billing doctors in Hobart so accessing health care is very limited now, especially with my many medical issues. It means spreading out your medication to make it last and cancelling your children's extra outside activities.

Listen to Mark, who is struggling to survive on a disability pension:

I get DSP. My grocery bill for the fortnight has risen by \$60 in the last five months. Electricity bill, up by already \$45 this quarter. DSP up \$5 per fortnight. I can't keep up. My medicine has gone up \$15 a month. Starting to think I might have to do without food to cover the basics.

'Starting to think I might have to do without food to cover the basics'. If there was ever a statement that showed how badly this Government is managing the economy, it is that one. You cannot go without food to cover the basics, because food is the basics. It is the bare minimum and it is why this Budget, which does so little to address the soaring cost of living, gets it so wrong.

It is not only new taxes and price hikes that are costing Tasmanians. Real wages today are lower than they were when this Government came to office, or put another way, the average Tasmanian can afford to buy fewer things with their pay packet than they could in March 2014. This is a disgrace. It is even worse when you look at the last four years where the average Tasmanian's wages first stagnated and are now going backwards at a record rate.

The undisputable fact is that under the Liberals, ordinary Tasmanians have seen their living standards go backwards. This is what weak economic leadership looks like, but it is no accident, it is government policy the new Premier has been at the heart of for the past eight years and that continues in this Budget under his leadership. It is a slap in the face to the nurses who worked so hard during the pandemic and do every day in a system that is failing them; a big 'thanks for nothing' to the teachers who educate our kids; an insult to the paramedics, police and firefighters who dedicate their lives to keeping the rest of us safe.

To rub salt in this wound, his Treasurer describes forcing these essential workers to take a 3 per cent pay cut as 'a reality check'. Premier, your Government needs a reality check if you think that our hospitals can function without a properly paid workforce. Your Government needs a reality check if you think this is any way to treat the people who are there for us and our families at the most important moments. You need a reality check if you think they will cop a pay cut while you waste \$600 million on interest repayments and \$750 million on a floating stadium in Hobart.

Ensuring Tasmanians do a little bit better each year, is the basic test of economic leadership. However, under this weak, economic leadership, workers today are \$5000 worse off than they would be if wages had risen at the 3.5 per cent they did under Labor. What a difference that would make to families snowed under by the rising cost of living; to mothers forced to give away their family dog. Five thousand dollars a year is the cost every Tasmanian worker pays because of this Government's weak economic leadership.

Under the Liberal's economic management, Tasmanians are not only paying more and earning less, they are also finding it harder and harder to find somewhere to live. It now takes the average family in Hobart more than 13 years to save for a house deposit. That is, if a 30-year-old starts saving for a house today they will be 43 by the time they can afford to put their first offer down. That is more than six years longer than when the Liberals were elected in 2014. Six more years to save a deposit - that is the cost of eight years of Liberals running the economy. It is hardly any better outside of Hobart, where it now takes more than 11 years to save for a deposit, which is six-and-half years longer than in 2014; Meander Valley - 10 years; Burnie - eight years; Sorell - 10 years; and Devonport - nine years.

Parents and grandparents across Tasmania are scared for their children's future. Where will it end? Fifteen years to save for a deposit, twenty years; how much more will the Liberals' failed economic management cost young Tasmanians? Part of the reason it is so hard to save for a deposit is that rents are completely out of control. For the fourth year running, Tasmania is now the least affordable state in which to rent. Across Tasmania, the median rent for a three-bedroom home has increased \$170 a week since 2014. That is \$9000 a year - pushing the cost of renting a house for a year up to nearly \$25 000. That is \$150 000 lost to rent during the extra six years it now takes to save for a deposit - money that families would otherwise build up as equity in their own home, which then could be used to start a small business, or pursue any number of dreams they might have. Paying \$150 000 on rent is the cost to young people of having the Liberals run the economy.

These massive rents are putting massive pressure on people who are just getting by. A person working full-time on the minimum wage would earn just over \$40 000 a year. If they were paying the median rent for a three-bedroom place in Glenorchy, they would be paying nearly \$26 000 of that to their landlord, leaving them less than \$300 a week from their pay for everything else - at a time when everything else is getting more and more expensive. Rising living costs do not only hurt people on lower incomes; they erode the basic promise of a decent life for people who work hard and crush the aspirations of people who strive for something more. As Lauren, who works for one of the Government businesses, says:

Five years ago, the dream of owning a home was remotely achievable. Now it's all now out of reach. It is completely unachievable to buy even in a so-called lower socio-economic area. We can't even afford to live where we grew up.

Or as Ella says:

It is impossible. I have to forgo my social events and quite often have to put off important doctors' appointments because I cannot afford them. Trying to save for a house on top of that is horrendously depressing.

Horrendously depressing, no hope of getting ahead, struggling to even get by: that is the cost of this weak economic leadership. It is not only household budgets that are bearing the brunt of this weak economic leadership. It is not only young people trying to get into the housing market who had hoped this Budget might give them a bit of hope. It is the Budget itself, the most basic test of economic leadership, a basic test that this Premier has completely failed.

When this Government came to office back in 2014, Tasmania had no debt. Labor, under Jim Bacon, had fixed the mess left by the last lot of Liberals and the hard work of successive Labor governments had left the incoming government with \$200 million in the bank. Before COVID-19 hit, this Government had set Tasmania on a path towards \$1.4 billion of debt. During COVID-19 they had to spend and we supported it then and we support it now, but the problem is, they kept spending. Over the past six years, this Government has blown its own budget by an average of \$177 million each year. That is over \$1 billion of budget blow-outs in the life of this Liberal Government.

They have blown their budget so consistently because they waste. They waste \$43 million a year on political advertising, and \$56 million a year on consultants and travel.

They have blown the budget because of endless delays to the infrastructure projects they promise, which means we end up paying twice as much for the same projects. A quarter of a billion dollars in infrastructure blowouts in this year alone and that is only those projects that they have finally started.

They have blown the budget by refusing to hire staff in places where they are needed, like the prison, which leads to massive amounts of overtime, staff burnout, workers compensation claims and inefficiencies. Tens of millions of dollars of so-called demand pressure funding was spent in only the last 12 months. Who knows what it would be in our hospitals? It would be safe to say that the Government's failure to adequately staff our hospitals has cost hundreds of billions of dollars over the past eight years. What do we now have after all this waste and all these cost blowouts? A record debt of \$5.2 billion and growing and almost nothing to show for it.

Treasury says the GST deal that this reckless, irresponsible Liberal Government signed us up to will cost every Tasmanian \$150 a year. Treasury says we are heading towards \$30 billion of debt within a decade, with interest rates going up and yet another budget filled with waste and blowouts, blowing up the Liberal Party's credibility when it comes to managing the budget, exposing their record on the basics of economic management and highlighting the fact that we will all pay for their warped priorities. Another ticking time bomb for future generations and not at all what Tasmanians voted for.

There is no single decision that better highlights the fact that this Government has forgotten the basics of economic management than its reckless plan to spend \$750 million on a floating stadium in Hobart. No single decision shows how irresponsible this Premier is with public money and it is hard to know where to begin. Questions over how we can possibly afford this with debt at record levels, the obvious engineering challenges, the likelihood it will mean no more AFL games in the north. How much of our construction workforce it will require in the middle of a housing crisis and perhaps, most ridiculous of all, the idea that you will finish it by 2027. If there is one thing we know about this Government's weak economic management it is that it never delivers projects on time and never within the original budget.

This is a government that simply does not deliver. The Glenorchy Ambulance Station, promised two elections and three premiers ago, with the black and white commitment that it would be completed last year. They have not even identified a site yet, while Tasmanians die waiting for ambulances.

The Burnie Ambulance superstation also with a black and white commitment it would be completed last year. The project's costs have doubled, work has not even started yet while ramping is much worse than it has ever been.

I am interested to hear you talk about Cosgrove High School, minister for Education. I thought you would be too embarrassed. It was promised in 2018 and all that has happened since, sadly, is one of the buildings has been destroyed by fire. You have not even done the designs yet. Students who were at the Glenorchy Primary School when this promise was made, by the man who is now the Premier, will have finished year 12 before the project is even delivered. All while our students' NAPLAN results continue to go backwards.

Mac Point is a laughing stock, a running gag, a bottomless pit, a waste of money and now the subject of a serious inquiry. Scores of tourism projects, particularly important in our

regions, are all years behind schedule. The next iconic walk, announced when with Will Hodgman was still the premier, has nothing delivered. The Cradle Mountain cableway, announced even earlier, has nothing delivered.

This new Premier says he has Braddon in his blood. It is a shame that the tourism projects were not in the Budget. What about Project X in Huon? It was promised as a recovery project for the region after the 2019 bush fires. The Liberals made a big song and dance about recommitting to it after the election last year, with extra money and a black and white commitment that despite the delays it would be open by June 2022. That is tomorrow. Nothing has been delivered, except MONA almost walking away because the Government was too weak to stand up to the Greens, who cheered when the project fell over. I have no doubt that is not what the far south business community voted for.

The biggest failure to deliver, the biggest fraud perpetrated by this Government is the \$580 million re-development of the Launceston General Hospital, the Government promised northern Tasmanians at the last election. For the second time since the commitment was made, the project is not even close to being fully funded in this Budget. Federal funding they promised to secure has never arrived. The Launceston General Hospital is the country's worst performing hospital for patient access. There could not be a more urgent reason for the Government to do more than just make announcements that they never fund. There will be no improvement for patients and staff at the LGH for as long as this Government fails to deliver the upgrades Tasmanians voted for and thought they were getting, but have never been delivered.

It is not just the projects they promise that the Government does not deliver, it is the policies they promise for entire industries. The Government's failed economic leadership when it comes to the Tasmanian salmon industry has to go down as one of the greatest acts of economic vandalism ever perpetrated in this state. This is an industry that grew from virtually nothing to be worth nearly \$1 billion today. It is an industry that provides not just jobs in regional areas but well-paying careers. It is an industry that supports hundreds of other businesses and thousands of other jobs across Tasmania, from local shops to plastic welding, to scientific research.

For years this Government, led by this new Premier, played politics with this industry. It did nothing as the attacks on the industry became more extreme. It grandstanded when it should have been supporting the industry to demonstrate to the public that aquaculture is the most environmentally friendly primary industry there is; that Tasmania's aquaculture industry was as good as there was anywhere in the world; that the industry was investing millions and millions each year to ensure it stayed that way; to prove that this industry was a success story in a state that has not had too many big success stories to brag about, but no, just politics. Politics and promises direct from the mouth of this new Premier that there would never be a moratorium placed on the salmon industry. He said to do so would cost jobs. They are the Premier's words. However, once all the votes from the last election had been counted, he chose politics again, albeit a very different kind. He swung in the opposite direction, and he adopted the Greens' policy. He slapped a moratorium on the entire industry.

Already, Tassal has announced it will not be making any new investments in Tasmania. No new investments, no new jobs, no new careers. How many salmon industry workers do you think voted for the Liberals in the last election? How many people across regional Tasmania do you think the industry supports? How many of those voted for the Liberal Party

thinking the Liberal Party supported them? How many people has this Premier now betrayed with his broken promises? What has this achieved? The misinformation is getting wilder, and the Greens are going further and further with their outrageous smears.

Earlier this month, the Bob Brown Foundation launched its first attack on fish farm sites. It said:

This is the first time in Tasmania a protest is being held on the toxic salmon factories, and it won't be the last.

The Bob Brown Foundation is now employing people to attack the industry full time. With Premier Rockliff's moratorium in place, the only salmon industry jobs being created now are at the Bob Brown Foundation. That is what this new Premier and his broken promises have delivered for the aquaculture industry. That is what weak economic leadership has delivered. It should be a warning to all Tasmanian primary industries.

It is not just projects and policies this Government has failed to deliver. It is the very character of the Government they have promised to be. They promised strength and stability, but parliament was cancelled for a month because they did not have the numbers. They are so divided they openly campaigned for each other's jobs and were leaking directly to the Labor Party. A third of the Cabinet has resigned and not just junior ministers. A quarter of the MPs on that side were elected by countback. A majority of the new Premier's MPs backed someone else in the early days after Peter Gutwein resigned. His loyal and trusted deputy betrayed the Attorney-General. Everyone can see that far from strength and stability, all this new Premier has delivered is weakness, chaos, and instability. Quite literally. this Government is not who Tasmanians vote for.

They also promised to be a government that gets the basics right on the economy. What it has delivered is a cost of living crisis, new taxes, falling real wages, declining population, record debt, and a ridiculous proposal to spend \$750 million on a floating stadium in Hobart. The last premier tried to reset everything in March. He told us they were now an aspirational government. That lasted a month before he resigned.

The new Premier has promised to lead a Government with integrity. That was never the case. Not with Jane Howlett still part of his team from day one. Not given the new Premier created a job worth several hundred thousand dollars for the previous premier's adviser on day one. Not when the Premier's Health department has openly flouted Right to Information laws for years. Not when there has been nothing done to implement the 55 outstanding recommendations to improve the Integrity Commission. There is no stability. They cannot manage the economy. They have ditched aspiration. They have no integrity. They are not who they said they would be because they never ever deliver.

Tasmanians deserves so much better than the future outlined for them in this Budget. Today, with inflation rising faster than it has since 2000, they deserve a government that is serious about tackling the cost of living crisis. That is why a Labor will scrap the bin tax for households. We would direct the Waste and Resource Recovery Board to provide a rebate to councils, equivalent to 105 per cent of their previous year's bin tax liability. This would provide a real incentive for councils to reduce waste across their municipality, year after year. It would improve environmental outcomes. Most of all, it would reduce council rates over time, rather than putting them up by up to \$70 a year, which is this Government's plan. There

would be still be millions of dollars left to invest in recycling technologies and jobs, all at no cost to the Budget, or to households.

A Labor government would say enough is enough when it comes to the sharing economy's impact on the housing market. We would, with immediate effect, put a pause on the listing of any more whole home short-stay accommodation permits. This would help to put downward pressure on unfair rent increases and give Tasmanians, especially young Tasmanians, a fighting chance to break into the housing market. Tasmanians deserve a future in which the government has its eye firmly on getting the basics right.

Cost of living, good jobs, budget management, growing our economy, housing, education and healthcare. Not a \$750 million floating stadium in Hobart. The Tasmanian Taskforce report never proposed a stadium in Hobart as part of the bid for an AFL team. Instead, it said:

Launceston would host and benefit from blockbuster matches being played at an enhanced 27 000-seat UTAS stadium.

Labor would abandon this irresponsible project, something this new Premier is too weak to do, and we would divert the money to Tasmania's real priorities. While we are there, we would abolish the \$2.7 million-worth of plum jobs given to Liberal Party advisers and consultants to oversee this reckless project, and would use the savings to overturn the cuts this new Premier is making to the cost-of-living support for pensioners and concession card holders embedded in his Budget.

Finally, I can announce I will lead a delegation of the parliamentary Labor Party to Canberra to meet with the new federal Labor government to discuss our plan for a better future for Tasmania. We are serious about tackling the growing cost-of-living crisis that has been created by the poor economic management of the Liberal Party, and identifying ways we can help ease cost pressures on Tasmanian households.

Instead of trying to pass the buck for our problems to a government that is barely a week old and trotting out the tired old lines that it is all Labor's fault, the Premier needs to work constructively with the new federal government to implement their commitments in Tasmania and to deliver their plan for our country. He should start by ending the fact that Tasmania is the only state government not to make a submission to the National Wage Review, because it is the only state government that does not care about wages for the lowest paid. One cannot believe anything other than that, given their lack of interest. He should add his voice to the submission from the federal Labor government calling for the minimum wage to at least keep pace with inflation. Tasmania's lowest-paid workers deserve nothing less. Taxes, housing, utility bills and wages - four real measures this Premier could adopt today at no cost to the Budget that would help to ease the squeeze on Tasmanian families.

It is not just today's problems this Budget ignores; it is the very future of our state. What is the plan, where is the vision, what does this Premier actually want to achieve? A bit of money here, a few dollars there - it is not at all clear from this Budget what this new Premier stands for.

I can tell you what I believe in. I believe that as an island state we need to pay particular attention to climate change. We have enormous pride on this island in who we are and the beauty of this place, but we must act now to make sure we give our children the future they

deserve. The failure of the Liberal Government to progress changes to the Climate Change Act six years after the review was completed demonstrates their lack of interest in this issue and their failure to listen to the community, which demands greater action.

When the bill finally comes to this place for debate, Labor will be moving a number of amendments to the climate change bill to strengthen it and achieve three key things: protect those who are most vulnerable; set out clear plans to guarantee that no worker or community is left behind; and ensure there is independent oversight to measure and evaluate progress. Getting serious about climate change is not just about reducing environmental risks. It is also about seizing the huge economic opportunism available to Tasmania in a world powered by renewable energy. Not stalling on projects, telling investors there is no power available at any price, which is what we have heard from this Government, but opening our state to new investment, new industries, lower power prices and thousands of new career opportunities, and putting the weight of the Government behind what we need to do.

I believe in the power of politics and governments to change Tasmanians' lives for the better, but I know that if Tasmanians lose faith in politics they will lose faith in the promise of a better future. That is why I continue to believe integrity improvements are long overdue. Four years after the Liberals promised reform, Tasmania still has the weakest political donation laws in the country. The Integrity Commission still has loopholes that has candidates in state elections slip through the net, and the 55 outstanding recommendations from the Cox Review from six years ago are still to be implemented. I reaffirm Labor's commitment to these reforms, whether the Liberals finally deliver on them or whether Tasmanians have to change the Government first.

Above all, I believe that Tasmania's time has come for us to break from our long history of being the poorest state in the country, with our economy 20 per cent smaller per capita than the average of other states. It is time for a modern Tasmania that sets itself the goal of getting off the bottom of the economic ladder and puts all its energy into climbing those rungs one by one and lifting everyone up.

If we are truly serious about getting off the bottom of the economic ladder we have to turn around our failing education system. In a state that was once renowned for having the best education system in the country, a state to which experts once travelled to see how we were getting it so right, it is utterly scandalous that today Tasmanian students have the worst results of any students in any state.

Our results are the worst of any state across every age group in reading and the second-worst in every age group in writing, the worst in every age group in spelling, the worst in every age group in grammar and punctuation, the worst in years 5, 7 and 9 in numeracy, and perhaps even worse is the fact that under new Premier Rockliff's leadership, we are going backwards. He has been the Education minister for the vast majority of the past eight years and in this time our students have fallen further and further behind. Bottom of the class, falling further behind, that is his record. It is holding our kids back, limiting their potential and most of all it is holding back Tasmania.

It is a simple fact that Tasmania will never be the economic equal of the rest of country as long as our education results are the worst in the country. The scale of change required is unprecedented but we will do whatever is required to bring it about because we understand

how vital it is to give each child a quality education for their wellbeing and future and for Tasmania's economic future.

This Budget is not what Tasmanians voted for at the last election. They did not vote for a cost-of-living crisis and a government that made it worse with new taxes and utility price hikes. They did not vote for real wage cuts, soaring rents and the dream of home ownership getting further out of reach. They did not vote for record debt with nothing to show for it and a \$600 million interest bill. They did not vote for projects that have never arrived, policies this Premier said he would never stand for and a strong stable government that did not even last a year, but that is what they got.

Labor is firmly focused on getting the basics right when it comes to the Tasmanian economy. This means real help with the cost of living and a fair increase to wages. It means responsible budget management, not floating stadiums in Hobart, and it means tackling the housing crisis head on.

It is more than only the problems of today. Labor is also committed to delivering a better economic future for Tasmania, one that people believe in because their faith in politics has been restored, one that values our public services and invests in the people who deliver them, one that sees climate change and renewable energy as an opportunity for Tasmania to thrive, one that works with business to drive innovation and jobs, and one that is built on a foundation of transformative change in our education system, because there is no better investment we could possibly make if we want a happier, wealthier and fairer Tasmania.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I can tell you now my team is hard at work right across the state, talking to Tasmanians about how we can make their lives better, and together we can. For the future of our children and our economy, we must.

[12.38 p.m.]

Mr ROCKLIFF (Braddon - Premier) - Mr Deputy Speaker, I will commence my budget reply speech but will also use the opportunity to reflect on the Leader of the Opposition's budget reply. They have had nine opportunities to produce an alternative budget and what we heard then was 40 minutes of no substance, no policy and personal attacks. That is what Tasmanians have become accustomed to when it comes to the Labor Opposition: all personal attack and no policy. They are a lazy Opposition that, after nine years, cannot possibly find it in themselves to produce an alternative budget.

An appalling example. Tasmanians expect more from an alternative government. Nine years, zero alternative budgets and that alternative reply was full of personal attacks but no substance and no policy.

Our Budget delivered by our Treasurer last Thursday, the 2022-23 state Budget, is about strengthening Tasmania's future and delivering for all Tasmanians. It focuses on what matters to Tasmanians, taking action on the cost of living, health, education, housing and building safe, inclusive thriving communities.

Our Government's vision is for Tasmania to be a place where everyone is encouraged and supported to be the best they can be. There is no doubt that the global COVID-19 pandemic caused economic volatility. We have leveraged our balance sheet as a shield, responding with

strong actions that maintain jobs and strength in our economy. Despite the impact of the pandemic, the Tasmanian economy remains strong.

There are 26 000 more jobs today than when we first came to government in 2014. Retail trade is up, exports are up, unemployment is down but, importantly, confidence in our community and business community is up.

We know that a strong economy is key to invest in areas that matter to Tasmanians and that the Budget delivered last week will support further economic growth and more than 11 000 additional jobs over the forward Estimates. It includes a landmark \$5.6 billion to continue building the infrastructure our communities need. It increases health expenditure to one-third of the state's Budget, operating expenditure with \$11.2 billion across the Budget and forward Estimates including funding for a new generation health infrastructure to enhance care and service delivery.

There is \$538 million over the next four years, which is part of our record \$1.5 billion over the next 10 years to build 10 000 new homes for Tasmanians; and funding for education, skills and training grows to a record \$8.5 billion including increasing our education workforce and substantial funding to keep our children supported and safe.

There are global forces at play which are outside our control. The Russian invasion of Ukraine is hurting the global economy, driving up inflation and neither Australia nor Tasmania is immune. These events have translated into higher costs for Tasmanian households and businesses. The Government understands the pressure this places on Tasmanian households. That is why our Budget provides over \$305 million in concessions to support vulnerable Tasmanians to meet essential costs of living, including cost of water and sewerage, electricity and council rates.

It includes \$39 million over four years in concessions for water and sewerage bills and, importantly, this concession is indexed annually in accordance with movements in the Consumer Price Index for Hobart to ensure the value of the concessions are maintained. A further \$79 million in council rate remissions will be provided over the next four years while electricity concessions of \$186 million will also be provided to eligible concession card holders and help manage their electricity bills.

To ensure the value of the concession is maintained, electricity concession value rates are revised annually to reflect any increase in the standing offer prices approved by the Tasmanian economic regulator.

We also have amongst the lowest regulated electricity prices in the nation and are working with Aurora not to pass on the costs associated with the Aurora Plus app. Over the past seven years, in real terms, regulated energy prices have decreased by 18 per cent for residential customers and over 27 per cent for small business. We stand ready to assess any further concessions or supports that may be required to support those who need assistance with their energy bills.

Our Government is supporting lower fuel prices through the fuel check website app, which continues to put competitive pressure on fuel prices. We have also delivered the lowest vehicle registration premiums of all the states and territories, and introduced quarterly registration payments to help smooth bills for households.

The health of every Tasmanian continues to be our highest priority and we continue to allocate more funding for health than any previous government. As Minister for Health, I welcome the substantial investments being made to Health in this Budget, which equates to \$11.2 billion over the four years, \$500 million more than last year. This Budget also includes a game-changing investment into digital health with \$150 million allocated to commence work on our Digital Health Strategy and to improving patient outcomes right across our health system, including in primary and community care settings. It is anticipated more than \$475 million will be allocated to this project over the next ten years as this strategy is further scoped and developed.

I welcome comments made by Dr Helen McArdle, former Tasmanian president of the Australian Medical Association, who noted, and I quote:

There are quite a number of areas where there are going to be a lot of positive outcomes. One is getting patients into clinics, getting patients into hospital, but also ensuring that GPs are fully informed of what has happened while they have been in hospital and can pick up their patients much quicker once they are discharged.

Dr Don Rose from Summerdale Medical Practice also welcomed the commitment noting:

Without a shared system we can't get hold of the information we need to manage a person's health. This is exactly what the Digital Health Strategy will address.

We are also continuing to invest in health infrastructure. This Budget includes \$654 million in funding to delivery health infrastructure projects over the next four years, including critical upgrades and new facilities in our four major hospitals and investment in rural hospitals and community health services to ensure our health infrastructure is well positioned to meet service capacity now and for future generations of Tasmanians.

An amount of \$91 million to the Royal Hobart Hospital redevelopment stage 2 projects with \$110 million to expand the scope of these stage 2 projects to deliver an expanded ICU, expanded emergency department, a new cardiology unit in J Block and refurbished A Block providing an old persons' unit and medical sub-specialties' wards with an additional 90 inpatient beds; \$7 million over three years for a new angiographic suite at the Royal Hobart Hospital, as well as \$5.8 million over one year to deliver a new pharmaceutical production facility with additional capacity to support increasing patient needs for chemotherapy and elective surgery; \$50 million to Stage 2 projects to progress our \$580 million commitment over ten years to the Launceston General Hospital redevelopment, which will deliver a new mental health facility and a new tower on the current northside site, providing additional capacity to meet future demand.

Over the forward Estimates this Budget will deliver absolutely, in addition to funding of \$38 million in this Budget to complete projects within the \$87 million Stage 1 LGH redevelopment. In the north-west, this Budget progresses our planned \$100 million redevelopment for the North West Regional Hospital, which includes \$40 million over the forward Estimates for Stage 1 of a new mental health precinct and \$20 million for the refurbishment of the Spencer wing to provide additional wards.

Once completed in 2025, we will progress plans for Stage 2 of the mental health precinct, at a cost of some \$40 million. We have also expanded our investment in the Mersey Community Hospital with a \$20 million allocation to provide a new kitchen and additional wards delivering more bed capacity. This will take the total upgrade of the Mersey to \$55 million, the most significant in the hospital's history, with construction commencing this week, to deliver the expansion of an upgrade of the outpatients' clinic with a new elective day surgery centre, new operating theatres, recovery suites and consulting rooms.

To meet demand pressures in our hospitals, we are investing a further \$50 million this year to maintain the additional beds opened to prepare for border changes in December last year. To optimise our public/private partnership there is \$12.1 million to improve patient flow, respond to demand in the public system and increase elective surgery for public patients to reduce wait times, supporting our Government's \$196.4 million stat-wide, four-year, elective surgery plan to reduce the elective surgery waiting lists to a sustainable level and to ensure Tasmanians can access elective surgery and endoscopies sooner.

We also have \$7.2 million over four years in the out-patient transformation program to implement innovative service models to ensure Tasmanians receive best practice services within the clinically recommended time frames. We acknowledge the incredible effort of our entire health workforce who responded to the pandemic and delivered nation-leading vaccination rates and low COVID-19 hospitalisation levels. I acknowledge the demand that the pandemic has placed on all our staff and their commitment to helping Tasmanians is clearly evident. The greatest asset in our health system is our people working together for better outcomes for Tasmanians. The Chair of St Luke's said at the TCCI breakfast last week:

Health is not just about funding. It is about people and their quality of life, achieved through good strategy and collaboration.

Between 1 July 2020 and early March 2022, we have seen a total 1259 new FTEs. That works out to nearly two additional people being recruited every day in our hospital system for the past twenty months. Over the past three financial years, we have worked very hard to build up our nursing and midwifery workforce, which has increased by close to 600 FTEs. Since July 2021, we have recruited 209 additional nursing and midwifery FTEs to ease the impact of COVID-19 and continue to actively recruit more staff in line with increased demands on the health system and our COVID-19 emergency response.

I am advised that 260 transition to practice nurses started their careers with the department in 2021, a 21 per cent increase on the previous year. That number is anticipated to increase again over the course of 2022-23. We have also committed to employing 11 additional paramedics across Sorell and Huonville in recognition of the demand we are seeing for emergency services in these areas.

The demand increases; we listen and we respond with investment. That is what our Government is all about. Along with Ambulance Tasmania we are conducting a review of service demand across the state so we can best target our future investment into this vital service. Our Budget ensures we can provide the right care, in the right place at the time.

Mental health is so important and having the supports in place where and when people need them. We are building on our long-term vision to transform the mental health system with a strong focus on community support options.

I am very pleased in this Budget that funding is allocated to deliver the new mental health precincts at the Launceston General Hospital and adjacent to the North-West Regional Hospital and also for the completion of the Peacock Centre and St John's Park redevelopment. This will provide 27 new mental health beds and integration hubs for the co-location of community services as well as an eating disorders treatment centre at the St John's Park site.

Following the early success of our pilot emergency mental health co-response model in southern Tasmania, also known as the PACER service, we are locking in our support of this initiative with an additional \$9 million over three years. Further to this, the department will commence work on a north-west pilot to operate from early 2023 as we progress our vision for a statewide model.

We have allocated \$6.5 million for the ongoing mental health reform program, which will allow for the roll out of adult acute care and continuing care models in the north and north-west, providing alternative services for people to avoid acute hospitalisation where this is not necessary.

Further, we will deliver \$1.5 million over three years to continue the implementation and evaluation of Tasmania's overarching mental health plan, Rethink 2020, including \$200 000 for the initial implementation of a new Tasmanian suicide prevention strategy in 2022-23, \$50 000 to upgrade the consumer experience of service system, \$375 000 for Connecting with People suicide prevention training; \$375 000 for the employment of LGBTIQ+ worker navigators, and \$500 000 to increase access, by improving community access to mental health services and support. We are also continuing to roll out our investment of \$45.2 million for child and adolescent mental health reforms. This year will see the first stages of new services established, including a youth forensic service and a specialist service for children in out-of-home care.

As we continue to implement the recommendations of the Roy Fagan Centre Review Report, the Budget provides \$20.5 million over the next four years to further improve patient care and outcomes through the Older Persons Mental Health Services. This funding will enable our Government to significantly improve the overall level of care and treatment provided to vulnerable Tasmanians with a specific focus on mental illness, including increased community-based services statewide.

Funding is also provided to expand the capacity of the grief support services of the New Mornings in Ulverstone, a not-for-profit mental health service supporting the north-west Tasmanian community. Our Government is taking unprecedented action to assist more Tasmanians into homes, implementing the most comprehensive and ambitious affordable housing strategy in Tasmania's history. Through this Budget our Government will invest up to \$538 million into social and affordable housing and homelessness initiatives, with \$204 million in 2022-23 alone.

We are also on track to build 1500 homes by June next year, rising to a total of 10 000 new homes by 2032, as part of our ten-year \$1.5 billion housing package. We are making good progress in establishing Tasmania's new housing authority, which will be tasked with building and acquiring these homes, as well as partnering with our community housing partner organisations to increase supply and deliver more affordable homes than ever before.

Our Government continues to invest record amounts into education, skills and training with expenditure in this Budget of over \$8.5 billion towards new schools and learning facilities, upgrades to existing facilities, as well as resources and initiatives that support better learning outcomes. We want all Tasmanians to have the opportunity to gain the skills they need to reach their absolute full potential.

Our Government is providing high quality, inclusive education for our students with disability through the needs-based funding model and will commission an independent evaluation of the model next year and engage with the new federal government on our longstanding concerns about funding distribution. Responsible budget management has been the hallmark of this government. It has seen our economy go from strength to strength. Maintaining investment in our competitive strengths is imperative to a strong economy, which in turns enables the Government to invest in the areas that matter to most Tasmanians.

Tourism is a vital part of the Tasmanian economy, especially in our regions. As tourism minister, I am pleased that the budget provides \$10 million to secure the sector's continued recovery from the impact of the pandemic and maximise Tasmania's resurgent visitor economy; as well as \$2 million for inbound tourism support to enable Air New Zealand to deliver a direct service between Hobart and Auckland.

As international borders reopen, now is the time to take Tasmanian products to the world. As trade minister, I am also pleased that the Budget allocates some \$1.8 million for the 2024 trade and investment mission to showcase the products of Tasmanian exporters and continue growing our export markets.

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

APPROPRIATION BILL (No. 1) 2022 (No. 23)

Second Reading

Resumed from above.

Mr ROCKLIFF (Braddon - Premier) - Mr Speaker, this is particularly important as we seek to diversify and strengthen our trade markets to continue to build on our strong export profile and allow Tasmanian businesses access to new markets and new opportunities.

Tasmanian products are prized for their high quality right around the world and attract a premium price. To better promote Tasmanian products Brand Tasmania has allocated \$500 000 to establish the Tasmanian market certification scheme which will be used to promote our unique products, goods and services.

This year we have watched history in the making, and I believe that is just the beginning. The success of the JackJumpers has reinforced the value of sport in our community and demonstrated that Tasmania can take its place on the national sporting stage. As I reiterated to the AFL, it is time for Tasmania to have its own team and \$1.25 million is provided in the Budget for the AFL team taskforce and stadium feasibility study. We know from stadiums developed across the world that they are an economic, social and community game-changer

and we are committed to ensuring Tasmania does not miss out on the opportunities that this presents.

Tasmania is a leader in climate change action, having achieved our target of net zero emissions in six of the last seven years. In November 2020, Tasmania achieved 100 per cent self-sufficiency in electricity from renewable resources. Tasmania's enviable emissions profile will deliver environmental and economic benefits and will generate investment and jobs. We are well on the way to implementing the historic agreement we made with the Australian Government to deliver the Marinus Link and Battery of the Nation.

Working with our government businesses, we will match the Australian Government's funding to support Marinus to final investment decision, while Hydro Tasmania will also provide up to \$58 million for the Tarraleah Power Station as part of the broader Battery of the Nation project. Our bold plan to be a globally significant producer of green hydrogen from 2030 is also gaining momentum, with Bell Bay in Northern Tasmania the perfect location for a nation-leading green hydrogen hub.

In our growing state, the Government is continuing to invest in next-generation infrastructure for Tasmanians that builds better communities, provides better services, opens more opportunities and creates more jobs. The Government will invest a record \$5.6 billion over the next four years in infrastructure in our hospitals, schools and communities.

I will not dwell too much on Labor's budget contribution, other than to say that our Budget is based on the commitments that we took to the election and we have honoured those commitments. At the 2020-21 state election, Labor made \$3.4 billion of election promises. If their alternative budget does in fact honour what they promised Tasmanians at the election, it would have forced the budget into deficit far longer and far deeper into debt. It was an irresponsible, desperate level of spending. In fact, they have not honoured what they took to the election. The Leader of the Opposition's contribution this morning demonstrated a sincere lack of consistency and leaves Tasmanians wondering what Labor actually stands for.

This Budget is about listening to Tasmanians and making their priorities our priorities. It is about investing in the future, using our strengths and building on the strong foundations that we have established since 2014. We are in good shape and there are opportunities ahead, but we also need to take action to ensure that no Tasmanian is left behind, and that is why we are providing support to Tasmanians in need, investing record amounts into Health, Housing, Education, keeping Tasmanians safe and our economy strong. The 2022-23 state Budget strengthens Tasmania's future and delivers for all Tasmanians.

[2.35 p.m.]

Ms ARCHER (Clark - Attorney-General) - Mr Speaker, as a proud and dedicated member of the Tasmanian Liberal Government team which has delivered much for Tasmania and has worked side by side with our community and industry and business for the past two and a half years as we navigated our way through the many challenges presented by the COVID-19 pandemic, it is my honor to rise today to speak in reply to the 2022-23 state Budget.

Our Government continues to understand the importance of securing Tasmania's future by delivering our plan as we transition to living with COVID-19. It progresses our plan to keep growing our economy, create local jobs and sensible investment in Tasmania's infrastructure. This is a budget that once again delivers for the people of Tasmania, for my electorate of Clark,

and for my portfolios as Attorney-General, Minister for Justice, Corrections and Rehabilitation, Workplace Safety and Consumer Affairs, and the Arts.

I am particularly proud of some of the local initiatives that will benefit my electorate of Clark that I have strongly advocated for and helped to ensure they have been prioritized. As a dedicated and proud Liberal member for Clark since 2010, known as Denison back then, I am pleased to see our Government more in major infrastructure, health, education and vital community facilities for my local community. I will highlight what is included in this year's Budget across my portfolios.

As Attorney-General and Minister for Justice I am extremely proud that this year's Budget represents the biggest ever spend in the justice system, with significant investment to keep Tasmanians safe and ensure our criminal and civil justice system operates as efficiently and effectively as possible. This includes \$26 million for a range of projects across my Justice portfolio in addition to more than \$11 million for the Commission of Inquiry into the Tasmanian Government's Responses to Child Sexual Abuse in Institutional Settings, and almost \$9 million towards critical upgrades to justice IT infrastructure.

I remain deeply committed to better protecting our children, and the Budget also includes over \$2.5 million allocated over three years to support the development of the child and youth safe organisations framework, which includes independent regulation and a reportable conduct scheme. This will provide an additional layer of protection for children and young people and give effect to another key recommendation of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, with legislation already well advanced and a bill to be introduced to parliament later this year.

As part of our ongoing commitment to keep our most vulnerable safe, legislation to introduce a new crime of failing to protect a child or young person will be drafted this year. This will ensure that adults in leadership positions within organisations that care for children must focus on protecting children and young people from sexual abuse, better protecting all children and young people under the age of 18 from risks presented by an adult in a position of authority. I will also be amending the Criminal Code to introduce a presumption that children under the age of 17 cannot consent to sexual intercourse when a person is in a position of authority over them. These legislative changes will bring our criminal justice system into alignment with community expectations.

On 17 November 2020, the Evidence (Children and Special Witnesses) Amendment Act 2020 commenced. This act fulfilled the Tasmanian Government's commitment to establish a pilot witness intermediary scheme. The scheme, which commenced on 1 March 2021, further strengthens Tasmania's criminal justice system by introducing skilled communications experts who work alongside lawyers and judges to ensure that vulnerable witnesses, including children, participating in the criminal justice process are able to communicate to the best of their ability.

Since our Government released its response to the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, we have completed 206 of the 306 recommendations that relate to the Tasmanian Government. I am very proud of that achievement.

I am committed to fast-tracking the remaining 100 recommendations, 92 of which have already commenced, to improve the safety of children and young people in our system. This is lengthy and complex law reform, but one to which I am committed.

In addition to funding the commission of inquiry we will invest \$2.2 million to continue to support the coordinated response to the Commission of Inquiry into the Tasmanian Government's Responses to Child Sexual Abuse in Institutional Settings. I strongly encourage all people to come forward and shine a light on these matters, including victims/survivors and state servants. As the Premier stated last week in parliament, state servants who have evidence to provide the commission will be provided two days of special leave, one day to enable preparation statements and one day off to appear. It is important that victims/survivors have appropriate avenues through which they can redress for past abuse. I recognise this can be extremely challenging and distressing for victims/survivors. I thank them again for their incredible bravery and courage in coming forward.

The national redress scheme is one approach where a direct personal response by the institution is provided if the survivor wishes to engage with the institution, including an apology and an opportunity for the victim/survivor to meet with a senior representative of that institution. I have provided many personal apologies on behalf of the Tasmanian Government for historical abuses. I know the positive impact this has had on many victims/survivors from the direct feedback I have received. There is also access to therapeutic counselling and psychological care as needed throughout a victim/survivor's life, and a monetary payment as a tangible means of recognising the wrong that victims/survivors have suffered.

As at 31 March 2022, we had received 684 claims in relation to state government institutions and 100 per cent of those claims have been returned to the scheme operator within the required statutory time frames.

Earlier this year I progressed reforms to the regulatory framework that provides financial help and assistance to Tasmanian victims/survivors of crime under the Victims of Crime Assistance Act 1976. The changes mean that from 1 July this year, victims/survivors will be able to seek greater financial support as a result of trauma or injuries, easing any financial burdens during extremely difficult and vulnerable times in their lives.

However, when victims/survivors opt for civil litigation the process should not, and must not, make victims/survivors feel that their experience or abuse has been dismissed or minimised in any way. To do this is simply not acceptable. We will review the structure and processes across civil litigation to ensure our approach is trauma informed and that all our legal practitioners recognise evidence-based understandings of the nature and impact of child sexual abuse. It is my expectation that our Government's new approach will ensure victims/survivors feel listened to, understood, informed and supported throughout the entire civil litigation process.

The model litigant guidelines also apply to all civil proceedings brought by or against the state and all legal practitioners acting on behalf of the state. State Service offices or employees instructing them must be made aware of these guidelines and are required to comply with them.

I have made my expectations known and very clear that I will review the structure and processes relating to management of civil claims and allegations of child sexual abuse to ensure that regardless of the engagement it is trauma informed and cognisant of the nature and impact of child sexual abuse.

I reiterate that I want to extend my sincere gratitude to victims/survivors for coming forward and telling their experiences so that we can better protect our children. To

victims/survivors: your words are powerful and I am listening, and I hear you, and I believe you.

The Registration to Work With Vulnerable People scheme screens individuals who work or volunteer with vulnerable people, including children. Evidence before the commission of inquiry has raised this an opportunity for further reform. I believe this can be achieved.

Since 2014, our Government has taken a number of actions to expand and strengthen the Registration to Work With Vulnerable People scheme. This includes a progressive implementation of a registration to work with vulnerable people mandate for child-related services between 2014 and 2017, the agreement and adoption of the national standard for working with children checks between 2018 and 2020, and the implementation of a registration to work with vulnerable people mandate for NDIS-funded services between 2019 and 2021. These steps have made children and vulnerable people safer by precluding those individuals who, by virtue of their past conduct, pose an unacceptable risk from engaging with children and vulnerable people in certain settings.

The Registration to Work With Vulnerable People Act 2013 provides for the adoption of additional categories of vulnerable persons and regulated activities. My department is currently exploring options to expand the scope of regulated activities under the Registration to Work With Vulnerable People legislation, to ensure Tasmania's worker screening scheme for people who work or volunteer with vulnerable people, including children, is the best it can be. In undertaking this work, we are looking at additional categories of vulnerable people, such as older people and people with disabilities, as well as reviewing the services and activities where registration is required.

We will, as is usual practice, consult with the community, with peak bodies, with charitable organisations and employers on these important changes. Additionally, we are continuing to invest in alternative dispute resolution for the judiciary and the courts and reforming our tribunals. I am delighted that the 2022-23 Budget provides for additional funding of \$1.9 million for the ongoing operations of the new Tasmanian Civil and Administrative Tribunal or TASCAT. This takes the total TASCAT funding to \$7.6 million.

As stated on numerous occasions in this place and publicly, I will be moving building disputes under our building regulatory framework from the courts to TASCAT this year to ensure these matters are resolved in a cheaper and faster manner. An additional \$4.9 million has been provided to meet increased demand and support for delivering Safe At Home, Tasmania's nationally recognised integrated criminal justice response to family violence. The additional funding will further support the prevention of family violence.

This funding includes \$784 000 for the Department of Justice, \$447 000 for Tasmanian Legal Aid, \$2.5 million for the services currently delivered by the Department of Communities, \$635 000 for the Department of Police, Fire and Emergency Management and \$488 000 for the Department of Education. This will give these agencies the resources they need to better respond and help victims/survivors of family violence while supporting my significant law reform agenda. In addition, we will invest a further \$2.2 million per annum to enhance ICT systems, technology, service capabilities and governance across our justice system. This will enhance our capacity to deliver important services to the Tasmanian community, and counter increasing cyber-security risks.

We will also continue to strongly fund the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions. In addition to the announcement of an additional \$6.4 million over the forward Estimates in last year's budget, to ensure that our hard-working prosecutors are well resourced, I am pleased that the 2022-23 Budget provides an additional \$125 000 per annum across the forward Estimates to increase resourcing for the office of the DPP, which will further assist in reducing the backlog of pending criminal matters.

In addition, we have provided new funding of \$307 000 per annum over four years, a total investment of over \$1.2 million to the Office of the Ombudsman, which includes the Health Complaints Commissioner, to establish two new positions to fulfil its statutory obligations. This follows the significant funding increase provided in last year's budget for the Office of the Ombudsman of over \$3.25 million over four years. Importantly, these new investments will complement the commitments we took to the election that are also funded over four years.

This is a budget that delivers on our commitments for all Tasmanians and will help keep Tasmanians safe whilst supporting the provision of an efficient and effective court and justice system that meets the communities' needs and expectations.

I am pleased my focus on rehabilitation recognised, not only through the recent portfolio name change to Corrections and Rehabilitation, but also through the 2022-23 state Budget, making it explicitly clear that rehabilitation is a priority as part of our Corrections system as it has always been.

The 2022-23 state Budget is strengthening Tasmania's future with clear investments in our Corrections system that will help keep our communities and staff whilst providing offenders with more opportunities for rehabilitation. An effective Corrections system must ensure that where a custodial sentence is warranted, serious offenders have access to opportunities to address their offending before they return to the community, including through rehabilitation programs. Our Government has already made significant improvements in rehabilitation programs, staff recruitment and infrastructure and this Budget extends these improvements further.

When we came to government in 2014, it is safe to say that there had been under-investment or no investment in our Corrections system in terms of infrastructure as well as education, training and rehabilitation opportunities. This Budget includes a \$500 000 investment in rehabilitation through new literacy programs, focused on improving the functional literacy of those in our Corrections system and providing strong foundation for increased opportunities for employment and successful reintegration into the community upon release.

This Budget continues to deliver the rehabilitation and reintegration commitments we took to the 2020-21 election: including \$780 000 over three years to partner with the Australian Red Cross to deliver their Volunteers for Change program; \$610 000 over three years to partner with Connect 42 to deliver the Just Time Prison Parenting Program, which is highly successful with a lot of offenders participating in the program on numerous occasions; \$100 000 over three years to partner with Dress for Success Hobart to expand the Welcome Back Pack Initiative; and \$1 million over two years to fund five new therapeutic staff to work within the Corrections system, particularly focusing on drug and alcohol rehabilitation.

I am also addressing the increasing demand pressures on the Tasmanian Prison Service by providing \$4 million per year over four years. This boost to funding will allow for the continued effective operation of our Tasmanian Prison Service and will support the recently commenced major recruitment campaign to bolster the number of correctional officers within the TPS's ranks.

The ongoing and intense recruitment drive is combined with a strong plan to invest in infrastructure with over \$417 million to meet future prison capacity, including the completion of the \$85 million Southern Remand Centre, with \$13.8 million across the forward Estimates to support its operations; and \$270 million for the construction of a new northern correctional facility; \$50 million for the construction of a new maximum-security unit within the Risdon Prison complex; and just over \$8 million over three years for critical infrastructure maintenance across existing correctional facilities.

This Budget also continues our investment in our hard-working correctional staff with \$3.6 million to replace the mobile duress alarm system at the Risdon Prison Complex and Mary Hutchinson Women's Prison, ensuring we provide a safe and secure work environment for our staff.

The introduction of new body scanners will be another tool to help ensure the safety of our correctional staff as well as inmates and detainees. With an investment in this Budget of \$1.3 million the new body scanners are able to detect objects on or inside a person's body and clothing without the need to physically remove clothing or make any physical contact with the person being searched, providing a less intrusive process for personal searches.

As well as the benefits to those being searched, the scanners will have a positive impact in our correctional facilities through increased safety for staff, reduction in the time required for correctional officers to conduct searches and the likely deterrent effect the scanners will have in people attempting to bring contraband into a correctional facility.

Rehabilitation remains a key priority and I will continue looking at new programs for future introduction.

Turning my attention to my Workplace Safety and Consumer Affairs portfolio, the health and safety of all Tasmanians is a top priority so that everyone returns home work safe at the end of their working day. The 2022-23 state Budget is strengthening Tasmania's future and ensuring workplaces provide a safe environment for both staff and customers alike.

I am pleased that this Budget provides funding of \$750 000 in 2022-23 to extend the additional COVID-19 work safe inspectorate funding allocated in the 2021-22 for a further year. This further funding will allow WorkSafe Tasmania inspectors to continue to support businesses across Tasmania to actively manage their COVID-19 risks in the same way they manage other work health and safety risks in their businesses.

While much of WorkSafe Tasmania's activity is focused on reducing the risk of work-related injuries, sadly, every year a small number of Tasmanians lose their lives in the workplace, and even that number is far too many. The impact of these deaths on workers' families, friends, and communities is devastating. In recognition of this, the state Budget provides funding of \$150 000 toward the development of a workers' memorial park in Elizabeth Gardens at Invermay. In addition to raising awareness about the importance of work, health

and safety, the garden will provide a place for workers, employers and families to remember loved ones lost through workplace accidents, and reflect on the importance of working safely.

As Minister for Consumer Affairs, I remain committed to further strengthening consumer protections within our building regulatory framework by reintroducing home warranty insurance, which was abolished by Labor in 2008. The consultation paper on our proposed model remains available on the Department of Justice website. I encourage everyone interested to visit the website and have their say before submissions close on Monday 6 June 2022.

Importantly, our Government has acted to deliver financial assistance to property owners impacted by building company insolvencies with more than \$2.2 million in assistance already provided by our Government to ensure homeowners are not disadvantaged while the home warranty scheme is developed.

In addition, I am developing further legislation to strengthen protections for consumers under our Building Regulatory Framework, which I expect will be out for consultation shortly. As stated previously, this will include moving disputes regarding the building regulatory framework from the court process into the next phase of the newly formed TASCAT jurisdiction to make it simpler, faster, and cheaper to resolve them. The 2022-23 Budget includes additional funding of \$1.9 million each year for TASCAT's ongoing operations and to meet its obligations.

I now turn to my much-loved Arts portfolio. I love all my portfolios, but this is one which I particularly enjoy and have enjoyed since September 2017. I remain strongly focused on sustaining support for our diverse arts sector. This Budget contains strong investments in our important cultural and creative industries to ensure we can continue to grow and support local jobs across the state.

As Minister for the Arts, and as a passionate and committed advocate for our local sector, I understand that our cultural and creative industries are vital for the Tasmanian economy, for our lifestyle, our reputation, for employment, and as a major drawcard for visitors and now film makers to our state. That is why I am committed to sustained and targeted support to drive the momentum we see across our arts sector as a result of our increased investment over the past two years in response to COVID-19. This includes supporting and securing the future of the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery (TMAG) as custodian of the state collection and a critical centre of education and discovery that tells unique Tasmanian stories and connects arts, science, culture and our environment.

TMAG is vital for our economy, especially the visitor economy. We are investing to futureproof the centre with \$1.3 million in additional funding across the forward Estimates. This includes \$100 000 toward the development of a TMAG strategic vision to progress plans for a re-imagined culture and arts facility and support crucial partnerships with local Tasmanian communities as part of our commitment to TMAG's future and sustainability. We have also committed \$250 000 annually across the forward Estimates in operational support for TMAG to ensure it continues to play a vital role for research, culture and the arts, now and into the future. Progressing the TMAG vision and increasing operational support will enhance and secure the future of this important cultural institution, with direct benefits for jobs and the state economy.

Our Government recognises that we are in the midst of a golden era for Tasmanian literature and, as Minister for the Arts, I am so pleased to see the continued recognition and accolades Tasmanian writers are receiving on the national and global stages. Reflecting the depth and diversity of Tasmanian writing, the new biannual awards will now include seven literary categories, including fiction, non-fiction, young readers and children, poetry, indigenous writing as well as a young writer's fellowship and, in partnership with the University of Tasmania, a prize for an unpublished manuscript.

These commitments continue our Government's record of delivering sustained support to the arts, screen and cultural sectors in response to the challenges of COVID-19 through our comprehensive package of financial support totalling almost \$13 million in new and ongoing funding measures since March 2020. This includes the much-needed uplift of \$1.2 million in Arts funding annually built into the Budget for 2022-23 and the forward Estimates. This funding increase targeted at Tasmanian arts organisations came into effect last year, representing an annual funding increase of 65 per cent on previous years and was welcomed enthusiastically by the sector, but particularly our vibrant arts organisations.

We continue to deliver support to Tasmania's live performing arts through our successful \$2 million Live Performance Support Program, providing ongoing confidence to the sector to continue to plan events until 30 September 2022 and I will be watching that program closely in relation to whether or not any further extension is required.

Importantly, we will remain focused on progressing the outcomes of the Cultural and Creative Industries Recovery Strategy 2020 and Beyond, aimed at creating opportunities and addressing the ongoing challenges of COVID-19 on our pathway to recovery. In 2022-23 this will mean creating new international partnerships through Asialink Arts, finalising Screen Tasmania's community engagement strategy to promote Tasmania as a film-friendly destination and building on the momentum and increased capacity within our local sector as a direct result of our Government's investment in response to COVID-19. There has not been a decrease in Screen Tasmania's funding; it is spread over two years.

I value the increased momentum, capacity, recognition and success we are currently seeing across the Tasmanian arts sector and the direct and rewarding outcomes of our increased investment. We are focused on driving this momentum through ongoing support and new opportunities to ensure the future growth and sustainability of our unique cultural and creative industries.

This year's state Budget also delivers a record Health spend, including the expanded second stage of the Royal Hobart Hospital redevelopment in my electorate, together with major investment in housing, education, roads, and other infrastructure projects in my electorate of Clark. I have been a member since 2010 and over this time, particularly after 2014, I have seen a transformation, especially in the northern suburbs, of business confidence and employment opportunities. This includes \$110 million toward the Royal Hobart Hospital expanded stage 2 redevelopment over three years; \$11.4 million to complete the \$20.7 million 27 new mental health beds over two years; \$20.5 million for older persons' mental health services over four years; \$7 million for ongoing operational funding for additional paramedic crews in Hobart; \$8.63 million to complete the new \$10.2 million Glenorchy ambulance station, and I note the site will be announced soon; \$23.8 million toward six new child and family learning centres statewide, including Glenorchy; \$13.8 million toward the \$21.8 million upgrade to two campuses at Hobart City High School in New Town over the next four years; \$19 million

toward the revitalisation of Cosgrove High School in Glenorchy; and \$33.5 million to develop the new indoor multisports facility at Wilkinsons Point.

There is also road and transport investment, which I do not have time to go through.

In conclusion, in this Budget our Government has once again laid out a key plan to secure Tasmania's future, to continue building on our strong economic position, supporting local businesses and creating even more jobs to ensure Tasmanians have the skills and training pathways they need to move forward. I am proud of the contribution that my portfolios provided to our plan for Tasmania, as we continue to build a safe, creative and more prosperous Tasmania for all Tasmanians.

[3.05 p.m.]

Dr BROAD (Braddon) - Mr Speaker, if you recall, we were in this place last year after coming back from an early election and we heard the Government talk about what they were going to deliver. They were going to deliver stable government and sound economic management. Now we have this Government's ninth budget and it is high time they were held to account for what they have actually delivered. This Budget talks a lot about what they are planning to deliver, but what has this Government actually delivered in their last eight budgets?

Stable government? We have seen since the election that there definitely has not been a stable government. We have seen the door being opened and people running through it. We have seen minister Courtney suddenly resign. We have seen premier Peter Gutwein suddenly resign. We have seen ministers resign, and that is not the stability that was promised. Jeremy Rockliff as Premier was not the premier that the state voted for.

On the other front, sound economic management was what this Government promised and they have delivered far from it. What is the strategy for dealing with issues such as their failure to deliver sound economic management? This Government has three consistent strategies: they either ignore the problem; pretend they are doing something about it; or the alternative is to blame Labor. We see that time and time again.

There are structural problems in the Budget and they are not going away - in fact, they are getting worse. We are seeing a significant deterioration in this state's financial position under this Government and it is getting worse. We have seen the Government go from last year planning to borrow \$2 million a day to now this year borrowing \$3.5 million a day every day for the next four years. That is not sound economic management. So, what do they do? They ignore it, they pretend they are doing something about it, or they blame Labor.

In last year's budget speech, the then premier Peter Gutwein spoke for a full 50 minutes and did not mention his record debt. Now that debt has blown out by almost \$2 billion this year. Is this the real reason premier Gutwein resigned? He was obviously framing the Budget just before he hastily resigned. Was this the issue he was struggling to address? This year in the Budget speech, the only time debt was mentioned was when new Treasurer, Michael Ferguson said:

I have also tasked Treasury with providing advice to me on strategies to ensure our debt levels remain within manageable limits into the future so we can again use our balance sheet to shield Tasmanian jobs and families should external shocks to our economy occur in the future.

If that is not an admission of failure, I do not know what is. The budget situation has deteriorated so much that they have to get Treasury to look at the balance sheet to think about ways we can possibly shield Tasmanian jobs and families should external shocks to our economy occur. What we are getting from this Government is a massive deterioration in the budget position and nothing to show for it.

I went to all the TCCI budget events last year across the state. I heard time and time again then premier Gutwein saying that the budget was back in the black. I am afraid there is no back in the black this year from the Treasurer, Mr Ferguson. We are seeing the Budget plunge deeper and deeper into the red.

This is the Liberal Government's ninth budget and I will argue that the state is headed back to where it was in the dark days of the late 1980s and indeed the mid-1990s under the debt of the Groom and Rundle years. I repeat again that this Government is proudly borrowing \$3.5 million every day. What do we have to show for that \$3.5 million every day? We have our NAPLAN results, our school results, declining, waiting lists at record levels, and ambulance wait times at record levels. We have crumbling infrastructure and now we have a growing homelessness problem. There are people sleeping in their cars or the streets, and it is getting worse under this Government.

All the key indicators that this Government is championing, all the really hardcore work of a government, are going backwards at a rapid rate. That is this Government's record. On top of that, their financial management is basically pull-the-doona-over-the-head stuff. You only have to look back at the state's debt position. When this Government came to power in 2014 there was \$200 million-worth of cash and investments in the bank. What we see this year is the Budget plunging rapidly to \$5.2 billion worth of debt. That is a huge turnaround and there is nothing to show for it.

In the last quarter our state final demand actually went back 1.5 per cent. Our economy shrank last quarter. When the new figures come out, if the state's economy has shrunk two quarters in a row, that is a recession. We already have a recession in this state; we have a population recession. Tasmania's population has shrunk for two quarters in a row. Why is this happening? It is happening under this Government's watch. People cannot afford to live here anymore. I have heard of professionals moving to Tasmania to take up some of these positions the Government are crowing about, only to have to turn around and go back to the mainland because they cannot buy or build a house or, more importantly, they cannot find a rental.

We are getting to the position that if you are a young person and you want to leave home, where do you go? Where do you rent? Where is that first step out of the family home? Increasingly, that first step is to the mainland, once again. If you graph Tasmania's debt from 1988 to 2026, you see a massive decline in the debt position. What has happened to the debt position? Former premier Gutwein's last job was doing the revised Estimates in February. Between the revised Estimates in February and our Budget in May is a massive downturn in the Budget's position, just in three short months.

We saw a slight increase in revenue but also a massive increase in expenses for the same period. The big issue that we see in the difference between the revised Estimates in February and the budget position today is a massive increase in the amount of debt that is laid on the table as part of this Budget. It is incredible. For example, in the predictions for next year, the difference between the revised Estimates in February and right now is a staggering

\$475 million more debt in three months. In three months, we are led to believe, that is how far backwards our Budget went. If you look at 2023-24, the current budget is \$926 million more debt than it was three months ago. If you look at the 2024-25 year, in three months, that position has gone back \$1.4 billion. The difference between the revised Estimates and framing up a budget is \$1.4 billion.

The next year's budget is also included and that gets to the \$3.5 million being borrowed every day. That is a massive decline in just three months. How did that happen? Was it because the revised Estimates were wrong? Is it the fault of the Treasurer? Did he change some of the parameters? That is a huge turnaround in just three months. Imagine looking at that and saying, 'Now we're going to have \$475 million more debt'.

What we saw just before this Budget handed down was a supplementary appropriation of \$441 million. That is what this Government is doing: their spending is out of control.

There are some massive alarm bells in this Budget. You only have to look at Table 7.3; the GFS net debt as a percentage of revenue by 2026 is going to be 58 per cent of revenue - 58 per cent of revenue is going to be debt equivalent. Debt is well and truly getting out of control. If we have a look at that debt compared to the size of the state's economy which is GSP, GSP net debt of the state Government is going to be 10 per cent of the sum of state outputs for all industries. That is the scale of debt that this Government is building up; yet nothing to see here, manageable debt we hear time and again.

If we look at Table 3.2, the Government borrowing and defined benefits superannuation costs, what we see is that the borrowing and defined benefit cost as a percentage of the Government's cash receipts is going to end up being 6.3 per cent. Basically, servicing the defined benefit superannuation liability and interest, the \$611 million interest that is baked into this Budget that we have to pay, is going to take up 6.3 per cent of all the Government's cash receipts. That is important because it blows the state Liberal Government's own fiscal strategy. Their own fiscal strategy says that this should never get above 6 per cent. Well, in this Budget it blows that and goes up to 6.3 per cent. Who knows how bad this is going to look next year?

This year I again went to all the Budget breakfasts. The Government knows they have a problem with the debt that is building up in front of everybody's eyes. Three or four budgets ago, there was no need to talk about net debt because there was not any. Then the Government starts talking about 'manageable debt'. If you recall the discussion, 'We need debt because this is a million-dollar infrastructure budget. We need the debt,' said Peter Gutwein because of a billion dollars of infrastructure spending. What happened? The infrastructure did not get built. The Government missed their targets by 50 per cent but they still borrowed the money. That is the fig leaf that is constantly put in front of this Budget.

On the road show, we saw a slide put up by the Treasurer highlighting the net debt. He has to understand that business people can read graphs. When they look at a big graph on a big screen, no matter what the Treasurer says, they can see what it is. What it shows is net debt skyrocketing into the stratosphere. How did the Treasurer describe that? He drew a little curve between the massively growing net debt and said that it was the arc of the javelin.

Mr Winter - He did not say that.

Dr BROAD - He did say that. He believes he can draw a little dotted line like that and that means that the arc of the javelin is going to reduce net debt over time. Even if that javelin is arcing, there is a hell of a lot of net debt in front of it before it hits the ground. The problem for the Treasurer is that business people can look at a graph like this and say, 'Oh my God, that's insane, that's not true'.

On the second part of the graph, he did a comparison of net debt per capita across other jurisdictions and said that we were the second-best state behind Queensland. There is an issue with that. It is not a race, for a start. We do not want to be racing in front of the other states, massively overtaking the other states, which we are doing. Only a few years ago we had no net debt so there was no need for a comparison.

In the Budget Papers, there is a true comparison of net debt. Chart 7.3 displays the general government net debt plus, importantly, the superannuation liability that other states count as at 30 June 2023 in nominal terms by the percentage of the state's economy. You can do a fair comparison between all the states economies. Tasmania is the second-worst state by a very small percentage. So, 27.8 per cent of our state economy is net debt plus the superannuation liability. We only beat Victoria by 0.1 percentage point. We are behind South Australia, Western Australia and Queensland by some distance. We are also worse than New South Wales and only just a tad in front of Victoria. It seems like it is a race to build up the net debt.

The other issue this Government is not addressing is the increase in spending every year. In the first two budgets the Government brought down, spending increased by 2.7 per cent and 3.1 per cent. That is showing some fiscal constraint. Then the treasurer Peter Gutwein threw the rulebook out and started on a spending spree. Over the subsequent years it was 5.6 per cent, 5.2 per cent, 5.8 per cent and then 7.6 per cent. That gets us to 2021-22. Then next year, the 2021-22 year, the expenditure growth was going to be 9.4 per cent. Last year the argument was that things were going to be brought under control because there was going to be a 4 per cent decline in spending in the following year.

This year spending is increasing by 15 per cent. How is the Government going to balance the books? By pretending that over the next four years spending is going to be flat. There is going to be no increase in spending over the forward Estimates, according the Government's Budget. Despite that, at the end of the four years there is \$5.2 billion of debt. There is no way the Government can control its expenditure growth to be completely flat for the next four years. In next year's budget, we can expect that, instead of borrowing \$3.5 million a day, it will be something like in the fours and fives.

You also see it in the fiscal strategy data. In chart 3.2 we see a growing gap between total expenditure and total revenue. Where you see those two lines coming apart expenses are outstripping revenue. That means debt. We are expected to believe that from the end of this year spending is going to be flat. All of a sudden, the massive expenditure growth we have seen in the past four years is going to flatline. It is just not probable. What we are going to see in next year's budget is more debt.

What are they going to do about it? They are going to be making more excuses next year. They are going to do one of their strategies: they are going to try to ignore it; they are going to try to pretend they are doing something about it; or more than likely they are going to try to blame Labor. The Government has to take responsibility for the budget mess they got the state

in. I argue that this Budget, with the rate of spending increases, the debt that is building up, is reckless. This is the year that the Government should be trying to turn things around. Instead, it is pretending it is going to do something about.

It is also pretending it is going to be spending all this money on infrastructure. We have heard this all before. We have heard it time and time again. Big headlines, billion-dollar infrastructure budget. What we see time and time again is an underspend. The Government keeps borrowing the money because it is spending more than it is bringing in. The delays in infrastructure cost businesses. The Government is really slow getting tenders out. People put in a tender price, do not hear anything, then six months later are asked to hold to their tenders, when steel prices have gone up, concrete prices have gone up, everything is going up. Cost of living is stripping away any profits. By delaying all these tenders, the Government is actually introducing another risk to business. That is quoting risk. If a business does a quote today and is held to it in six months' time, it can actually drive them broke.

Debt used to fund investments that will save money in the long-term is good. We are not arguing that the Government should not have spent the money it did protecting the state from COVID-19. We are not complaining about the \$1.5 billion that was in the Budget for COVID-19. The problem is that debt was building up before COVID-19, and it is continuing to accelerate off the other end of COVID-19. How can the Government justify this? It cannot justify it with infrastructure, because it is not doing enough in infrastructure. This is a failure.

If you want to look at a failure of this Government, you only have to look at education. The Premier, as Education minister, is proud of this. He talks about how he turned around education. The actual result is that one in four Tasmanian year 9s cannot understand numbers and basic maths. One in four Tasmanian grade 9s cannot read well enough to understand what they are being taught. Two in five cannot express themselves in writing. It highlights the human cost of the Government's incompetence.

It could be worse. We are facing significant risks into the future from interest rates, GST decline, and state revenue. Is the housing boom going to continue forever? What happens if there is another shock like COVID-19?

There are also unfunded commitments, such as the \$750 million floating stadium and infrastructure delays. There is debt. You do not build and you still borrow. The Government is doing nothing about the cost of living, expecting public servants to take a real wage cut. Where are the staff going to come from? Are you going to get them from the mainland? Where are they going to live, where are they going to rent, where are they going to buy?

Are you expecting Tasmanians to take a real wage cut on top of the better offers they are getting from the mainland? These are the human costs of this Government's incompetence over the past eight years. It has not started today; it started eight years ago: NAPLAN, waiting lists, ambulance waiting times, housing and homeless, crumbling infrastructure and constant delays.

We have so little to show for all this debt. It makes it harder for Tasmanians to accept. It is bad for Tasmania and it is bad for the economy. The Government talks about sustainable debt, but then this Budget has some shocking cuts in it. The Government is expecting us to believe that it will cut health expenditure from what it actually spent this year. This year, it is projecting \$2.772 billion, whereas next year it is going to spend \$100 million less. The

Government is expecting us to believe, and this is the Premier's portfolio, that the Tasmanian Health department will get by with less expenditure than the year before. The 2023-24 year is less than what the Government spent this year. We can expect that the Government will again be doing supplementary appropriations and borrowing more money.

The other Government priority is housing. There is a boost in housing in the Budget. This year it is \$242 million, next year \$326 million. That is welcome if they can actually build, and it is not just empty words. After 2023-24 there is a massive cut from \$326 million down to \$215 million. The next year it is \$186 million, and the next is \$180 million. There are massive cuts over the forward Estimates for housing.

All we get from this Government is empty rhetoric: a 10-year plan, \$1.5 billion for 10 000 houses in Tasmania over 10 years. Does the Government expect Tasmanians to believe you can build a house for \$150 000? Is the Government asking Tasmanians to believe it can build three houses a day for \$150 000 a house? What is the actual cost of this housing policy? It is homelessness. People having to sleep in their cars, families having to sleep in tents.

We heard in the Budget speech about extra funding for homelessness, extra funding for shelters - and we heard it again today in question time - and I think funding for food relief got a mention too. The Government does not ask the question about why there is so much demand for housing, shelters and temporary accommodation. Why is there so much demand for food relief? It is because this Government has its priorities wrong. They have driven these people into poverty and they are being driven out of their own homes. They cannot afford rents, and they cannot find an alternative. Their only alternative is to sleep on the streets, in their cars or in tents. That is exactly what this Government does.

If we recall a couple of years ago, then premier Peter Gutwein talked about the 'golden age'. Remember that? 'Tasmania is in a golden age', he proudly stood in this parliament and said. Where are we now compared to that golden age? Is it a golden age when we have pensioners evicted from houses and having to sleep in cars? Is it a golden age when we have the disabled being evicted from homes and having to sleep on the streets? Is it a golden age when people are constantly relying on food relief?

What do we have to show for it? We have increased waiting lists, declining education standards and record debt. What have they got right would be more the question. Over the eight years the Government talks about everything they have done when what they have done is driven this state into the ground.

There are little hints of stuff going really wrong under this Government. You only have to look at the risk management fund and the provision for medical problems, people suing the state for things that have gone wrong during medical procedures. Across the forward Estimates the Government is providing for an extra \$40 million in that risk management fund, \$40 million for personal injury, so another \$80 million across the forward Estimates has been put into the risk management fund. We know from the supplementary appropriation that a lot of that is for claims of mental health injury and the like; workers' compensation claims. That is what is happening under this Government. The medical system has become so bad under their watch that they have to put another \$40 million into the risk management fund to cover people with their operations and so on going wrong. It is extraordinary.

There are a couple of other issues across other portfolios. In forestry it is becoming increasingly apparent that the Government is unable to fill its wood supply agreements. What future does the industry have if this Liberal Government keeps going the way it is? There is going to be a reckoning coming this year. The Government has its sustainable yield report coming out. What is that going to tell us? Is it going to demonstrate to us how incompetently this Government has managed the timber industry? What we need from the Liberals is not just slogans, politics and grandstanding because they are not the same things as economic leadership and definitely not the same things as leadership in the forest industry.

In the mineral sector we see MMG struggling to get a tailings dam built. We saw the federal Liberal government during the last election delaying MMG's application once again. Hopefully this can be turned around. We have a ship loader that is being built apparently but it is significantly delayed. What are they doing about the Burnie port? Talk about intergenerational infrastructure. Building the Burnie port would definitely be something you would not complain about because it is unlocking the potential of Tasmania. This Government's record is pathetic when you compare it to the first eight years of the Labor government.

In the first eight years of the Labor government we got new *Spirits*, we got the gas pipeline, we got Basslink. Those are the intergenerational assets. What have these guys got? Nothing.

Time expired.

[3.45 p.m.]

Mr TUCKER (Lyons) - Mr Speaker, after listening to that for the last half hour, do you know what came into my mind? A comment that Alan Smith told me years ago. He said, 'You need to have a look at the bloke giving you the advice before you accept the advice'. Mr Speaker, I know you have run a business before but I wonder whether Dr Broad has ever run a business.

Dr Broad - Do you want me to answer that? Yes, I have.

Mr TUCKER - Well, you would not know it. The other thing I was going to say to you, Dr Broad, was that we did offer you tutorial lessons with the Treasurer last year with your little mate there beside you. You obviously never took us up on the offer. You are running around fearmongering over debt. You have provided no alternative budget and, to be quite honest, I really have to wonder about you running a business, I really do, with what I have heard today.

I congratulate the Treasurer for delivering the 2022-23 Budget. During the past couple of years Tasmania's economy has been hit hard. Despite this, our economy remains strong. We have the lowest unemployment rate on record at 3.8 per cent, Mr Winter. I know you only remember 8 per cent when you were in government -

Mr Winter - Has it been hit hard or not?

Mr SPEAKER - Order.

Mr TUCKER - Now businesses confidence has risen. Tasmanians are fighters. We are a strong and proud state, having the strength and ability to fight and support each other. The

Liberal majority Government has taken its share in unprecedented circumstances and continues to rise and strengthen Tasmania's future. We all know how important it is to secure Tasmania's future, to support businesses, to maximise growth and to continue to invest in our infrastructure which will result in more job opportunities.

Our economy is strong. This is why we must continue to create more opportunities for Tasmania instead of talking it down. This Liberal Government will invest over \$8.5 million into education, skills and training, while \$4 million will be provided for technology for our students so they can have access to remote learning, providing more flexibility.

It is important for all Tasmanians, especially students, to have the opportunity to gain knowledge and skills, allowing each to reach their full potential and qualifications for future employment. An amount of \$5 million is allocated in the Budget to support principals' professional growth and \$3 million to expand resources for state library users. The 2022-23 Budget allocates \$250 million in infrastructure investment to build and improve classrooms and essential facilities. In my electorate of Lyons, we are investing \$46 million toward the new Brighton High School; \$18 million for the new kindergarten to year 12 Sorell school; and there are a further five schools to benefit from the 2022-23 Budget. This Budget will also provide \$24 million for six new child and family learning centres around the state and over \$37 million into TasTAFE, delivering an extra 100 teachers, with a further \$7 million toward support services.

Last year's budget provided \$10 million for the virtual campus, allowing increased access for our regional students over two years, and \$4 million over two years to increase TasTAFE access for rural and remote students with Libraries Tasmania. We recognise that skills training is important so there is a further \$45 million to upgrade TasTAFE with a transition fund for a new model over four years.

Education, training and skills is vital in securing Tasmania's future. Investing into this sector will see Tasmanians receiving the education and training they need to obtain the skills to secure jobs. Our trade training centres are specialised centres enabling adults and school students in our community to undertake accredited training in purpose-built facilities.

The success of these centres has been overwhelming, and by committing an extra \$5 million to complete the development of the Water and Energy Trades Centre of Excellence, will become an asset for the local communities. I would like to talk about the media release that the Youth Network released on 26 May 2022. The CEO Tania Hunt said:

- We are pleased the Rockliff Government is backing Tasmania's children and young people in today's Budget.
- We are especially pleased to see funding for young people aged 18 to 25 years as they transition to adulthood. This funding is the next step in appropriately responding to the unique needs of this group and will ensure they are not left behind as they move towards independence in our COVID-affected world.
- This group is often lost as they transition from services aimed at children to services built for adults. We are looking forward to speaking with young Tasmanians aged 18 to 25 years, to develop appropriate supports so they can go out in the world and live the lives they want to.

- This funding is in addition to that already promised to resource the Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy Action Plan and the substantial funding announced on Tuesday for Safeguarding Officers in our schools, which we also welcome.

Our building sector is going from strength to strength. Construction is booming. There is a boost for more affordable housing: \$538 million for social and affordable housing and homelessness across Tasmania; with \$204 million in 2022-23. Already, helping to boost housing supply in Tasmania is the \$2.5 million Ancillary Dwellings Grants Program, which opened on 30 June 2021. We are still tracking to build 1500 homes by June 2023, totalling 10 000 new homes by 2032.

The 10-year \$1.5 billion-dollar housing package will help meet the record growth, extending our building program of new social housing for Tasmanians in need, the biggest record in Tasmania for decades. As promised, we are delivering, investing \$10 million into the Headways holiday for a new residential subdivision to unlock new land supply. This has created more than 1062 blocks of land statewide, with 116 being assessed. We extended the First Homeowners Grant to 30 June 2023, and increased the residential land rebate available from \$15 million to \$30 million to support low-income Tasmanians to buy their own home effective July 2022 -

Quorum formed.

Mr TUCKER - reducing the deposit required to 2 per cent, Mr Winter, and increasing the property value threshold for stamp duty concession to \$600 000. We will also continue to invest in new youth housing models to support more young people into safe and secure housing across the state.

Last year's budget continued to invest in our youth with \$15.3 million for new youth housing and homelessness, which included a residential care pilot program for young people under 16 who are not in the care of the state and unable to live at home. I would like to read a couple of the media releases, one from TasCOSS and one from Shelter Tas. The TasCOSS one was released on 26 May 2022 by Ms Adrienne Picone, CEO of TasCOSS.

Funding in this Budget for the Tasmanian Government's revised social housing pledge of 10 000 new dwellings by 2032 is proof the Government is listening to the concerns of the community with housing affordability only getting worse. The challenge now is to deliver the homes as quickly as possible.

On 26 May, Shelter Tas, said this:

Budget paving the way to continue major investment in homes for Tasmania.

Shelter Tas is the peak body for housing and homelessness in Tasmania, representing all Tasmanians funded specialist homelessness services and community housing providers.

With our community facing cost of living pressures and escalating housing costs and over 40 000 households managing the stress of high rents in the tight and competitive private rental market, we welcome the state

Government's continued investment in affordable housing in today's Budget. Investment in social and affordable housing is the foundation for building our community.

Shelter Tas, CEO Pattie Chugg goes on further:

Our state's nation-leading investment in social housing delivered by community housing providers assists many Tasmanians with the homes they need and together with the Government we recognise that there is more to be done. There is still a need to boost the essential supply, and deliver a Housing First approach.

This year we have seen increased demand for affordable homes, with the waiting list for social housing past 4400 applications and 46 people a day are being turned away from homelessness services. There is every sign that housing stress and homelessness are continuing to increase across Tasmania.

The \$1.5 billion package to build and acquire 10 000 homes by 2032 reflects the Shelter Tas budget ask for a thousand homes per year. Shelter Tas hopes this important announcement will contribute substantially to boosting the supply of social housing from the current level of 6.2 per cent to 10 per cent of all dwellings, to ensure all Tasmanians have the safe and affordable home they need.

It is positive to see the increase in both capital and recurrent funding, with an increase in the capital funding to \$538 million, which is \$142 million more than allocated in last year's budget. We are pleased to see the investment in bricks and mortar is accompanied by the essential dollars for running these services to cover staffing and the costs of supporting vulnerable clients to achieve independence.

Our submission to this state's Budget process emphasised that, in 2022 with accelerated cost of living pressures and an affordable housing crisis, it is vital to ensure investment in social and affordable housing products as well as targeted strategies for specific population groups that are vulnerable.

Funding for the Safe Spaces in Hobart, (\$3.86 million), Launceston \$1.9 million, and in Burnie \$1.9 million, totalling \$6.9 million across the state is very welcome, but provides operational funding for only for one year. We would like to see an ongoing commitment to these services because the need for this essential safe net will not disappear in one years' time. .

In the north-west, we are pleased to see \$2.5 million operational funding for the new eight-unit Devonport Men's Shelter. The Youth to Independence centres in Burnie and Hobart will receive \$3.2 million over two years.

There is \$16 million committed for the establishment of supported accommodation facilities for older Tasmanians in the north and north-west. This fills a much-needed gap and will build on the success of the

Wintringham aged care model in the south, providing homes for the increasing numbers of older Tasmanians experiencing homelessness.

Women, and women with children, are some of the hardest hit by housing hardship and it is time for a dedicated women's housing strategy to address their specific needs. Shelter Tasmania has called for this strategy in our budget submission and we hope that the Hon Guy Barnett MP, Minister for Housing, will initiate the development of a Women's Housing Strategy.

More women than men seek assistance from specialist homelessness services, and family violence is the number-one reason that women and their children ask for help. We know that one women's shelter is turning away eight out of 10 women seeking assistance, which means that women who may be survivors of family violence are forced to live ... in their cars, or make do in hostels, or short-term hotel rooms. More women live in poverty, and older women are the fastest growing group of people facing the risk of homelessness and presenting to our member services.

It is important to identify funding opportunities in the Budget. The obvious and yet untapped source is the stamp duty 'conveyancing duty' that comes from the increasing value in Tasmania's housing market, which last year brought a windfall of \$48.5 million more than expected in last year's Budget and this year there will be \$49.9 million more than budgeted. The additional stamp duty income can be dedicated to much-needed social housing and homelessness services, to build safe, inclusive, thriving communities across the state. Every house and every dollar counts when so many people are missing out.

Of concern in this year's Budget is the low indexation rate of only 2.5 per cent, substantially lower than inflation, and this will impose significant challenges to services over the coming year.

The housing policies of the new federal Labor Government elected this week pave the way for new partnerships and efficiencies with the state Government in the year ahead. Shelter Tasmania anticipates opportunities for new social housing supply and home ownership products that will complement the existing programs in Tasmania. We encourage both levels of government to work closely with the community housing providers who will continue to be front and centre of the expansion of affordable rental housing in our state.

Australia has successfully managed the COVID-19 pandemic and with positive outcomes over the past year. We have recovered faster than estimated and our position over the next few years is encouraging. This Liberal Government has a responsible approach and does not play politics with Tasmania's lives and wellbeing. Labor still has no understanding, no trust in Tasmanians and no plan to deliver, as we heard from Dr Broad. We all know you need to spend money to make money, make sacrifices and take some risks.

The Tasmanian Liberal Government will continue to secure Tasmania's future and get more Tasmanians into work and back industries to create employment. We recognise the valuable investment business makes and want to ensure businesses are confident and prepared

to take on more apprentices, trainees and young people. Businesses are the engine room of our economy and they will lead our recovery. There has been no better time to hire an apprentice or trainee so let us make it easier for businesses to do just that.

By taking a responsible approach our economy is growing and we will continue to invest in intergenerational infrastructure. Over the next four years the Liberal Government will invest \$5.6 billion in infrastructure for our hospitals, schools and communities, in return providing better services, opening more opportunities and creating employment. A total \$222.9 million will go into our law and order system, including \$91 million towards the new northern prison and \$37.5 million for the Burnie Court complex.

There is \$2.7 billion for roads and bridges, which includes \$731 million towards the Bridgewater bridge, \$633 million over four years for roads of strategic importance, an \$81.5 million boost in maintenance of the state road network for roads and bridges, \$64 million for road safety projects, \$17 million allocated for park and ride facilities, \$166 million for the Greater Hobart traffic solution, and \$112 million for ongoing improvements to the Midland Highway. The Urban Congestion Fund will receive \$85 million; traffic vision for the Launceston and Tamar Valley, \$60 million; south-east traffic solution, \$51 million; duplication of the Kingston bypass and Algonia interchange, \$42 million; and the Huonville-Channel Highway bypass, \$22 million.

We all know COVID-19 has had a big impact on Tasmanians and now we face a new invasion. Ukraine and Russia at war and lockdowns in China are affecting key manufacturing hubs, placing pressure on supply chains and increasing the cost of living. The Liberal Government understands the pressures placed on households and businesses so we shall provide over \$305 million in concessions supporting vulnerable Tasmanians; \$39 million over four years in concessions for water and sewerage bills; \$186 million to eligible concession cardholders to assist with electricity bills; and \$79 million in council rate remissions over four years. To help further assist, we have the lowest vehicle registration premiums now payable quarterly and, with fuel costs fluctuating, we will continue to place pressure on fuel pricing via the FuelCheck website and app. I encourage people to download it.

The Opposition is consistent with a map of disaster, sitting on the fence, spreading fear-provoking, menacing rumours. David O'Byrne commented that:

The word 'aspirational' did not appear in the Treasurer's budget speech once, despite it being a key talking point earlier this year. That tells you everything you need to know about this Budget.

That statement clearly identifies their lack of knowledge and seriousness. The Budget is not a hope or ambition. It is about real-life expenditures and revenues.

The Liberal Government has many other projects we are funding and these projects are designed to set Tasmania and Tasmanians up for the future, investing in communities and supporting growth and job opportunities. The 2022-23 Budget provides \$8 million to extend the job trainer fund.

With significant investments already in Health, we are facing challenges due to increasing demand. To ensure Tasmanians receive the help they require, we shall increase expenditure to \$11.2 billion, acknowledging Health as our highest priority. With this increase,

Health now accounts for 33.6 per cent of the Budget. An amount of \$7.3 million on average will be spent every day to ensure delivery of health services; \$50 million to meet our hospital demands by locking in the beds opened last December; \$654 million over four years for upgrades to our four major hospitals, including rural hospitals and community health services; and \$48.6 million to Ambulance Tasmania for paramedics to meet increase in demand. Our elective surgery plan over four years for \$196 million statewide will be complemented with more than \$12 million of public and private partnerships to meet demand and deliver more surgeries sooner.

Last financial budget saw \$5 million to our GP after-hours support initiative on top of an existing \$3 million, enabling GP clinics and pharmacies to support people in their local communities after hours, taking pressure off our emergency departments. The 2022-23 Budget includes \$30 million for the Community Rapid Response Service across the state.

Rural hospitals are equally important, and \$17.7 million will be invested in a safe staffing model and \$3.8 million to assist with additional staff. The 2021-22 Budget enabled work to start on key focus areas for a 10-year digital health transformation plan. Over the next four years, \$150 million invested into digital health will continue to improve access to healthcare.

The Liberal Government will invest \$1.5 billion into Health over the next 10 years, with \$9 million towards a highly successful emergency mental health co-response model, the PACER, as we move toward a statewide model; \$2.6 million for a new safety and quality team to improve clinical outcomes; and \$6.5 million to continue delivery of the mental health reform program. This also includes the rollout of the adult acute care and continued care models. There is \$45 million for child and adolescent mental health reforms, with new services established for children in out-of-home care and youth forensic.

This is what the Mental Health Council of Tasmania had to say on 26 May on this subject:

Following Thursday's state Budget announcement, the Mental Health Council of Tasmania has welcomed the Government's continued investment in the mental health and wellbeing of Tasmanians, but warns that more needs to be done address workforce shortages across the state's mental health sector.

TasCOSS said this on 26 May:

We welcome the announcement of significant investment into digital health services which will see a fully integrated care platform, connecting our community healthcare and hospital sectors. However, we are concerned for the 65 thousand Tasmanians that are digitally excluded and unable to get online.

Tasmania is the most digitally disadvantaged state in Australia and one of the clear gaps in the Budget are measures to close this digital divide.

Without the necessary investment in digital literacy, telecommunication concessions and a Digital Consumer Reference Group to identify key issues and solutions, thousands of Tasmanians won't have the same access to services as their more digital advantaged peers, and our state as a whole will

continue to languish at the bottom of the national pile when it comes to digital access, skills and affordability.

The next step must be to move beyond only announcing funding and counting the services delivered - we need to start building in accountability through targets and the measuring of progress against outcomes that improve the lives of all Tasmanians.

We are looking forward to working with the Government on their commitment to using a wellbeing framework to set goals, monitor and report on progress.

The Liberal Government is keen to work with clinicians, healthcare staff and stakeholders on a combined solution-based approach to face the challenges we currently have in Health. This process will involve the help from a newly established health staff recruitment task force, which includes representatives from the AMA, ANMF, HACSU and UTAS. We will be addressing the need to attract and retain staff in every region of our state.

We have provided \$20 million in the 2022-23 Budget for the Roy Fagan Centre review to further improve patient care and older persons mental health services. Rethink 2020 will receive funding of \$1.5 million with a focus on suicide prevention; \$7.5 million over two years to alcohol and other drug sector to continue the reform agenda; and \$1.3 million to support the Tasmanian Drug Strategy.

By contrast, Labor remains in chaos and divided and once again has the facts incorrect. It is so distracted and out of touch that Shane Broad, shadow treasurer, quoted a comment about this year's state Budget. He said:

On top of this, Mr Ferguson has made a stunning admission that his Budget is so out of control he will have to task Treasury with coming up with a debt stabilisation plan, and that can only mean cuts, new taxes or both.

I will now correct Dr Broad and read the truth from Mr Ferguson.

I have also tasked Treasury with providing advice to me on strategies to ensure our debt levels remain within manageable limits into the future, so we can again use our balance sheet to shield Tasmanian jobs and families should external shocks to our economy occur in the future.

Mr Winter - So what was wrong with what Dr Broad said?

Mr TUCKER - You will have to read *Hansard*, Mr Winter. I am not going to read it out again.

In the last minutes I have left I want to say that our agricultural sector is a considerable contributor to our economy, not only providing for our population with food for our tables, as well as wool, cotton, raw materials and the clothes we wear, it is the largest contributor to Tasmania's economy.

The Government will allocate \$8 million to the independent Environment Protection Agency to undertake environmental assessments, with a further \$2 million to meet additional operational costs; \$3.3 million to implement the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area Biosecurity Strategy to respond to threats of invasive weeds, animals and diseases; \$1.3 million to strengthen biosecurity on the Bass Strait islands by funding full-time officers on Flinders Island and King Island.

Agriculture is one of our most important industries, employing more than 7500 Tasmanians in regional and rural communities. Tasmania's fresh produce is the envy of the world. This is why the Tasmanian 2022-23 Budget delivers for our agricultural sector, creates more jobs and sustainable growth. We are also well on our way to implementing the historic agreement we have made with the Australian Government to deliver Marinus Link and Battery of the Nation. Working with our government business, we will match the Australian Government's funding to support Marinus through the final investment decision.

Up to \$58 million will be provided by Hydro Tasmania for Tarraleah Power Station as part of the broader Battery of the Nation project. We have planned to be a globally significant producer of green hydrogen from 2030, with Bell Bay the perfect location for a nation-leading green hydrogen hub.

Overall, the 2022-23 state Budget is supported by a positive economic outlook. Circumstances can change rapidly and the Liberal Government will continue to manage the long-term needs of Tasmania's community. We shall continue to help and support with initiatives used in the 2022-23 Budget to provide targeted support and stimulate growth across our state.

Time expired.

[4.05 p.m.]

Ms DOW (Braddon - Deputy Leader of the Opposition) - Mr Speaker, it is my pleasure to give my Budget reply this afternoon.

There is a chill in the air. Winter is upon us again in Tasmania. It is going to be a tough winter for many Tasmanians. The economic headwinds are fast approaching and for Tasmanians it is getting harder to make ends meet. Bread, meat, milk, rent, petrol, power, water and sewerage, and vegetables are all increasing while Tasmanians' pay or hours are not increasing, or they struggle to make ends meet on an aged pension or a Newstart allowance.

Right now, Tasmanians need hope and a government that is there for them through the tough times and in the good times. This is the Rockliff-Ferguson Government's Tasmania. The first budget handed down by the new Treasurer, Michael Ferguson, is not what you would expect from a Government and a party that prides itself on good economic management. It does a good job at shredding this Government's credibility as a good economic manager.

I am gutted by the opportunities this Government has squandered. Our economic fortunes are changing and we face challenging economic times once more. We are still adjusting to living with COVID-19 and the constant disruption this is, at a time when cases are still very high in Tasmania. It has been a very tough two years for Tasmanians with the uncertainty and significant disruption to our lives from COVID-19, especially since the borders opened on 15 December.

This is the Rockliff-Ferguson Government's Tasmania. This is a Premier and a leadership team that Tasmanians did not vote for. The election we had to have led to more chaos and instability for this Government - not a strong, stable, majority Liberal Government as we were promised.

Too many Tasmanians are suffering, whether that be in our health system, waiting for surgery or a specialist appointment, or for a new set of false teeth. Tasmanians facing homelessness or those experiencing homelessness are being left out in the cold by this Government and they are desperate to have a roof over their head. This is the Rockliff-Ferguson Government's Tasmania.

A courageous government with heart and integrity would have more to show for the debt and deficit it is imposing on Tasmanians. It would have done more to make life better for all Tasmanians. The state budget presents the opportunity to do that. You can tell a lot about a government's values and priorities from its budget.

The Budget was an opportunity for the new Premier to lay out his vision for Tasmania, his ambitions, his key priorities for the state, delivered in partnership with his new Treasurer; a new leadership team for Tasmania, committed to tackling the challenges we have before us; a leadership team that fundamentally wants to change Tasmania for the future and to improve the lives of Tasmanians. This Budget fails to deliver this.

The Premier had the opportunity to clear up the unanswered questions of perceived or actual conflicts of interests about the former sports minister. I would have thought he would have wanted a clean slate rather than carrying the weight and burden of previous iterations of this Government.

This Government simply does not get the basics right for Tasmanians. In this Budget, the \$305 million allocated to cost of living relief, talked up by the Treasurer, is actually a cut to last year's budget. At a time when Tasmanians needed cost of living relief, this Government has failed to deliver.

The Government's focus in the Budget is yet again on infrastructure to support economic growth. This is all well and good if you have a good track record of delivering. Therein lies the problem for this Government: it does not. It is all announcements, no delivery. There are plenty of examples in this Budget and previous budgets. This also adds pressure, as others have said in their contributions today, to local supply chain businesses as time lines move and change on government projects. I have heard stories of this first-hand.

Here are a couple of infrastructure projects as an example. The Burnie Ambulance station and the Glenorchy Ambulance station; the Burnie court project; the north-west anti-natal clinic; the Energy Trades and Water Centre of Excellence; the four-lane Midland Highway; the underground bus mall; the northern suburbs light rail project; the Tamar bridge; Montello Primary School upgrade and north-west support school upgrades; the Cradle Mountain cable way; and the sealing of the Western Explorer. The list goes on.

The reality is, this Government loves to spruik memorandums of understanding, strategies and master plans. A glossy mock-up of the Bridgewater bridge was a centrepiece of the Treasurer's Budget PowerPoint presentation that was part of the roadshow that rolled out across the state last Friday. There is now the glossy brochure that came with the Budget Papers,

which, I must admit, reminded us a little bit of our jobs plan that we announced not so long ago.

I also want to mention my astonishment from the budget briefings and the budget roadshow from when the Treasurer referred to 'encouraging our young people to get a trade and an apprenticeship and that they would be better paid than a maths or science teacher if they did so'. I was struck by that because I do not understand where the connection is for this Government to the importance of a strong education provided by valued and well-paid teachers and opportunities for our young people. There is a clear connection. Our young people rely on a good education and the skills, knowledge and expertise of our teachers. Our teachers are pivotal in changing the economic fortunes of Tasmania and Tasmanians. The Government should be working with them and valuing them. Tasmanians deserve better leadership.

Then there is the floating \$1 billion stadium. The closest the Budget comes to funding this is a feasibility study and a floating pontoon on the Derwent. This is a delusional proposal. Our people, our productivity and our economy continue to be held back by the worst educational outcomes in the country, the poorest health status in the country, the longest waiting list for elective surgery, a housing crisis, a workforce crisis and chronic skills shortages. At a time like this, how can this Government justify an almost \$1 billion floating stadium? You have to question whether this new Premier's heart is really in it.

Health, housing, and education are the fundamental building blocks of our economy, our society, our state and, more importantly, our fellow Tasmanians' economic and social prosperity and wellbeing. Tasmanians deserve better leadership.

I attended two very different budget briefing events, which presented two very different sets of economic indicators and data. I will make some reference in my contribution to the Budget in a moment, the economic and debt profile and budget position the Government presented to Tasmanians last Thursday. First I want to share the view of Adrienne Picone from TasCOSS. She made some important points in her opinion piece, which was in the *Mercury* newspaper. The headline is 'The heart of the budget is sadly missing: this week's Budget offered to make the basics more affordable for those on low incomes.'. She went on to say:

As Tasmanians, we are proud of our island home, and fierce defenders of our identity should anyone seek to ridicule our state. The passion for our state is palpable, and rightly so. But as much as Tasmania has provided a sense of community and an abundance of opportunity for myself and my children, the reality is that not all Tasmanians enjoy these benefits.

Premier Jeremy Rockliff's stated commitment to leading a government of "heart" now faces its first real litmus test. Yet, for all the talk on cost of living relief, there was unfortunately no new measures in the Budget that will have an impact on making the basics more affordable for Tasmanians on low incomes.

For years, Tasmanians have told us they simply want to live a good life, yet in more recent times they are telling it is an uphill struggle just to get by. And despite recent gains, the stark reality is there are: 29 100 Tasmanians are looking for work, or more hours; 120 000 Tasmanians living below the

poverty line; 65 000 Tasmanians are digitally excluded and not able to get online ...

that is very concerning.

... 59 000 Tasmanian households are currently experiencing energy poverty; more than 4500 Tasmanian Families are on the social housing waitlist; and Hobart is the least affordable capital city in Australia.

She says: 'By any measure, this is not good enough'.

I agree. She goes on to talk about the Government's gender budget impact statement, and says that it lacked detail and much needed targets to measure gender equality were sorely missing. I could not agree more; it really fell flat. She went on in her presentation on the day to talk about that. I will read this into the *Hansard* because there are some important points to be made. It starts by saying:

What is gender budgeting? It is an analysis of all policy measures with a gender lens to reflect on how they may impact different communities on the basis of gender to be applied to all policies, not just those intended to support women. It should include informed analysis of how proposed expenditure and initiatives will impact upon our progress towards gender equality.

What we were looking for: gender equality specifically aimed as an over-arching objective; establishment of gender equality targets and indicators; and an analysis of whether the assigned budgetary allocations address current inequities. And what was the Government's response?

It acknowledges the reality of gender disadvantage. It lacks clear targets -

as I said, to measure progress.

And there is a need for more detailed analysis of existing and proposed initiatives.

I think, in short, it fell short. It was half-hearted really; that is another way to describe it.

There was concern raised on Thursday afternoon at the TasCOSS budget briefing also around the 2.5 per cent indexation in the Budget across grants and services and programs funded by government to many organisations across our community that do amazing work. They are concerned about this funding and the length of tenure of some of the contracts and the viability of some of the work that they are doing going forward.

I would like the Government to put on the record some explanation of that, and why that was and if they are concerned about job losses across those community service organisations or the inability for them to deliver services. We certainly are.

A good indication of community and business sentiment on the Budget handed down are the headlines of the day. I will share some of these with the House: 'Heart of the budget is sadly missing'; 'Health workforce missing'; 'State sailing into record net debt'; 'Unions talk up

fight over wages'; 'What's in it for education?'; 'Majority of social housing spent for years in the future'; 'Timebombs looming large'; 'So who pays?'; 'Tasmanian budget, debt soars, tax reform looms'; 'Tasmanian Government's debt to exceed \$5 billion'. They say it all really.

It is important to go back and look how far we have come in the last 12 months and reflect on some of the things that have happened in that 12 months and how that has gone on to then frame the Budget. If we look back at the last 12 months things have changed significantly in this place. Three MPs have resigned. A third of the Cabinet has quit. We now have a weak, new premier that Tasmanians did not choose. As I said, this is not the stable government that Tasmanians were promised. The new Premier and Treasurer have wrecked the budget, racking up record debt with absolutely nothing to show for it. They will be spending over \$600 million on interest alone, and have shredded the Liberal Party's credibility when it comes to managing the Budget.

The Budget does nothing to address the cost of living crisis; in fact, it makes the problem worse by cutting costs of living support for pensioners and imposing real wage cuts on nurses, teachers and other public sector workers. Whether it is the soaring cost of living, the housing crisis or Tasmanians leaving the state in record numbers, it is clear the Rockliff-Ferguson Government is not getting the basics right for the state's economy. When the Liberals came to government, Labor had left them \$200 million in the bank. Tasmania's debt will now reach a record \$5.2 billion by 2026. The accumulation of debt is showing little sign of slowing after that point.

As a result, Tasmanians will be spending \$611 million over the next four years on interest payments - enough to give to the entire redevelopment of the Launceston General Hospital and still have money left over. There is an enormous debt with nothing to show for it.

The Treasurer said he would task Treasury with finding ways to stabilise the Budget position. What does that mean? Is the Treasurer going to be upfront with the Tasmanian community about what they can expect to see as part of that process? What will be cut? What new taxes will be introduced? This is a conversation that the new Treasurer must be upfront with the Tasmanian community about. He needs to start that from day one, once this process is undertaken.

I ask the question again: how has the life of Tasmanians been improved by this Government? After all, is this not the primary role of a government, to provide for its people, provide services and provide leadership on the big issues, particularly given the economic position we find ourselves in? This is where this Governments fall short.

This Government's economic management is not working for Tasmanians. The Government cannot get the basics right. It has been a difficult two years for all Tasmanians as we continue to manage the impact of COVID-19 on our daily lives. It has been years of significant change. The tagline of this Budget is 'Strengthening Tasmania, delivering for all Tasmanians'. The harsh reality is that this Government is not delivering for all Tasmanians. That is very clear.

When Tasmanians needed a budget and a government that offered hope and help in our time of need as cost of living skyrockets, inflation reaches 5.8 per cent, as the economic headwind circles, this Government delivers what some have described as a vanilla budget. This is not a budget that delivers or has heart. It is more of the same, with little innovation and

increased debt and deficit. The projected surpluses are officious to say the least. Michael Ferguson has done it again. The former failed Health minister has taken the wrecking ball to the Budget. It can only be fixed with new taxes or cuts. The new Treasurer needs to be honest with Tasmanians and tell them about what action he is going to take. What is the Treasurer Michael Ferguson's plan?

I want to go now to the recent election and say how pleased I am with the result. We now have a majority Labor Government in power in Canberra. I would like to congratulate Anthony Albanese and his team on their win, and to say that I am looking forward to the good work they will do across the Australian community and to working very closely with them as a parliamentary Labor Party. There is hope for the future in Australia right now. There is no doubt they have significant challenges ahead of them, but they are up to the task. Tasmanians and Australians will see a great deal of change in their daily life for having a federal Labor Government. I want to thank and congratulate my friend and colleague Chris Lynch on his election campaign for the seat of Braddon. He ran a decent campaign and worked very hard.

You cannot have a strong economy without investment in people. You cannot have a healthy economy if you do not have a healthy workforce. COVID-19 has provided us with a strong example of that. As Bob Hawke said:

I think it's just stupid economics for a government to approach economic management from a strand of thinking regarding unions as enemies.

I could not agree with him more. They are a critical part of the work that needs to be done around our economy and around the importance of our workers and workforces across not only the public sector but the private sector as well.

The 2.5 per cent pay increase in this Budget is a slap in the face for our public sector workers, particularly those working in our health care system who have made so many sacrifices for us over the past 12 months. You only have to look at the good work of our Public Health officials. They have guided us with their expertise and advice and got us safety through this pandemic. We are working with them constantly around changes to restrictions and keeping Tasmanians safe. It is a slap in the face. It is no thanks to them to have a 2.5 per cent wage increase in the Budget.

I would like to know what has happened to the workforce strategy. You talked a lot about the working group that the Government has put together, but there has been nothing about the workforce strategy that was announced as part of the last election campaign. I am talking about the last state election, Ms Ogilvie.

Ms Ogilvie - Thank you for the clarity.

Ms DOW - What happened to that? The ANMF is looking for a workshop taskforce to try to address the crisis across our health system when it comes to recruitment, retaining staff and attracting staff across our health workforce.

As I said this morning in my earlier contribution, there is a fundamental structural deficit in the Budget, with no workforce development. This means there will be no staff to provide essential services. The Government has failed to deliver. In generations to come, we need to be planning for the ageing population across our workforce.

As we lose skills and expertise as people leave the health system, there needs to be that intellectual property in skills and support still in the system to nurture and provide support to younger health professionals coming into the system. If you do not have a workforce, you cannot provide services. That is a structural problem in this Budget that the Government needs to deal with.

We have talked about the COVID-19 allowance and the fact that was an abysmal process and does not address what people wanted.

I turn now to my electorate and talk about the Burnie Court. I want to understand what the Government's position is on that and when it will be making an announcement about that. The community is eagerly awaiting that announcement.

There seems to be a lot of talk from the Government about Montello Primary School. I raised this matter years ago. I wrote to the respective minister at the time, who is now the Premier. That request for funding for upgrades to that school was largely ignored for years. At the Budget briefing we went to on Friday night in Burnie, I heard the Treasurer talking about Montello Primary School. It would have been good if you were talking about it, thinking about it and funding it much earlier than now. In the Budget Papers, that investment is still not due for a number of years. The renewed interest is interesting. The students, the teaching staff and the school association want to know what the Government's plan is to spend the money that has been allocated to them and when they will see those improvements to their school, such as disability access, that they have been waiting for, for years.

My other point is about the aged care beds promised by the federal government at the federal election before the recent one. That funding was to be provided by the state. Those aged care beds still have not been delivered at the West Coast Hospital. Now that you are not in government federally, will the state honour that commitment and deliver those aged care beds to the people of the west coast, which was committed to by Liberal governments?

That brings me to Health. Ambulance Tasmania, what a mess. The worst ambulance response times in the country. We have terrible ramping, we have bed-block, the worst in the country at the LGH and the second-worst at the Mersey Community Hospital. Our paramedics are crying out for more support from this Government. You only have to look at the resilience scan that was undertaken. There is no money in the Budget to address those concerns.

There were 14 recommendations from a Senate inquiry but only one of those has been followed through. That is by the state Government, not the federal government. What are you doing to support the mental health and wellbeing of our paramedics? They are there for us in our time of need and we need the Government to be there for them in theirs. I am calling on the Government to do something about it.

There are unfilled shifts and fatigue alerts across the ambulance service. The CEO of Ambulance Tasmania acknowledged in the media that things are not great and wants more funding. I am interested in asking him at budget Estimates whether he is satisfied with the level of funding that was provided in the Budget. Those additional paramedics were really in response to the elections in Huon and Lyons. Would we have seen that commitment had those elections not been taking place? That is another question I will be asking.

The elective surgery waiting list is far too long. Every day I hear from Tasmanians who are living in pain and distress waiting for elective surgery that is necessary surgery and impacts on their productivity. A total \$120 million a year is the cost to productivity in Tasmania from long elective surgery waiting lists. What is this Government doing about it? There is no funding in the Budget for the Launceston General Hospital. When there is \$580 million for that project I think there is only about \$50 million in there over the forward Estimates.

We have a one-off payment for beds and staff. Those needs are not going to diminish over the forward Estimates so why is there not a continuation of that funding from this Government? Of course this Government is projecting to spend \$126 million less in the budget next year on Health. It is quite extraordinary.

As this Government looks to spend more money across the Budget, outcomes are not getting any better for Tasmanians. Clearly what you are doing is not working.

That brings me briefly to COVID and obviously the importance of continuing the vaccination programs across the state and how we would like to see free flu vaccinations for all Tasmanians and those being provided by general practice and also by community pharmacists, as is happening in other states. We need to make sure that as many people as possible get access to a flu vaccination this winter as we will see huge increases in the flu across our community. That is the last thing our hospital system and our exhausted health staff need, or indeed Tasmanians need, as so many of them have suffered already with COVID-19 and how unwell they have been with that over the last few months since the Government opened the borders.

I will also briefly talk about local government. I am not pre-empting this but there will be a bill coming before the House today. This Government has really had a hands-off approach to local government. The reform process has been ongoing now for eight years but not much has happened. There are still unattended matters through the review of the charitable rates remissions. Nothing much has happened with that. People in the community want to understand how much extra they are going to have to pay or if, indeed, they will have to pay. The Government has not made its position clear on that. The code of conduct process is unresolved. There is a review but nothing has been changed in that.

The culture across local government is turning good people away from either being involved in local government or running for local government. We have an election coming up. Local government is an important level of government and we need good people to be standing for local government and making a contribution to their community. It is very rewarding to be involved in, and there are times where I reflect fondly on my days in local government and sometimes think about how great it was to be able to deliver things and do things as part of a team in local government for your local community, and the frustrations of opposition, I might say.

The only other thing I wanted to make mention of about local government is that it would be remiss of me not to talk about the lack of planning reform that has been rolling on now for years and years. We are hearing from people in the community who are still concerned about the local provision schedule process, the fact that they are not being notified about significant changes to zoning of their property, and the implications that will have for them and their inability to provide representation about that.

This whole process needs to be improved. Councils have not been resourced adequately enough by this Government to roll out its statewide planning scheme. It almost looks as though you have given up on it. You are reviewing the state planning policies again. It is sort of back to the future, and we have not even completed the scheme in its entirety. Housing is impacted by this. There are so many things that are impacted by the lack of planning and this Government's approach to planning in this state as it has not planned appropriately through Infrastructure for the growth and for the housing needs of Tasmanians, those living here or coming to Tasmania.

Peter Gutwein is gone, but the Budget was well underway before he left. The most important task of any government is to ensure a better future for our children. As I said, our educational outcomes are appalling. They continue to decline under your Government: 48 per cent of our population is functionally illiterate. I find that absolutely disgraceful.

We are at an important time in Tasmania right now where Tasmanians need better leadership. This Government has been in power for eight years. They are tired, and they are out of touch on the issues that matter to Tasmanians. They have run out of ideas. The new Premier has failed to deliver his vision for Tasmania. Health, housing, cost of living, small business support, and education must be the core business for this Government. Right now, the Government is not getting the basics right. It could not be clearer: the Liberals' economic management is not working for Tasmania, and this Government is not delivering for Tasmanians.

Time expired.

[4.36 p.m.]

Mr BARNETT (Lyons - Minister for Energy and Renewables) - Mr Deputy Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to speak on the 2022-23 state Budget, a budget that is about strengthening Tasmania's future and delivering for all Tasmanians.

Upfront, I thank the Premier, Jeremy Rockliff, for the vision for Tasmania to be a place where everyone is encouraged to be the best they can be. What better vision can you have than that: to achieve your potential to be the best that you can be as individuals, as families, as a community, as a business, small, medium or large? How good is that? Thank you, Premier Rockliff, for your leadership. It is appreciated.

Congratulations likewise to the Treasurer, Michael Ferguson, on his first Budget. He had just a few weeks to get his head around the figures and to pull together such a comprehensive, competent and thorough budget that delivers for Tasmania and is a great success. It is all about harnessing our competitive advantages, creating more opportunities for Tasmanians and maintaining a robust economy.

We have had a tough time with COVID-19. It has been difficult, particularly for vulnerable Tasmanians. We have got through, and thanks to Peter Gutwein, the former premier, for his leadership. I put that on the record again, right at the beginning of my remarks, and to say that we have been rebuilding the economy. When I say that we are rebuilding; we are growing our economy, to the extent that of the last nine consecutive quarters our economy has led the nation. The State of Tasmania is leading. How good is that? The CommSec report makes it very clear that Tasmania has the mantle as the best-performing economy in Australia,

quarter in and quarter out. It ranks highly with respect to many of the key economic indicators and we are pleased and proud of that.

I was at the Budget breakfast last week. I was at the Budget lunch on that Friday with the Tasmanian Chamber of Commerce and Industry. There was very positive feedback from my stakeholders in the area of state development, construction, housing, and the resources sector, with respect to our renewable energy plans and veterans. We received very positive feedback at those events and subsequent to that; it was very encouraging. I see nods on this side of the House.

I congratulate both Premier Rockliff and the Treasurer, Mr Ferguson, for their presentations and taking questions, and the very strong encouragement from the Tasmanian Chamber of Commerce and Industry that represents small, medium and large businesses across the state. We are very pleased and proud.

There are many other things to share, and a few remarks that I want to put upfront. Our exports are at a record high, growing by almost 25 per cent to reach \$4.6 billion in the 12 months to March 2022. More than 60 per cent is from our mining and mineral processing sector, so the resources sector is delivering again.

You have seen productive industries doing positively, whether it be mining, forestry, agriculture, fishing, salmon, delivering jobs in rural and regional parts of Tasmania that so desperately need them. What a contrast that is to the previous Labor-Greens government where 10 000 jobs were lost and we were brought to our knees with regard to our productive industries, particularly forestry.

With regard to agriculture, we are on track to hit that \$10 billion target by 2050. Retail trade is now at \$665.9 million in the March quarter, a 15 per cent higher figure than before the pandemic and a staggering 45 per cent higher than when we came to government. That is because we are managing the economy well.

What is essential to understand is that you need a strong economy to deliver for health, for education, for housing, for police and to keep the community safe. We need a strong economy. We are delivering a strong economy and getting that budget balance is so important. The economy grew by 3.8 per cent in the 2020-21 financial year, the second strongest growth in Australia, and then more than double the growth experienced in the national economy. We are expending record levels now in infrastructure, whether it be road, rail and port, whether it be in health and our hospitals, in our schools and, of course, housing. I will come to that shortly. It is of top priority and it is an absolute honour to have that responsibility for and on behalf of the Government.

We have intergenerational infrastructure, providing strategic jobs growth that will benefit Tasmanians for decades to come. This is about increasing productivity, delivering jobs and delivering a sustainable future for the great state of Tasmania. We have a 10-year \$2.5 billion Hobart City Deal which has set the blueprint for the greater Hobart City and its future. Over the past three years, our Government has invested over \$800 million in countless initiatives with 35 of the 69 commitments completed and the remaining 34 all actively progressing.

A key part of that is delivering our draft Greater Hobart Plan. It is a 30-year plan, a draft that has been put out for public comment for six weeks through to 20 June. I encourage

feedback on that. It is all about meeting the challenges and grasping the opportunities of a growing population, delivering housing, services and infrastructure, particularly in terms of road, rail and port, while maintaining and enhancing what makes our capital city Hobart so special. My thanks to the Greater Hobart councils for the meeting I had with them a few weeks ago on 27 April, the sixth meeting of that Greater Hobart committee. To the mayors, Lord Mayor Anna Reynolds, Mayor Paula Wriedt, Mayor Bec Thomas, and Mayor Doug Chipman, I thank you very much for your support. I look forward to catching up with you shortly to discuss the importance of this as well.

The state Budget continues this investment with \$37 million of the \$78 million contribution for the next stage of our plan to deliver our once-in-a-lifetime development at Macquarie Point. You have the Antarctic and Science precinct. Just a couple of weeks ago I met with Milieu. They have the escarpment development at Macquarie Point underway. A development application with the Hobart City Council is expected later this year and that will attract around \$100 million in job-creating investment for this project alone.

We have the Hobart Airport upgrade, the Greater Hobart transport opportunities, which are being invested in as we speak. Housing is important. We have the Launceston City Deal, \$569 million which will unlock lasting benefits for the community through the city-defining projects. Fifteen of the City Deal's original 33 commitments have been completed and the Budget includes half a million dollars to continue the management and coordination of the Launceston City Deal as well as other northern cities initiative projects.

We have a \$129 million upgrade to the Launceston's combined stormwater and sewerage system, improving the health of the estuary and building infrastructure for our future. Construction is well underway on the \$97 million Willis Street development, the largest building in the \$304 million redevelopment of the University of Tasmania Inveresk Campus. It is very exciting to see that come out of the ground, which I see regularly.

Building construction activity provides an immediate economic and jobs boost to local communities as well as promising a long-term economic return to Tasmania. That is why in our long-term plan, the Tasmanian Liberal Government has already invested \$25 million into the Building Projects Support Program, which has supported \$238 million in local projects. I spoke about the building and construction industry and want to thank you for your support. Thank you for achieving your potential and being willing to do more. Only yesterday, the Minister for Skills, Training and Workforce Development, Roger Jaensch, and I had the honour of signing the memorandum of understanding for building our future with the key sectors of the building construction community. It was a very special day because we have agreed to collaborate and work in partnership to obtain those 6500 extra jobs for tradies and others to boost the 24 000-odd in the building construction sector, to ensure that it is sustainable, that we build resilient businesses while working with government to deliver our ambitious infrastructure and housing plans. It is all about driving investment, jobs, growth and opportunity.

I mentioned housing. All Tasmanians deserve a roof over their head. Safe, secure and affordable housing is a priority for our government. The Budget delivers on that; it is the most ambitious and comprehensive investment in housing and homelessness in the state's history. As the minister, I am proud to lead the charge in delivering a strong 10-year plan which ensures that we deliver 10 000 new homes by 2032.

The Budget outlines that we have \$204 million allocated in this year alone; it is over 30 per cent of our massive \$1.5-billion package in this Budget over the forward Estimates - \$538 million, which is in the budget papers. There have been some debate and questions about whether it is or it is not, and I would say some misleading claims - very disappointing, misleading and deceptive claims because it is in the Budget. I am more than happy to explain it to anyone who is interested and assist them to understand it better.

In the year ahead, we will build a further more than 1000 homes to meet that target of 1500 homes by the end of June 2023. We are on track, but there is much more to do. I want to put in a big shout and thank you for the housing debt of the Commonwealth being waived under this Government and under the former government when Roger Jaensch was the minister for housing at the time who helped negotiate that; I say congratulations, well done, thumbs up, because we know that has delivered a \$15 million benefit of additional funding following the waiving of the housing debt. That means more money is going into social and affordable housing. Thank you to the former Coalition government, and thank you to the work of this Government to make that happen. We want to make it a priority so we will do that - this is a priority.

Tasmanians also have a proud history of home ownership and we do not want to underestimate the importance of that. We know the recent strength in our property market has meant buying a home is now beyond reach for many Tasmanians; it is tough. We want to give Tasmanians a helping hand to take their first step into the housing market, so we have a range of initiatives now funded in our Government, whether it be the First Home Owner Grant, the lifting of the land tax threshold, stamp duty concessions and so much more. The new shared equity program will provide up to 40 per cent equity contribution to new homes or 30 per cent for existing homes with just a 2 per cent contribution from the home owner. This will help and make a difference for those younger Tasmanians and couples who want to get into the market and realise their potential. This is all about achieving the potential.

We have other initiatives in the Budget including \$15 million towards our Headworks Holiday and \$2.5 million for Ancillary Dwelling Grants. It was great catching up with Tiny Homes on the weekend and seeing the benefits of the Ancillary Dwelling Grant in Ravenswood near Launceston. In addition, through the Private Rental Incentives Program, which is very important, an extra \$9.25 million is provided through this Budget to support more than 300 properties for Housing-registered tenants over the next two years. Importantly, this scheme now includes expanded eligibility criteria to support tenants coming off the federally inspired and established National Rental Affordability Scheme.

Of course, our most vulnerable need emergency shelter and assistance right now, and that is why we have \$36 million in the Budget for wraparound services to provide that assistance for 17 specialist homelessness services including shelters, which are often the first step towards stable accommodation for many Tasmanians. The Budget includes just short of \$7 million for Safe Spaces in Hobart, Launceston and Burnie. I visited the day Safe Space in Hobart last week, as well as the night Safe Space; likewise, in Launceston last week, organised through Launceston City Mission, which I thank them for.

There is health screening, mental health care programs - so much support for those vulnerable Tasmanians who are without a home. I say thank you to those services for what they do and for providing that help and support, including to the volunteers involved. The

volunteers are often undervalued and under-recognised and we should recognise our volunteers in whatever aspect of the community they serve.

We are expanding the shelters with supported accommodation. We are also building new ones; we are building new and expanded youth shelters and foyers in Hobart, Launceston and Burnie. There is the new Devonport men's shelter; expanded services and facilities at Bethlehem House in Hobart, which I visited recently, nearly doubling the capacity of the Launceston Women's Shelter, which likewise I visited only a few weeks ago, and the expanded McCombe House for Women and Children.

We have a lot to do. I thank Housing Connect and my department for the wonderful work they do, going beyond the call. I have now convened the special ministerial reference group and will be meeting for the first time in July with the Premier, and Mrs Alexander, my parliamentary secretary, whose support and experience I greatly appreciate.

We have a big plan ahead with the new authority in establishing that. It will be brought before the House, put out to public consultation in the near future and the authority is expected to begin operating by 1 October. That is our plan - a big and ambitious plan, but we do not apologise for that. There is a lot more to do. As a state we have very comprehensive integrated housing and homelessness services and one of the best in this country. As the Premier says and I totally agree, it is a budget with a heart, with housing at its centre.

In energy and renewables, it is a great honour to be leading the charge again and proudly being 100 per cent fully self-sufficient in renewable energy, and going to 200 per cent by 2040. In six of the last seven years, we have had net zero omissions in Tasmania. We can be proud of that; we should stand up and say yes, well done and thank you to our pioneers and forebears with the hydro industrialisation and now using our world-class water resource and world-class wind resource to deliver on our renewable energy plans. It is going to deliver jobs and opportunities. It is not only in that space, but also in bioenergy: we have \$10 million to support bioenergy and organic waste as opportunities to replace fossil-fuel boilers. There are 60 fossil-fuel boilers across 20 sites around the state, so there is a lot of work to do. It will not be long before we release our bioenergy vision for Tasmania. It is very exciting to be working with those in this area.

We have funding support for the \$800 000 over two years to implement the actions of the recently released Tasmanian Renewable Energy Coordination Framework. There is a lot happening in this space. Thank you to all those at Recfit, Hydro and Aurora Energy who are progressing our renewable energy plans. Marinus Link and Battery of the Nation projects are well underway and well-funded thanks to the former government's commitment, with \$75 million from each government to support Marinus Link, taking it to the final investment decision by December 2024.

The Morrison government gave \$65 million for Tarraleah Power Station redevelopment. This is going to deliver double the megawatts from 110 megawatts to 220 megawatts at Tarraleah. This is part of the Battery of the Nation plan and it will deliver jobs, growth, opportunity and a cleaner world. When I say 'a cleaner world', I am talking of Marinus Link delivering at least 140 million tonnes less of CO₂ by 2050. I look forward to working with the federal minister to develop and progress our plans, deliver jobs, affordable, reliable, and clean electricity not just in Tasmania, but to export our surplus energy into the national electricity market.

With respect to green hydrogen we are all go. Congratulations to the Bell Bay advanced manufacturing zone, to Susie Bower who has led the charge there and done a great job. We have secured \$70 million. Origin Energy said about that announcement:

We welcome the announcement and support plans to deliver shared infrastructure into the Bell Bay precinct. This is a great example of government and industry working together to help deliver the transition to cleaner energy.

How good is that? Tasmania has what the rest of the world wants and needs, that is affordable, reliable, clean electricity. Green hydrogen is Tasmania's superpower. It is the next big thing in energy. We are excited about it and we are getting on with the job. We have MOUs with the port of Rotterdam, the Flanders region of Belgium, and a lot of interest from Japan, Korea and elsewhere.

I want to address the cost of living. The cost of living is important to Tasmanians. That is why we have worked hard to ensure our regulated energy prices for Tasmanians have remained the lowest or among the lowest in the nation. We have a very generous concession program, one of the most generous in Australia. Hardship provisions, energy efficiency loan schemes, winter payments. We accept the community is still doing it tough, particularly during the winter. We know that power bills go up based on consumption. That is why we will continue to work with our community to keep the cost of living down wherever possible. There is the \$30 million Tasmanian Energy Efficiency Loan Scheme. We will be monitoring this very carefully and stand ready to assess further concessions and supports that may be needed with regard to any future energy price increases.

There is no greater friend of the resources sector than a majority Liberal Government. Remember what happened under a minority Labor-Greens government? When the resources sector went, I will not say totally down the chute - they were taken to their knees. As a result of the efforts of a majority Liberal Government, we have rebuilt the forestry industry. We have a very productive and confident mining and mineral processing sector. There are 10 000 jobs in mining and forestry across Tasmania. We are so proud of them. They are world-leading. More than 60 per cent of our exports are in mining and mineral processing. We have \$1 million in our Budget to support that sector. We could not be more pleased.

I will not reflect on, but I will refer to, the workplace protection legislation that has now passed this place. How important as a principle that workers have the right to work and businesses have the right to operate free from interference, free from workplace invasion. That is a principle we have stood by since 2014: three elections, three mandates. We will not cease our efforts to prosecute the case to pass such legislation.

Mining and mineral processing is delivering for Tasmania with record royalties from the mining sector. There is positive progress with New Century Resources at Queenstown. I look forward to catching up with the Queenstown community next week. Likewise, on King Island, Group 6 Metals is all go. There is positive feedback from Avebury Nickel Mine. There is \$800 000 in the Budget over four years to support Mineral Resources Tasmania and providing enhanced services and information to the sector. There is a \$2 million grant for King Island. That shows how important we see the King Island community and how important that mine is for the community.

Forestry is sustainable. It is the ultimate renewable. We are backing it. We will not hold back. It is the same support we give the mining and mineral processing sector, including at the Rosebery mine, notwithstanding the Greens and the Bob Brown Foundation trying to kill off that mine and the 500 jobs that are there.

We will not give up supporting this important resource sector. We are backing it to the hilt. The Government's investment in forestry includes the On Island Processing Program, a \$10 million five-year investment that's all about getting value added jobs in Tasmania. We are about promoting Tasmanian timber through \$1.15 million over three years for the Tasmanian Timber Promotion Board. We are about ensuring resource security for our sector. We are about supporting skills developed through Arbore Forest Industries. The diversity action plan supports both the forest and the mining industries.

I am pleased that federal Liberal and federal Labor committed to \$100 million to be invested in Launceston in the National Institute for Forest Products Innovation with industry support. We are a standout in terms of well-managed best-practice industry. I thank the federal Labor Government for that. I congratulate them on their election and I look forward to working with them to benefit Tasmania.

I congratulate a colleague and friend, Gavin Pearce, who has been an ardent advocate for the resources sector and his community in Braddon. Likewise to Bridget Archer. She supports our community. Susie Bower received nearly a 5 per cent swing in Lyons.

No government has been more supportive of our 10 500 veterans than the Liberal Government. We are backing them to the hilt. We have provided record funding and will continue to do so because we believe they deserve the support. We say thank you for your service and your sacrifice. We thank RSL Tasmania; we congratulate the new president and the new CEO, John Hardy. We thank them for being open to supporting the Teddy Sheean VC Memorial Grants Program of \$100 000 per year. That is well appreciated. The Frank MacDonald Memorial Prize Group funding support encourages young Tasmanians to learn and understand the importance of service and sacrifice. How important is that? Thank you to our veterans. We have funding support for the Veterans' Wellbeing voucher, \$200 000. That is \$100 to support them to be healthy and well; there is Dago Point, the Veterans Active Recreation Project and a whole lot more. I acknowledge that and say thank you.

In conclusion, Tasmanians clearly trust our Government to secure Tasmania's future and deliver on our plan. Despite those on the other side, still not having delivered an alternative budget, only whingeing, whining criticism and knock, knock, knock.

It is time they stepped up to say congratulations, well done for what has been achieved and the opportunities we deliver to strengthen Tasmania's future.

Time expired.

Debate adjourned.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT AMENDMENT (ELECTIONS) BILL 2022 (No. 28)

Second Reading

[5.06 p.m.]

Mr STREET (Franklin - Minister for Local Government) - Mr Speaker, I move -

That the bill be now read the second time.

This bill introduces an important democratic reform for the long-term success and renewal of our system of Local Government. Local Government impacts all Tasmanians. Our 29 councils manage \$12.1 billion worth of infrastructure assets. They have invested \$1.19 billion in capital over the last four years, employ approximately 3300 full-time equivalent staff and raise around \$740 million in own-source revenue each year.

Councils make decisions about the footpaths, local roads, parks and recreational facilities Tasmanian communities depend on and deliver the important waste, regulatory, wellbeing and community services that we could not do without. It is extremely important that councils reflect and understand the breadth and diversity of the communities they represent. That is why today, this Government is taking the very significant step of introducing compulsory voting for local government elections. This reform will bring local government into alignment with state and Commonwealth elections.

Compulsory voting is characteristic of Australian democracy and underpins the very high and consistent participation of Australians at elections. Tasmanians are enthusiastic voters who are passionate about our democracy. At the last federal election Tasmanians were more likely to vote than Australians in any other state.

Most Australians are required to vote at their local council elections. Compulsory voting is established in New South Wales, Victoria, Queensland, along with the Northern Territory. The benefits of this measure are clear as the three states achieve voter turnout for their local government elections much higher than in Tasmania, in the order of 80 per cent participation in recent elections. By contrast, in 2018 statewide turnout at Tasmania's council elections, including the Glenorchy City Council elections held separately, was 58 per cent. In 2014, the turnout was under 55 per cent.

The statewide numbers alone are not the best argument for reform. I acknowledge that rural councils have achieved reasonably high turnout under optional voting, which speaks to the connectiveness in Tasmania's regions and towns that smaller councils know so well, but Tasmania's cities are not as successful. In 2014, participation within two large urban councils was below half of all eligible electors. Without taking a definitive step to introduce compulsory voting, we cannot be confident that local representation of Tasmania's urban areas best reflects the diverse and changing communities they serve.

In this context, I am pleased to note the long-standing support and advocacy for this reform from Hobart City Council. This reform may seem unexpected to some stakeholders and communities; however, with a view towards the local government elections scheduled for September and October of this year, this Government considers it opportune and, indeed urgent, to act to introduce compulsory voting now, otherwise the democratic benefits of this worthy measure will not be realised until the future electoral cycle some years in the future.

While compulsory voting will doubtless attract a range of views in the community, this Government is of the view that the issue is well understood and that further discussion will not be necessarily beneficial. Parliament, councils and other stakeholders in the community have all participated in the public conversation about this issue in the past decade, including legislative debate. Government considered the arguments put by councils and other stakeholders informing its decision to proceed.

It could be argued that compulsory voting for Tasmanian local government elections is overdue. I am informed that the people of New South Wales have been required to vote in council elections since 1947. The Local Government (Elections) Amendment Bill provides for a compulsory voting framework very similar to that for elections for the Tasmanian Parliament. I note this framework is also similar to that proposed by those sitting opposite in the 2013 Local Government Amendment (Elections) Bill.

Importantly, compulsory voting at local government elections will apply to the same people who are required to vote at state and federal elections, namely, people enrolled on the House of Assembly roll at a residential address in the electoral area. This means no changes proposed at this time for the additional classes of persons able to vote at local government elections, through voluntary enrolment on council General Manager rolls.

The bill establishes that a person enrolled at an address in the electoral area must vote at an election, and establishes an offence for failing to vote without a valid and sufficient reason. 'Valid and sufficient reason' is defined in the manner of the Electoral Act 2004, including providing for those with objections to voting on the basis of their faith.

The bill provides for the Electoral Commission to issue failure to vote notices and follow up notices and to consider reasons provided for an elector's failure to vote. Electors who fail to vote and who do not provide reasons or whose reasons are not accepted by the commissioner are able to pay a fine of 0.2 penalty units, which was \$34.60 in 2021-22. The Electoral Commissioner may issue an infringement notice for 0.4 penalty units where this fine goes unpaid; \$69.20 in 2021-22. Persons may elect for the matter to be heard in a court, or the Electoral Commissioner and Director of Public Prosecutions may commence proceedings in which case a fine of up to one penalty unit may apply, which was \$173 in 2021-22.

Importantly, the bill provides for the commissioner to not issue notices in cases where an elector is known to have a valid and sufficient reason for their failure to vote, which will provide protections for members of the community disadvantaged or hindered in their ability to participate in the specific election.

The Government expects that as a result of these measures, tens of thousands more Tasmanians will have their say at local council elections, and that this number will rise over time. This large democratic dividend should flow through to improved and more responsive local decision-making and will reconnect councils, especially in urban areas, with the communities they serve.

Costs associated with the enforcement are expected to be defrayed by the payment of failure to vote penalties. While this will have a negative impact on those who do not return their ballots, initial failure to vote fines in Tasmania in the Electoral Act and this bill are low compared to those in some other states.

The Government acknowledges that Tasmanian communities must be informed about the measure prior to elections later this year. For this reason, a significant public information campaign is planned. This campaign will stress the importance of all Tasmanians keeping their electoral enrolment up to date.

The bill will introduce a further significant reform to ensure that more Tasmanians have their say at the coming local government elections. The bill changes the ballot formality requirements so that ballots for the elections for more than five councillor vacancies only need to be numbered from one to five to be considered formal. This measure responds to the observed increase in informal voting in Tasmanian council elections following the introduction of all in, all out voting in 2013. This matter was the subject of community feedback through The Local Government Legislation Review.

All in, all out elections had the unintended effect of increasing informal voting in some instances, due to requirements, for instance, that a vote for a Hobart city councillor elections be numbered from one to 12 without error or omission, to be considered formal. Unaddressed, unintended informal voting could deprive many Tasmanians of their ability to have their say at local government elections. I am pleased these amendments should substantially address this issue.

Noting the risk of increased vote exhaustion due to reduced preferencing, the amendments provide the ballot papers are required to contain instructions intended to encourage electors to number their ballots with as many preferences as they may wish to include, while clearly stating the minimum requirement. To further reduce unintended informal voting, ballot savings provisions are introduced such that electors who make an error on their ballot above the mandatory number of preferences will have their vote considered formal, and be counted up to the preference before the first error or duplication.

This bill represents a package of reforms that will have significant benefits for many years to come. I am entirely confident that the introduction of compulsory voting alongside these important measures to reduce unintended informal voting will mean that more Tasmanians than ever before will have their voice heard, and their vote counted at this year's local government elections.

We are taking this step at a time, when the Government, through the local government board is working alongside councils and the community to consider the shape and function of the local government sector in Tasmania to ensure that our councils are equipped to support communities and meet the challenges of the decades to come. I consider this bill the first, and very important step, on the journey to a more robust, efficient and responsive local government sector, which more fully reflects the communities it serves.

Mr Speaker, I am pleased to commend the bill to the House.

[5.15 p.m.]

Ms DOW (Braddon - Deputy Leader of the Opposition) - Mr Speaker, I indicated to members opposite and my colleagues on this side of the House that I would be moving an amendment. At this stage I will not be doing that. Through further work with OPC, I understand it does not quite do what I want it to do, which is about one value, one vote. I need to do further work on it with OPC and we may consider introducing that in the upper House to

enable that change to take place in line with Labor's policy position. I will not be moving it in the debate today in this House.

It is quite refreshing. We have had three local government ministers this year. It is a case that this Local Government minister wanting to show that he is doing something in local government. The Government's approach to local government has been pretty lacklustre. It has put forward a number of reform processes that have not been delivered upon. The sector is undergoing significant change. There are significant cultural issues across local government that are of concern to me. Having been involved in local government for a very long time, I understand the importance of that level of government but also how rewarding it can be to be involved in local government, provide services to your community and create change in your local community.

Local government is fundamental to the success and the prosperity of local communities. As a creature of the state government, local government needs to be much more supported by this state government. It has had a hands-off approach and it needs to support them. We have talked about cultural workplace reviews for those working in local government but also for those elected representatives. The last thing we want to happen at the upcoming elections is for Tasmanians to not want to put their hand up, to stand for their community, to represent their community and to be involved in what is a wonderful level of government.

This Government needs to do more to raise the profile of local government. Compulsory voting has been a long-held policy position for us. It goes without saying; that being our policy position we will be supporting this bill this afternoon.

This has come as a bolt out of the blue from this Government. There was not the opportunity to have good consultation with the sector, with all the councils. There has not been time for us to consult individually with all the councils around the state. It would be important to do that. We have spoken at length with the Local Government Association, which made some points to us that we have considered.

It feels like a rushed process. That is the point to make about the amendment as well. We have not had time to work through these things. This has come in a rush when this Government has had eight years to implement any type of reform in local government. If you look at the reform directions paper, which is from when you were the minister for Local Government, which is a while back, Mr Speaker, it outlines a number of reform directions for the state and for the sector. It does not outline compulsory voting as one of those recommendations. That was our policy position.

There are a number of other important reform mechanisms that need to take place in Tasmania for local government that have not been delivered by this Government. We are still awaiting this review and what that will mean for the Local Government Act.

It has been fed back to me from councils that they hope this rushed process and this lack of regard and consultation does not then carry through to the reform process itself, which is happening in the state. There needs to be due consideration of the recommendations and due consultation with the sector for those working in local government, for those elected in local government and with the unions as well, the Australian Services Union and with the Local Government Association. They deserve that respect and they deserve to be fully involved in

that process. I would expect nothing less from the minister. I ask that he make that commitment today to the House.

The amendment I wanted to move was in relation to one vote one value. This is part of our policy. That is because people should have one vote in the local government election. If you are making it compulsory, then that makes great sense for democracy. I have not been able to do that. It was quite complicated to do that and it links back to the general manager's roll, which I understand is not part of the reforms being presented to the House today.

You need to get on and do this work. It has been sitting on the table for such a long time. There are things that need to be fixed in local government, such as the code of conduct. That is sitting on the table. There are a number of things in this report that people have had the good will to provide feedback to the Government on, in a number of submission processes that have not been acted on. Give people an update on where you are at with each of these recommendations.

The other thing which is outstanding is the charitable rates remissions and the Government's policy position. I met with some retirees last Friday in Launceston about their concerns about what that legislative change might mean for them. Their major concern is that they do not actually know what you are proposing. I encourage you to put it out there. I understand that the consultation process was meant to start in January. I understand there have been lots of changes with the Government, with changes to ministers and changes to Premiers. People need to understand because that will impact on those individuals and they need to understand what it will mean for them.

I have a couple of questions in relation to the legislation. What increased administrative costs will we see for local governments because of these changes?

There are concerns raised about the risks of votes exhausting with a 1-5 process around voting. Minister, why did you cherry-pick this reform measure over numerous others that are there in your reform directions paper when it is not in your reform paper? You have been working with the Hobart City Council. In your second reading speech you said that Hobart City Council had provided advocacy on this issue, or something along those lines.

Mr Street - No, I commented that they publicly supported. There was no advocacy from the council itself. I was just commenting on the fact that they supported it in the past, and they have made a public comment since, which was tabled last week, in support of the amendment. I have not worked with Hobart City Council.

Ms DOW - It would be good to understand why this decision has been taken by you. What has prompted that, and why have you done it in such a rushed way? Where will the money come for these reforms? It may be included in the budgeted amounts for local government and the general administration of the local government division.

I had a question about clause 262B(2)(c). What criteria would be around that, to understand how that would make it that people did not have to vote?

Mr Street - For reasons of faith.

Ms DOW - Yes. I want to understand about the education campaign for this, if it passes both Houses and is rolled out across the community. There is not a very big window of opportunity to do that. It will be critical to the success of the rollout of compulsory voting, particularly the changes to the way that people vote and how that will be undertaken.

Mr Street - Changes in how they vote?

Ms DOW - Just with the 1-5. That concludes my contribution. We will be supporting the bill. This is our policy in relation to compulsory voting. I note again that it was not part of the reform directions. It is important that you get on and implement these things and work with the sector to do that. I understand they sent you a list of priorities they want to see implemented. I ask that you bring your attention to that and do so. I will not be moving the amendment because it does not achieve what we want to achieve with one value one vote.

[5.25 p.m.]

Dr WOODRUFF (Franklin) - Mr Speaker, the Greens very strongly engaged with and supported the reform process which has been the review of the local government legislative framework undertaken by the department over a number of years. I think it first formally started in the community in March 2019, which is three years ago. We participated very actively because we really understand that local government is essential and an often-overlooked level of government. It certainly does not have the constitutional recognition and the legislative framework that it deserves.

We are of the view that there were quite a number of changes that needed to be made to the legislation. We made a substantial contribution to the review process in March, including that changes should be made to the General Manager's roll so that the roll is abolished and is essentially taken over because it does not enable the principles of contemporary democracy that give individuals one vote. It is the opportunity to have more than one vote. Businesses entities, for example, are able to have a vote, when a business is not a person. This effectively allows businesses to have more votes than other people, and that fundamentally offends the principle of one vote, one person.

It entrenches a bias towards wealthier people and sectors of the community. Also, the General Manager's roll enables people to vote from outside an electorate. There are a number of reasons why we do not believe that the General Manager's roll in its current form performs the democratic purpose that it ought to.

We also strongly proposed and were pleased to see that the department supported the recommendation to have compulsory voting, and that there should be in legislation provisions around the caretaker period. There are a number of reasons why the caretaker period is sloppy in Tasmania at the moment. Other jurisdictions have provided explicit provisions in legislation that require councils to have caretaker policies. They do not all necessarily prescribe the form that it happens, but some of them do. For example, Victoria, South Australia, Queensland, and New South Wales all have fairly similar provisions and require common rules around the fact that no major policy decisions can be made in the caretaker period. For example, you cannot appoint or terminate or vary the salary of a CEO or approve expenditure or a contract greater than 1 per cent of the council's revenue.

It requires that councils have a process to apply to the Minister for Local Government for an exemption that allows for other major policy decisions; that provisions be made to allow for

the invalidation of major policy decisions if they are made in contravention of the act around the caretaker provision period; and that there should be some compensation for damage if decisions are made during that period and they are made unlawfully.

In the Victorian legislation there are some really useful and important requirements around advertisements, hand bills, pamphlets, and notices that must be certified by the General Manager during this period. Queensland does not allow publication of election materials. Some caretaker policies go further and require that all announcements and publications are handled by council staff, are limited to operational matters only, and that they do not spruik council projects or events.

We recommended that there be minimum requirements for caretaker provisions in the Tasmanian amendments to the legislation with a standard provision about how major policy decisions are made in relation to the matters I have described, to do with termination of salary variation or appointment of General Managers and a process to allow for an exemption by the Minister for Local Government, if necessary, for major policy decisions and a process for them to be declared unlawful if they are not undertaken in that frame.

In the second iteration of the reform process, phase 2 in August 2019, we made a second submission. We were very supportive of the fact that the Local Government Review Team had not shied away from the ambitious reforms that we need in Tasmania. Our view is that these are in line with communities' expectations about democracy and good functioning and the sort of basic legislative frameworks that people probably expect are already in place to guide the actions of local councils. There were 51 reform directions proposed and there were only a few that we opposed.

I am pleased to say that almost all the things we proposed in our first submission were taken up by the department. The thing that was not supported was the reform of the General Manager's roll in the manner in which we proposed. We remain concerned that the recommended reform, which is not in this bill and I will get to that, to eligibility for the General Manager's roll would allow people to enrol to vote in an area if they occupied a property where they are not themselves a resident. It would also allow people to enrol to vote if they are the sole representative of a business operating from a property in an area, provided that they are an Australian citizen and not already on the roll in that area.

These do not deal with the concerns that we continue to have; that it provides opportunities for individuals who are wealthier and who have more political power to exert influence over the people who are on council through exercising extra votes than other members of the community are able to.

We did not get any rationale from the department. I would like the minister to speak to why this position has been adopted as a recommendation. These are the review of the approved reforms from the Review of the Local Government Legislative Framework. We have no rationale for why this is the current stated position of the Government.

Mr Street - You mean the General Manager's roll?

Dr WOODRUFF - Yes, about who gets to vote on the General Manager's roll. We can only assume that there is the influence of wealthy interest groups at play.

Mr Street - That is not fair.

Dr WOODRUFF - Well, it is a question.

Mr Street - Ask it as a question.

Dr WOODRUFF - This is my second reading contribution and I can say what I like. The question is: minister, what is the reason for not enforcing the one vote, one person throughout the whole of the Local Government Act reform and for having this remaining carve-out in the General Manager's roll so that corporations get extra votes and people who are asset rich with multiple houses are able to have extra votes? People who are asset rich with multiple houses are able to have extra votes. We think this is inequitable and it does not fit in with the democratic voting rights that we have as a society at the state and federal levels. The argument that at the local government level people have more engagement and more connection with what is happening at the local government level does not really stack up because people are just as affected at a personal household level by decisions that are made at the state and federal levels. We believe it is a case of providing consistency across levels of government.

I turn to the bill before us. Here we are with this amendment bill. I agree with Ms Dow's comments that we were very surprised to see it being brought on now. We support it being brought on now because we supported the whole legislative package coming in before the October election.

We are deeply and bitterly disappointed on behalf of councillors in local government and also ratepayers who wanted to get these legislative reforms done. I also agree that this minister seems to have a propensity for doing something, which is excellent. It has been two years wasted by the Government. These could have been brought forward. They are fundamentally and wildly agreed to. They could have even been brought forward with two or three things which had disagreement, but the vast majority of the 51 recommendations, every one has been discussed now for multiple years by all councils and LGAT. I do not think this is a last-minute review process; there has been plenty of time. There is no argument for not bringing these other things on. I am concerned that a number of other things in here, particularly about the conflict of interest provisions and the principles-based legislation have not been included.

Principles-based legislation is far too narrow at the moment. We think, given the changes in the community and the massive crises we face, that local government will be on the front line in many cases. There has never been a more important time to review the powers and functions of the act and to propose strategic and operational priorities that will give communities the skills and facilities, and the preparation they so desperately need to be able to respond and flourish in our changing climate.

This bill seeks to make voting compulsory and reduce the number of boxes that a voter has to number correctly for a valid vote from previously up to 12 to now five.

I want to read in some comments from Kevin Bonham, Tasmania's psephologist, who has written some very useful psephological points. He has run the numbers and it is helpful to understand the impact of informal voting. It has been very damaging on our democracy. This was most acute in the all-in all-out election of 2018. He says that both the 2014 and 2018 council elections had unacceptably high rates of informal voting, mostly as a result of voter error, trying to vote from one to 12 with dozens of candidates and no party cues. If there were

any, many people made mistakes and the votes were not counted. The contests where a voter particularly had to number from one to six without error required people to vote from one to 12 in the all-in all-out election. Clearly, it had a damaging effect on the number of valid votes.

The informal vote rates in 2018 were 8.78 per cent in Hobart, 7.94 per cent in Launceston, and 7.28 per cent in Launceston. These are very high and concerning. He says that in a state where local government seats are frequently decided by a few dozen votes or less - a recent Hobart recount was decided by less than two votes - there is little doubt that the current system is sometimes electing the wrong councillors and is not democratically legitimate.

A voting system has to accept that some voters do not have strong clerical or numeracy skills and excluding those people through observably strict counting laws is likely to result in seats being wrongly decided. He also goes on to say that reducing the number of boxes to five will increase the currently negligible exhaust rate, although plenty of voters will still number beyond five. The experience of the somewhat similar Senate system suggests that exhaust rates will not be massive. His estimate is that they will rise from below 1 per cent to a few per cent. The argument he makes, however, which is a good one, is that a vote exhausting because a voter chooses not to number further boxes is a minor matter compared to a vote not being counted at all because the voter made a mistake with their tenth or eleventh preference, a point at which their vote may well have had no impact anyway.

Therefore, we strongly support the measures in here to remove informal voting. As we have been on the record and stated in our two submissions, we also strongly support compulsory voting. One of Dr Bonham's arguments, which is an interesting one that I had not thought of and it is a very good point, is that in the last few years the impact of council politics on many young voters has greatly increased, primarily because of the ongoing issues with affordable housing and rental availability. Councils have a large impact on the housing market and on the regulation of short-stay accommodation. Young voters are severely underrepresented in voluntary voting in councils, which is shown in the Tasmanian Electoral Commission's report on the 2018 election. He says -

... it is now more important than before that young voters are heard as close to equally as possible in council elections, so that those affected by council decisions are not disadvantaged by the failure of others in their cohort to participate.

For this reason, Dr Bonham has changed his previous position of opposing compulsory voting. To pass compulsory voting without also improving the rules for formality would be likely to make an even greater voting mistake and even greater effective disenfranchising before they cast an informal vote. Therefore he, and we, support those two measures coming in together.

Mr Speaker, I conclude by saying that we do not have any amendments to this other than that we would have preferred to see the whole package of reforms come before us. We would especially have preferred to see some legislative reform on caretaker provisions. I have heard that the stop-gap measure that the minister proposes for this is to write to the Kingborough Council and invite them to share their caretaker provision guidelines with other councils -

Mr Street - Just to correct you, I am going to write to each individual council with a copy of Kingsborough Council's policy, rather than write to Kingborough Council only.

Dr WOODRUFF - I do remember you said that, thank you. We support that all councils get a copy of Kingborough's caretaker provision guidelines; however, that is just a short-stop measure and it should be in legislation. We have not had a look at Kingborough Council's caretaker provisions, so we cannot comment on them in terms of whether they do the work that other jurisdictions have done. We hope they do, because there are decisions about employment, or the removal of the General Manager and the expenditure of large amounts in that period, which are really critical and have been things that people have pointed to in the past and made allegations of bias or unfair decision-making during that period. There are plenty of opportunities to tighten up our act in that area.

I thank the minister for bringing on what we have. Local government would be better for all of the reforms being enacted, but it will be better at the next election for having these two in place.

[5.46 p.m.]

Mr O'BYRNE (Franklin) - Mr Speaker, I rise to speak on the Local Government Amendment (Elections) Bill and indicate at the outset that I will be supporting the bill in its current form through the House.

It is important that we say that this is not ideal. This is not the best way to manage electoral reform at what is a very important tier of government. I acknowledge that the minister, not only in his public statements and in the briefing and in his second reading speech, has acknowledged that this is not necessarily the package that he wanted to bring to parliament. Given the time constraints placed upon us, this is the bill that is before us that will deal with an element of local government reform that is time sensitive. There was probably not enough time to draft it for the parliament but if it was broadened and if there were more issues included, it might very well extend the debate to the point where the reform does not get done prior to the local government elections.

I take the minister's commitments that he has made on the record and in briefings that this is one element of a package of reforms that he is proposing to bring back to the parliament, for both Houses, to consider. Ideally, you should not have to be on a promise as a parliament. You should not have to be on a 'trust me, I will fix it'; that is not ideal, but given the time constraints and that this is a once-in-a-four-year opportunity to support compulsory voting, I think there is considerable scope being provided to you, minister, in trust on the basis that there is a whole range of issues stemming from the Local Government Act Review that do need to be resolved, particularly in compulsory voting.

It is a narrow bill, but other speakers have spoken about the GM's roll, donations reform, and the caretaker period. I believe the proposals around the one to five numbering are sensible but again there are potentially some other initiatives that could improve the formality vote in local government elections.

I acknowledge that the minister has said that it is not ideal, but he will be bringing in a broader package given more time later this year or early next year. Could the minister give an indication of timing of when that next omnibus package of reforms will come through?

If we pull back from the issue around process and scope and time constraints, we all acknowledge that local government is a fundamentally important part of Australian governance. They are a very important tier of government.

Many members have had experience either as mayor or as councillor on different councils across the state and all of us would have close relationships with mayors, deputy mayors, General Managers and local councillors in our day-to-day role, advocating for our community, advocating for change. A whole lot of issues overlap between state and local government and there is a lot of cooperation between the state and local tiers of government. At the end of the day, many constituents do not care about what tier we are from; if they have a problem, they want someone to fix it. We also, like local councils, lobby state government for reform and change. We, in our role as parliamentarians, contact and speak to local government about various issues within their bailiwick, to improve the lives of individuals and improve the cohesion, the coordination and liveability of local communities.

Local councils are important. I have been a strong supporter of compulsory voting in local government for many years. This is an important democratic reform we are undertaking here. Whilst people talk about their rights all the time - I have a right to do x and y - rights come with responsibilities. At a local government level, it is not only paying the rates, it is also engaging in a democratic process. In a representative democracy you elect people to govern on your behalf for the four years of a local government term. If you are going to whinge about them, you might as well vote for them or vote against them, depending on who you want and what their policies are. I have been strongly supportive of compulsory voting. I welcome this initiative by the Government.

Having said that and qualified my earlier comments, there is a range of reforms that need to be undertaken in the local government space. The minister, in the briefing, said that there is a range of actions and the previous speaker, Dr Woodruff, the Greens member for Franklin, talked about the fact that this is a long time coming. It has been a long period of time and a number of ministers of local government - I am not sure of how many - who have been involved with the Local Government Act Review.

It is unfortunate that you are the minister who has inherited a bit of the squeeze with regard to time. The easy thing for you to do would have been not to do anything and push until the local government elections and then seek to bring in an omnibus bill. I give the minister credit for this. He has taken it on. He is proceeding with this reform, albeit narrow; albeit other elements of it to be resolved and debated through this and the other place. The minister has not been in the role very long and he has taken it on. He has probably copped a bit of criticism from people about a lack of consultation but, broadly speaking, there is consensus about the need for this reform, having made those qualifications about the other elements.

I will not take too much of the House's time. It is important. I am not a conspiracy theorist at all. The minister has been referred to occasionally as the 'accidental politician'. He has been elected on some recounts, et cetera. He has made it clear he wants to make his mark and he is a reformer. I recall after the 2018 election, heading into the last local government elections, I was shadow local government minister at the time and we made some strong statements around compulsory voting. We were criticised by the Government then. I will quote the criticism of our position that we took on compulsory voting from the then minister:

It is now clearer than ever that Labor calls for compulsory voting in council elections are entirely self-interested. It is about Labor wanting to get control of local councils. This is not a priority of the Government at this moment and can be considered later on.

Another quote:

Once again, Labor are in lock-step with the Greens in calling for compulsory local government voting. Labor are acting in their own interests, not Tasmania's interest.

That was the local government minister at the time. That minister was former premier, Peter Gutwein. Mr Street, you have a first scalp. There are lots of conspiracy theories about why Mr Gutwein resigned from parliament. Clearly you have knocked him off on this package. You have argued him down and he has had no choice but to leave not only the Cabinet, but the Parliament of Tasmania. I will not buy into that conspiracy theory, but some people may say that by weight of your argument you have already made a mark on Tasmania, Mr Street. I pay my respects to that. I have my tongue firmly in my cheek on that, minister.

This is something that is important for the state. Compulsory voting at a local government level is an important democratic reform. I commend the minister for bringing it in. I very much look forward to the package of reforms he will bring in later in this parliamentary session which, in different times, should have brought together at the time of this amendment being made. With those few words and an acknowledgement of the significant mark the minister has already made I will finish. I will be supporting the bill.

[5.56 p.m.]

Ms JOHNSTON (Clark) - Mr Speaker, I will keep my comments brief and acknowledge from the start that I will be supporting this bill. Local government is dear to me, having spent 10 years in local government. Maybe more than anyone else in this House, I have given the Local Government Act a pretty rigorous test over my time in local government. I know that it needs significant reform as an act. This is just a small component but it is a very important component. I acknowledge, as other members have, the minister for bringing this forward in time for the October 2022 elections. Time is critical in this particular instance.

The act is very clunky and it does need reform and refining. Included in that is reform to the conflict of interest provisions, code of conduct matters, roles and duties of councillors and aldermen and staff officers. Donations are a few things that definitely need reforming and looking at. I trust that those reforms will come to us in a timely manner during this term of government.

I am pleased to support this bill. I am particularly pleased to be supporting the provisions regarding compulsory voting. I have long held a view that there should be compulsory voting at local government. One of the best jobs as mayor, and I think the other mayors in the Chamber would agree, is making new citizens. We talk to them about their rights and responsibilities as part of a democracy. One of those rights and responsibilities is the right to vote.

It had always baffled me when I spoke to my new citizens afterwards that they talk about the right and responsibility to vote at state elections and federal elections, but then it became optional to vote at local government elections. Our migrant communities had a lot of

interaction with their local government, so they could not understand why it was not compulsory to vote at local government.

Local government is the level of government that is closest to the community. It is often at the grassroots, dealing with a number of issues that the community faces. As mayor, I was often frustrated when people expressed their concern, or were upset or disappointed at who their elected members were. When I delved into what their issues were, I discovered quite quickly that sometimes they did not vote. My response was that if they wanted a better local government, or a government that is more reflective of what they want to see happen in the community, of the people in their community, then they need to engage.

This is an important step in ensuring that there is true engagement. The voter profile does not reflect the current status of the community profile. We know there is significant under-engagement from young people in the voting process in local government elections, from migrant communities, so we do not have people elected that reflect the community profile they are representing. Clearly we do not have enough people participating,

I am also pleased to support the vote-saving provisions. These are important. It is a complex ballot paper that people receive in the mail. People try to express their voting intentions and it is important to try to give effect, as much as possible, to those voting intentions. It is very confusing. There are a number of ballot papers: one for mayor, one for deputy mayor, one for alderman and councillor. It is often difficult for people to appreciate that you have to vote for both mayor and alderman or councillor in order for a person to be elected mayor. There is a lot of confusion and instructions around that. Any vote-saving provisions we can have will be of benefit to increasing engagement and saving those votes.

I thank the minister and the department for the briefing. From the briefing it was clear there would be an education package should this bill pass through the parliament to ensure that people understood what their rights and responsibilities were as well as how to vote. It has always concerned me, particularly following local government elections in the past, when people expressed surprise that they could vote if they were renting a property. It is a misconception that you must be a property owner in order to engage in a local government election. I trust that the minister and the department will follow through with a very thorough education package to ensure that everyone knows it is their right and responsibility to vote in the local government area should this pass. That is an important part of engaging in the democratic process.

I thank the minister for urgently bringing this bill on. It is going to be an interesting October 2022 election. I look forward to the local elections in my area and watching from a distance and not involved this time around. These particular provisions are important to ensure that we get a local government that is more effective in the community. That can only be a good thing.

[6.01 p.m.]

Mr WOOD (Bass) - Mr Speaker, it is with pleasure that I rise to speak in support of the bill. Not so long ago, I had the privilege to serve a term as an alderman on the Launceston City Council. It was one of the most rewarding experiences of my life.

Local governments make a real difference to local people in their communities. Councils operate at the heart of the community and bear a responsibility to ensure the present and future

success of our regions. They are concerned with matters close to our hearts and, if you think about it, close to our homes. In fact, every time a person steps outside their front door, leaves their house, they are using services provided by their local council.

The list of services is far more extensive than the typical three Rs of rates, roads and rubbish. Just a few of the services that council provide include issues such as safety, emergency management, community development, arts, culture, local laws and permits, pets and animals, youth services and much more. Not every municipality is the same. Take the Flinders Island Council, for instance. I had the opportunity to meet with mayor Annie Revie and the general manager, Warren Groves, just a couple of weeks ago. Their council runs to a very different set of community needs from what a city-based council like Launceston does.

Regardless of its characteristics, each council responds to and provides for the needs of its local community. This is really grassroots stuff, which is why this is the perfect opportunity for me to give a quick shout-out to the hard-working staff at Launceston City Council. I have witnessed first-hand how these guys work with commitment and dedication. Their belief is in the power of place-based community led approaches. We could all learn something from that attitude. All of our councils in Bass are uniquely special. You have George Town Council by the mouth of the beautiful Tamar River with its huge industrial sector. You have the Dorset Council with its strong agricultural industry, world-renowned mountain bike trails. The Little Rivers Brewery in Scottsdale does an exceptional pale ale. I suggest you try it. You have West Tamar Council with both urban and rural areas and its prestigious cool climate wine regions.

Mr Speaker, these councils are all passionate about aligning business, community and government to achieve social, economic and environmental outcomes. They know this is best done when people are invested in the long-term outcomes of a place. Councils can see that the greatest challenges of the next 50 years or so will be solved first at a local level, and that small local action often leads to big, widespread change.

I know firsthand the great honour it was to serve the community at the local government level, closest to them. I also understand the pressures and complexity of the issues that councils seek to resolve. I found that I learned a certain local community language and it became a pleasure to invest myself in working to make the lives of my neighbours better. Though the issues raised by a local might not seem big to some, they can make a significant difference in the lives of a particular ratepayer.

Local government is just as important as the other two tiers of government. It serves us in our communities and in the way we do business. It meets our needs at an everyday grassroots level and it helps shape who we are, and who we will become.

Our own backyards are just as important as the state and the nation. That is why I believe it is extremely fitting that voting at council elections aligns with both state and federal convention and, indeed, becomes compulsory. I congratulate minister Street for bringing this bill before us, and I support it.

[6.06 p.m.]

Ms HADDAD (Clark) - Mr Speaker, I welcome the opportunity to speak on this amendment bill. In doing so, I note that compulsory voting is really a hallmark of Australia's democracy. It was introduced for the Commonwealth election in 1924 after the

Commonwealth noticed a very low voter turnout in Commonwealth elections. That led to a dramatic increase in the turnout at the next Commonwealth election.

As members would know, compulsory voting applies now to Commonwealth elections and to state elections, but not to local government elections. It is not the most common form of election around the world. Most countries have voluntary voting, often leading to unrepresentative results. Compulsory voting is considered, and is, more democratic and increases the legitimacy of elected representatives. I think that, as Australians, we have a good understanding of the value of compulsory voting and a proud history of the reasons compulsory voting leads to more democratic election, and leads to more representative parliaments, and hopefully more representative councils in the future as well.

Many countries around the world envy the fact that we had compulsory voting introduced such a long time ago and wish that they could have the same. Indeed, the right to vote is a powerful gift, and it is one that Australians take very seriously. It is something that people have suffered and died for in the past and, in many countries, still do, in regimes that are dangerous or corrupt.

There is no allegation that local government is dangerous or corrupt. Australia's history of appreciation for compulsory voting is something that I believe is reflected in the minister's intentions in bringing in compulsory voting for local government elections. We welcome this reform, and, as my colleague the member for Braddon said, albeit a little bit rushed. It was a bit of a surprise in terms of our capacity to consult with others around the intention of this bill, but it is something that is welcomed and something that will lead to a more robust local government system in the future.

Local government is indeed a key pillar in representing our community. People should know that they are able to put their hand up to represent their communities at local government level in a system that is fair and equitable. It is really important that people do put their hand up to represent their communities at local government level. I believe I am one of the few people in this Chamber who does not have a background in local government, although my first full-time job was working for the Hobart City Council, but as a staff member, not an alderman or councillor.

In terms of open and fair elections, I have spoken to the minister about some amendments that we intended to move to modernise the Local Government Act in terms of how councils deal with gifts and donations to councillors. For the sake of the debate, I am going to read the amendments into the *Hansard*, partly out of respect for the work that is being done by OPC today. The minister has acknowledged that I was intending to move these amendments in good faith that would deal with an updated regime for how gifts and donations to sitting councillors as well as to intending candidates in the lead up to local government elections.

I spoke to the minister directly about these amendments today. I am confident from his words that this is an intention for future tranches of reform to the Local Government Act. I feel that I can take the minister on his word that it is indeed his intention that in the next tranche of reforms we will see something akin to the amendments that I have had drafted today that would put in place a disclosure regime for local government level representatives.

I would like to note that today we have seen the tabling by the Attorney-General of the electoral donation reform, which is a welcome step. I look forward to working on that bill and

working on amendments that reflect Labor's position on donation disclosure for state Parliament.

I will not go into committee to move my amendments but I do want to put them on the record in the *Hansard* in my second reading contribution.

The amendment defined 'donation' in relation to an election to be 'a donation that is of a value of more than \$50' which is what is in the Local Government Act at the moment. So, a donation of the value more than \$50 to an intending candidate in relation to an election in respect to a council that is intended by the person giving the donation to be used by, or on behalf of the intending candidate in relation to the election for the purpose of expenditure for the purpose of promoting the election, of the intending candidate.

And 'expenditure that is of a value of more than \$50 by a person other than intending candidates, in relation to an election in respect of a council for the purpose of promoting election of that candidate'.

It defines 'election period', it defines 'gift', meaning 'a gift to an intending candidate in relation to an election in respect of a council that is valued greater than \$50 and that is intended by the person giving the gift to be used to promote the election or to be sold or otherwise disposed of, in relation to the election of that intending candidate.

It defined 'intending candidate' in relation to an election as being someone who 'is nominated or proposes to nominate as a candidate'. In other words, has announced themselves as intending to run for an upcoming council election.

The amendments I would have moved would have gone on to deal with councillors and intending candidates and what they need to do to notify the council that they are running for, of their gifts and donations. They outline that a person who is a councillor, so a sitting councillor or an intending candidate in relation to an election in respect of council, who receives a gift or donation must give the General Manager of the council a notice in relation to the gift or donation that satisfies the requirements of this section. It would impose a penalty of 10 penalty units for failing to comply with that requirement.

It outlines the notice from the councillor who is not an intending candidate in relation to an election in respect of the council that relates to a gift or donation is to be in writing, containing the details prescribed by the regulations and be provided to the General Manager within the period prescribed by the regulations.

It went on to explain that a notice from a person who is an intending candidate in relation to an election in respect of a council that relates to a gift or donation is to be in writing, and contain the following details: the person who made the gift or donation, the person to whom the gift or donation was made, a description of the gift or donation, the value of the gift or donation and when that was made.

Importantly, the amendments would also have put in place some fair time lines of the frequency with which those declarations were to be made. Inside the election period, relating to that election, that notice would have to be given by the councillor or intending candidate to the General Manager of the council by the Wednesday after the end of the week of which the gift or donation was received or made, with the week ending on Sunday.

In other words, each week during an election period councillors and intending candidates would have three days after the end of each week to declare those donations to the general manager of the council, and the general manager would have until the following Friday to make those declarations public. However, outside an election period the disclosure thresholds would be a little slower, and would need to be made to the general manager within three days after the end of each month. In other words, when you get to 31 May, as we are out right now, if we were councillors we would expect that within three days after the end of this month, we would declare donations that we have received in that month prior to the General Manager, who would then have 14 days to make those declarations public.

I imagine that in practice this would become a fairly standard item of business for council meetings, and I know that many councillors do not receive a lot of donations and gifts. Hence, in many councils it would probably be a fairly quick agenda item, but there would be an intention that there would be rolling disclosures each month going onto council websites with declarations from the General Manager of the disclosures that she or he has received from the councillors. Then inside the election period that would be more frequent; it would be weekly.

My amendments are to empower the General Managers of councils to establish and maintain those registers. As I said in my opening remarks, I will not go into Committee to formally move those amendments because I am taking the minister at his word that he takes donation disclosure at the local government level seriously, recognises that it was a recommendation of the reform directions paper - I think it was recommendation 14, which outlined that donation disclosure was a priority. Many in the local government sector would welcome a reform to this area of legislation, just as many people sitting in this Chamber or those intending to run for state parliament - either in the House of Assembly or the Legislative Council - will likely welcome the idea of donation disclosure reform at the state level as well, because there is not much transparency now around donations and gifts that councillors or state members of parliament receive.

We have the worst donation laws in the country, and part of what adds to people's cynicism about politics generally is the fact there is not much transparency, particularly in state and federal elections. Next to Tasmania, the Commonwealth has the worst record in the country when it comes to disclosing donations received by candidates and parties running in state and commonwealth elections. It dawned on me recently that many members of the public think that those donations just go into personal use - that members of parliament are using those donations to have a party, which, at least for this side of the Chamber, is absolutely not the case. Donations made to campaigns like mine go to paying for things like flyers and Corflute posters, wood and steel posts to erect those Corflute posters, and stamps to post letters - those are the kinds of things that political donations are used for generally or should be used for, in my view. Any reforms to our political systems that lead to the public knowing more about how politics functions and is funded in this state are a good thing.

Mr Speaker, with those comments I conclude my remarks and thank the minister for his open way of working with the Opposition on this bill.

[6.19 p.m.]

Mr TUCKER (Lyons) - Mr Speaker, I commend the bill and thank Mr Street for bringing this bill on. I hope it is the start of a number of reforms in the local government area that need to be made. Like many people here, I come from several generations of councillors - in Dorset, Portland, now Break O'Day - many of my forefathers; I never thought I would end

up as a councillor and I went further than my father did, who spent 30 years on the Break O'Day Council and the Portland Council.

Mr Barnett - He was very well regarded.

Mr TUCKER - Thank you, minister. Even in the position we are in now, councillors and mayors are the grassroots of the communities. In my job here now, I am always in contact with my mayors on the phone, visiting them, talking to them, even the councillors, to get the information of what is going on in the community. They are the ones on the ground, listening to what is going on in their community - as you are probably well aware, Mr Speaker, having been a former mayor yourself. Councillors do not get the acknowledgement of what they do for our communities throughout Tasmania. I hope that with some of these reforms we can encourage more people to put their hand up for the council, because it is a big problem that people see it in a bad light. They do not want to be a councillor.

I was one of them myself. I saw it as a lot of work for not much benefit. It is a community service and we need to change people's attitudes about councillors and what they do for the community, and the rewards of being a councillor and what you can do for your community, even down to the outside workforce, in fixing things up that are going on in your local council so that they have pride, they want to turn up for work, they want to do the jobs that need to be done around the community. The outside workforce is a very important part of a community in getting those things done.

The other thing I would like to finish with, which I found a bit difficult going in, was making the right decisions with the facts you had in front of you, even though you would be going around the community and people who did not have those facts and would be of a different opinion. It is about making those decisions - and sometimes they are tough decisions - but we can bring in reform on that as well, when we encourage new councillors by explaining what they have to do in making those sorts of decisions. Some councillors, when they go on the council, are a bit influenced by outside influences in making their decisions, without basing their decisions on facts. As councillors, we need to give people a voice and make those right decisions. Sometimes people have different opinions, but you still have to represent those different opinions within your community as well.

I commend the bill to the House.

[6.23 p.m.]

Mr STREET (Franklin - Minister for Local Government) - Mr Speaker, this is my first bill before this House so I have made notes as we go to ensure I answer any questions that have been raised. If I sit down and I have not addressed something, please make me aware of it.

First, I acknowledge the good faith in which the debate has been conducted by everyone. In the spirit of that good faith, I make the admission from the outset, as Mr O'Byrne pointed out, that the timing of this is not ideal, and nor is the rushed consultation period. I will dispel your conspiracy theory right from the start, Mr O'Byrne, because unfortunately I did not become the Minister for Local Government until after Mr Gutwein's resignation.

Mr O'Byrne - He saw you coming.

Mr STREET - He saw me coming. I am almost flattered that you think I am that powerful, Mr O'Byrne. Yes, I did not become Minister for Local Government until about 10 weeks ago. The timing is the way it is because when I came into the portfolio, and as Mr O'Byrne said, I did not make the decision that this was something I wanted to institute for this year's elections.

If members of local government - staff or elected members or anybody else with an interest in local government - are watching tonight, the one thing I hope they take away from this is that this was not me cherry-picking the low-hanging fruit in local government reform. I was a member of local government for nearly five years myself - I understand that the pressures that existed back in 2011 to 2016 when I was a member have only become more severe, and that we need a suite of reforms to get local government to where we want it to be. From listening to everybody's contribution to the debate, everybody has acknowledged that we have work to do. However, they also acknowledge that local government is an extremely important tier of government and we need to work hard to make sure it is perceived by the community to be as important as federal and state government.

That is the reason why it is so important to bring compulsory voting in. Whether it was intended or not, there is a subliminal message to the community when state and federal elections are compulsory and local government is not, that it is more important to vote at state and federal elections than local government. I believe that the decisions made at the local government level are as important as the decisions that are made at state and federal level. Whether they are worth as many dollars is inconsequential to the impact they might have on somebody who is affected by those decisions.

I acknowledge the good faith from everyone's contributions to this and acknowledge that there is support across the Chamber for this reform. In the spirit of good faith, I admit that as my first bill through this parliament as a minister, this is not how I wanted it to be.

Ms Dow made the point that when speaking to local government members, they wanted an assurance that there would be no rush on future reforms. I give that absolute commitment that the next tranche of reforms will not be rushed into here, nor will they be rushed through here. They will be done in consultation with the local government sector. As much as is possible, they will be done in consultation with everybody in the business community, private citizens, other members of this place, and other members of the other place. We will bring forward a tranche of reforms that has been widely consulted to make sure that we get local government to where we want it to be.

I will work through each member's contribution. Mr O'Byrne, you raised the timing around the next tranche of potential reforms. My understanding is that the reforms sitting there that have not been enacted were part of a review process of the Local Government Act. When PESRAC came back with the recommendation that there ought to be a more wholesale review and analysis of the local government sector, the Local Government minister at the time made the commitment to park that particular piece of work until the full report that PESRAC had recommended has been completed.

My only commitment to Sue Smith as the chair of the board of the local government review was that I would allow that process to play out as it had been instituted at the start. That is, I will receive a report in June 2023 at the end of that review process. I will combine that

report and suggestions with the suite of reforms that had already been talked about that have been parked.

Whether they all come back in one tranche as one omnibus bill as you suggested, or whether we bring them back in sequential order somehow, depending on what they are, my thought process at the moment is that next tranche of reforms will come through in the second half of next year, once I have the report from the full PESRAC review. That is the sensible way to vote.

I do not discount the fact that these other reforms are important and have been parked for the time being. Regarding a holistic approach to do this once and to do this properly, the best course of action is to wait until I have that report in June next year and then undertake a wholesale review of the changes we need to make.

Ms Dow raised the issue of raising the profile of local government. That is another reason to do this. People who are elected by a larger percentage of the community are likely to have to work harder for votes. It raises the profile of local government but it also raises the importance with which these decisions and these representatives are viewed by the community.

I understand that there is a lot of pressure on local government representatives, whether it is through social media or traditional media or any other commentary. Raising the level of legitimacy of people elected to local government is one of the things we can do to help that problem. It is not going to solve everything. I am not going to stand here and say I have a solution for social media bullying, because that is a far bigger problem for more than just the local government sector. If we raise the level of legitimacy of those elected officials we at least give them a better basis from which to argue their point and to conduct themselves in public.

I have talked about why it is rushed. The other thing that you raised, Ms Dow, was the public awareness campaign. That is the other reason for bringing it through now. While the elections are not until late September or early October, in order to frame the public awareness campaign, get it out to the community and make sure it is effective, we needed to get this legislation through and confirmed this week so that we can ensure the public campaign is as widespread as possible. It is an important reform and the only way it works is if people are aware of their new commitments or their new rights. We want to make sure that the public campaign hits the mark.

How we are paying for it? The TEC's advice to us is that there will be an increased cost in counting more votes. In time that will either be cost-neutral or cost-positive from the infringement notices that are levied. The other commitment I have made in writing already to LGAT and to the mayors is that there will be no cost shift to local government at this election for any increased costs. It will not cost them any more than it normally would to run their local government election.

Dr Woodruff made the point that they have made a number of recommendations in previous review processes. I acknowledge that. When I wrote to the LGAT management committee to let them know I was bringing this legislation forward, a priority item they listed was the caretaker period. That is why I have made the commitment that I am going to write to the other 28 councils with a copy of Kingborough Council's policy. Like the issue of compulsory voting, if we do not legislate for that caretaker period policy, there is a chance that it will not be taken up by all 28 councils. We will give them an opportunity to take it up

voluntarily and do the right thing this time, then we will look at legislating in the future to make sure there is a caretaker period policy for local government across Tasmania.

The issues that you raised about the caretaker period are legitimate. There are caretaker policy provisions for state and federal government. Local government should not be any different. We want to make sure that we get that right. Having had a look at Kingborough's policy, I think it is a really good policy. We will send that out to the other councils and hopefully they will do the right thing. They will see the commonsense in enacting that policy. After October we will review the uptake of that policy.

The General Manager's roll is an issue. LGAT made the point to me, and it is a fair point, that the General Managers now feel like they are being asked to make decisions on the validity of someone's application to be on the roll who, if they do get on the roll, have a vote as to who their bosses are going to be - who is elected to council. They do not want that responsibility any more, necessarily. There is an opportunity to reform the General Manager's roll process, to take that pressure off individual councils and have the TEC deal with the General Manager's roll. That is something we will look at in the next tranche.

Mr O'Byrne dealt with me being the cause of the previous premier's resignation.

Mr O'Byrne - Tick.

Mr STREET - Tick. Trust is not something that is talked about often in this place, particularly when we are talking about trust between both sides of this Chamber. I hope in the way that I have tried to deal with members in the lead up to this, with briefings and giving my commitment on some things that I have engendered a level of trust that I understand what needs to be done in addition to this.

I do not want people to think that this was picking low-hanging fruit. It was just a time-sensitive issue. I also acknowledge the lack of consultation with the local government sector means that I have some work to do to gain the trust of the local government sector. Post the budget session of parliament, when I can get out of Hobart, I will be doing everything within my power to meet with every local government individually, each municipality, and establish an ongoing relationship that means that this is just the first commitment, not the first and last commitment to local government reform, and that I am committed to making sure that local government ends up where we want it to be, once this reform process is done.

Ms Johnston mentioned the citizenship ceremonies. The reason I bring that up is that there is not a mayor I have spoken who does not list it as the most enjoyable part of their job, but it does raise an interesting point of having to explain to new citizens that we entrust the presiding officer role to mayors when citizenship ceremonies take place, but they are the only ones that these new citizens do not have to potentially vote for in the future. I believe it sends mixed messages.

You raised the point about voter profile. It is absolutely the case that voting at local government is under-represented in the 18 to 34 age bracket. I am confident that introducing compulsory voting will deal with that, and we will see more a more consistent profile across voting at local government elections in the future.

Ms Haddad raised the point of legitimacy and it is an important one. People who feel like they have been more legitimately elected, are more confident in their position and are better able to defend themselves against the criticism that potentially comes their way.

We still have a lot of work to do in regard to social media and how it is used to criticise elected officials. You only had to follow social media like I did for the last couple of weeks, surrounding the federal election to see that social media is not the greatest contributor at times to our public discourse. I acknowledge the point about legitimacy and the fact that more legitimately elected people are better able to fulfil their role.

I acknowledge that Ms Haddad took the time to show me the potential amendments around donations. Not unlike the caretaker policy and a couple of other issues within local government, it seems, in the very brief time I have had to communicate with the local government sector this afternoon since we talked about it, there are varying levels of disclosure of gifts and donations at local government level. I would be disappointed if there was opposition at local government level to better disclosure of donations and gifts, not just at times of election, for potential candidates and sitting members, but also as an ongoing process. I think you were talking about once a month once elections have been concluded. Once the processes are in place, it would be a relatively simple process but one that probably needs to be legislated in the future to make sure that we have consistency with disclosureables rather than what we have at the moment which is 21 different policy positions on levels of disclosure or any disclosure at all. In five years of local government, I never received a gift or donation, so I do not know whether I was doing the wrong thing by the people of Kingborough.

The extra costs will be taken care of out of the local governments division's existing budget as will the campaign for this year's elections. You asked about faith; if you can prove that you are a member of a religious order that has a conscientious objection to voting then you need to be able to provide proof that you are a member of the order. The example that was given to me was Jehovah's Witnesses. I did not realise but apparently many different sections of Jehovah's Witnesses have a conscientious objection to voting. If you provide proof that you are a member of Jehovah's Witnesses to the TEC then you would be excused from voting. It is just a matter of proving that it is a legitimate faith reason.

The rates remissions issue is one that I have already looked at and I am continuing to look at. I understand that not only does local government want certainty but so do the aged care providers and the residents within aged care facilities. I absolutely commit that we will make our position clear and communicate it and that we will make sure that if we do make a decision that changes the policy there will be broad consultation about how it is introduced in the future so that there are no surprises.

If I am not mistaken, I have dealt with everything. To finish, I thank everybody for the good faith that this debate was contributed to in, particularly in light of the timing. There has been some criticism about the consultation. It was criticism that I could not avoid but it was not unfair criticism. I hope, by demonstrating the commitment to ongoing reform I can reassure the local government sector that this was not the easiest reform; it was simply the most time sensitive one. I am committed and as a government, we are committed to making sure that we institute further reforms to bring local government to the level that everybody in this place and everybody in the community wants it to be. Thank you to the House.

I commend the bill to the House.

Bill read the second time.

Bill read for the third time.

ADJOURNMENT

RSL - Annual State Congress

[6.41 p.m.]

Mr BARNETT (Lyons - Minister for Veterans' Affairs) - Mr Speaker, I rise tonight to share some remarks regarding the annual RSL State Congress held a couple of weekends ago in Launceston and to commend the State RSL and recognise the 10 500 veterans and ex-serving personnel and to say thank you for your service and your sacrifice. It must not be forgotten. Lest we forget.

For more than 100 years now, the RSL has been serving and supporting our veterans. Tasmania has a long and proud history when it comes to our veterans, from the Boer War right through to the Middle East and Afghanistan. Tasmanians have been at the forefront of answering the call. They have served in all major theatres and conflicts and peacekeeping operations with courage and commitment. Sadly, during World War I, nearly 3000 Tasmanians lost their lives.

I refer specifically to the ethos of the RSL Tasmania which is compassion and service. It remains the motivating influence of the League as potent and relevant now as it was in 1916. It is for this reason, among others, that it was so significant to attend the 107th Annual RSL Congress with my wife at the dinner on the Saturday night, and on Sunday, together with many veterans and their families. I recognise Jen Butler, my colleague from the Lyons electorate, who attended the conference.

It highlights the important role of the RSL and its some 49 sub-branches around Tasmania. I have visited so many of them from King Island to Zeehan, to Scottsdale, the east coast and north-west, south and east. It has been an honour and a pleasure. Each one is special and each is unique and I thank them for their service.

I congratulate Barry Quinn, State President of the RSL, Linton Harris, Vice President, John Hardy, the new CEO and others of the RSL leadership team for their commitment and care in supporting our veterans. It was excellent, together with yourself as a joint host, Mr Speaker, to have members of the RSL Tasmania Board, including the President and the CEO, here last week. We enjoyed a productive and enjoyable evening hosting them in Parliament House.

We thank them for their service and also look forward to being updated on the RSLs priorities and Anzac Day services, feedback on that, and how it all went.

We have the Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide coming up in July and August to continue the important work. The hearings in Tasmania will be held in August. It is going to be a tough time for our veterans and their families during that period. I want to recognise that in advance and alert the community to the difficult period ahead when that royal commission comes to Tasmania.

The Government supports our veterans. We have the wellbeing vouchers and the Veteran Employment Strategy, the Veterans' Reference Group, and the wellbeing centres. I thank Gavin Pearce for his leadership to secure funding support for the wellbeing centres and services and the Teddy Sheean VC Memorial grants. On the weekend I caught up with Garry Ivory, nephew of Teddy Sheean, and we reflected on the great honour we had to spend a day at sea onboard the Royal Australian Navy submarine, the HMAS *Sheean*. It was a special time to spend the day in the Bass Strait under the sea in HMAS *Sheean*. The commanding officer, Tim Markusonn, provided Garry, Dennis Sheean and me with a special certificate to be honorary submariners. We became totally submerged in the HMAS *Sheean* and we received the true and loyal associate of the wearer of the dolphin. It is a great honour. I thank the Chief of Navy, Mike Noonan, for the invitation for that special time in HMAS *Sheean* in the Bass Strait.

It was a great opportunity to again honour the memory of Teddy Sheean VC, his selfless bravery and sacrifice. He continues to be an inspiration today, not just to older veterans or younger veterans, but all the community, with the courage, mateship and sacrifice he demonstrated on 1 December 1942 when he went down with the ship to help save his mates and Australia.

In conclusion, I thank RSL Tasmania and all our ex-service organisations around the state for their wonderful support for our veterans and their family. Doug Baird will be here in a couple of weeks. He is the father of Corporal Cameron Baird, VC MG, one of only two who have received that title. He is a Burnie boy. It will be wonderful to catch up with Doug again. Kay, I understand, will not be here. I know Doug and Kay well. They are wonderful people. Sadly, Corporal Cameron Baird was killed in Afghanistan in 2013. Doug will be here to recognise the memory of his son. As Minister for Veterans Affairs I look forward to standing shoulder to shoulder with Doug Baird, and to recognise the memory of Corporal Cameron Baird, Burnie boy.

The day before Anzac Day, when the Burnie Dockers were playing Latrobe, I was at the Latrobe football ground. The Latrobe football club was honouring Teddy Sheean VC and the Burnie Dockers were recognising Corporal Cameron Baird. They were wearing the vests in honour of their respective Victoria Cross recipients. It was a very special day.

We have much to be thankful for in this state, least of all our veterans and their families.

Michael O'Neill - Tribute

[6.48 p.m.]

Dr WOODRUFF (Franklin) - I want to pay my respects and tribute to Michael O'Neill from the Huon Valley, who was killed in Ukraine last Wednesday. Michael was in Ukraine in a humanitarian role, helping people defend their land and culture against Russian invasion and domination.

Michael was just 47. He was a truck driver. By his actions, obviously a practical and caring man. His family described him as being moved to join a humanitarian organisation in March because he saw the Ukrainian people's desperate need for help. Many of us have watched on our phones in shock, dismay, anger, and sadness, as we have seen images of this cruel, unprovoked war. It continues. We have seen its brutality. We have seen its violence

and the mass upheaval of 44 million women, men, and children. Many of us have watched and felt helpless. Michael O'Neill watched and took action.

His family is very proud of him. He has four brothers and three children. Bernadette Doyle, his sister, said that her brother knew it was dangerous but could see that outside help was desperately needed to assist conveying women and children to safer places. She said Michael became more involved, delivering supplies into the front line, assisting with the retrieval of the injured and deceased. These dangerous and selfless actions to help defenceless people exposed Michael to more danger. He ultimately died along with soldiers and other civilians nearby.

Michael had a strong connection to the southern Tasmanian football community. He was an active sportsman and talented Australian Rules football player in the Huon. He and his brothers last played for the Kermandie Football Club until it closed in 2010. On Sunday, the Cygnet Football Club's under 17 girls' team, the Southern Storm, played a game at the Kermandie Oval and they wore the old Kermandie Football Club jumper in Michael's honour. The Southern Storm side included Michael's three nieces. They wore the colours of his former Kermandie club. I understand that they won by eight goals against Huonville. Michael must have been barracking them along from the sidelines. Go the Storms.

I never knew Michael. I wish I had. I admire his get up and go. His sister describes him as always a larrikin. I know others of Michael's large extended clan across the Huon Valley. My thoughts are with everyone who loved him. Michael O'Neill's actions speak to the man he was: outstandingly courageous, generous and thinking of others to the very end. He saved so many lives. Heroes never die. Vale, Michael O'Neil. I have no doubt your kind and generous spirit will live long in the hearts of those who have been touched by you.

Thoroughbred Racing and Breeding Industry Tasmanian Heritage Register - Online

[6.52 p.m.]

Ms OGILVIE (Clark - Minister for Racing) - Mr Speaker, I rise tonight on two matters. First, some good news. As Minister for Racing, I will update the House on some good events that have happened.

Mr Speaker, as you know the Government is a strong supporter of the Tasmanian thoroughbred racing and breeding industry, which makes a vital contribution to our economy and employment, particularly in regional Tasmania. Tasmania has always had a reputation for breeding tough race horses. From Sydeston to Alpha, Lady Lynette to The Cleaner, our state has continually had a great race horse flying the Tasmanian flag interstate.

Of recent times, we have been fortunate to witness the racetrack achievements of mares Mystic Journey, Still A Star and Deroche. These mares have recently retired and have been wonderful advertisements for the Tasmanian racing and breeding industry. Mystic Journey is undoubtedly the best Tasmanian horse since Sydeston. Purchased by Adam Trinder at the 2017 Tasmanian Magic Millions sale for just \$11 000, she would go on to amass almost \$4.2 million in prize money. She would become the first Tasmanian-trained horse to win a group one race, taking out the 2019 Australian Guineas. Mystic Journey would then win the richest mile race in the world, the \$5 million All-Star Mile. Mystic Journey was retired by owner Wayne Roser

and was purchased privately by one of the world's largest breeding operations, Northern Farm in Japan.

Still A Star was purchased at the 2018 Tasmanian Magic Millions yielding sale for \$13 000 and would go on to win her trainer, Bill Ryan and connections, over \$870 000, including the 2021 group two Rose of Kingston Stakes at Flemington. Last week, Still A Star was purchased by Widden Stud for \$700 000 at the 2022 Magic Millions brood mare sale on the Gold Coast.

Finally, Deroche, the winner of 13 races, including the group 3 stakes and listed Newmarket Handicap syndicated by leading Australian syndicator, Star Thoroughbreds, the mare won connections \$563 000 in prize money and was recently sold to leading thoroughbred nursery, Newgate Farm, for \$260 000 at the 2022 Magic Millions broodmare sale. This is an outstanding result not only for the connections of these horses but also the Tasmanian breeding industry. It shows there is a demand for Tasmanian-bred horses internationally and interstate.

This was further demonstrated with the results of the 2022 Magic Millions Tasmanian yearling sale. The sale attracted buyers from around Australia, New Zealand, Singapore and Hong Kong; as a result, records tumbled across the board to achieve a record gross of \$4.3 million well above the 2021 record of \$3.3 million.

The Tasmanian Government supports the Tasmanian thoroughbred breeding scheme through a grant of \$300 000 annually, which has been extended to the 2024-25 financial year. The purpose of this grant is to assist in funding thoroughbred breeding programs to further enhance the Tasmanian breeding industry, which is mainly located in regional areas of Tasmania. Congratulations to the breeders, trainers, owners and everyone involved in the fabulous careers of Mystic Journey, Still a Star and Deroche.

Second, as Minister for Heritage, it is the most marvellous portfolio because I love my history and heritage in Tasmania. I have a degree in history so I find this portfolio very exciting. I would like to update the House and it is my great pleasure to talk about the exciting release of the online Tasmanian Heritage Register.

As Minister for Heritage, I am very pleased that our Government is providing a new way to discover and learn the stories behind Tasmania's historic heritage places. I had the very great pleasure recently to meet with Brett Torossi, Chair of the Heritage Council. I understand that this initiative has been a long time coming. Online access to information held in the register will increase appreciation for Tasmania's iconic heritage places, which play such a critical role in Tasmania's lifestyle and brand. Importantly, the online register will help raise awareness of the importance of protecting these places so special to our beautiful state.

One of the most frequent questions the Tasmanian Heritage Council receives is whether a property is heritage-listed and why it is listed. Now everybody has access to the location, boundaries and historic details of each register entry, together with a statement of significance. Increasing the understanding of the significance of these places is key to encouraging owners, prospective owners, developers and the community at large to learn more about how to best manage our historic heritage. There are more than 5000 individual places entered in the Tasmanian Heritage Register, each with a story to tell, and collectively they are part of the rich complexity of Tasmania's wonderful history. I encourage everyone to delve into the register and explore the historic cultural heritage significance of these places.

The Tasmanian Heritage Register can be searched at LISTmap - Land Information System Tasmania - or as we know it, the LIST.

RSL Annual State Congress

[6.58 p.m.]

Ms BUTLER (Lyons) - Mr Speaker, I rise on this adjournment to talk about the 107th annual State Congress of the RSL, which I was honoured to attend on Sunday 22 May. I acknowledge that my colleague, Mr Barnett, also attended. It was a fantastic event, and wonderful to catch up with old friends and also make new friends. Representatives from all the sub-branches across Tasmania were there, so it was quite an event.

I will put on the record the recipients of the Meritorious Service Medal this year. They were awarded to Trevor Duniam and Robert Ramsay. Life membership was awarded to Hans Gramberg, Ray Simpson and Charles Thorpe. I have been provided with information about each one of these recipients, which I would like to read into the record.

The citation for Raymond Simpson is -

Raymond, or Ray to those who know him, enlisted in the RAN in 1958. In his long RAN career, Ray enjoyed stints with the RN in England, and finally discharged in 1985 to join the RSL in 1988. Ray has been an active member of the Latrobe sub-branch for 23 years. During that time, he has held several positions on the committee, most notably as the president for four years and as vice-president for eight years and still holds the position of Vice-President. Ray is still very active with the sub-branch, attending meetings and Friday night raffles. With his vast life and service experience, he is a wealth of knowledge and advice.

Ray is always available to assist and he is one of the first to make himself available when fundraising activities arise. But with his health issues, he has had to slow down. As well as his commitment to the Latrobe RSL sub-branch, Ray has served on the Latrobe Basketball Association committee, at which time he served as president for a period of time. Ray is also a serving member of Naval Association Ulverstone-Devonport sub-branch, having served for a period as president.

Ray has travelled extensively over the years since leaving the RAN, enjoying cruises with both friends and family. Although Ray has slowed down, his commitment to both the RSL and the Naval Association has not waned, and he is to be commended for his valued contributions. He is a valued member of both organisations. Ray has given great service to the Latrobe RSL sub-branch, and is a most worthy recipient of life membership of the Returned and Services League of Australia.

Another gentleman who was a recipient on that Sunday was Robert Neil Ramsay. Robert, otherwise known as Bob, was born on 6 January 1950 in Charleville, Queensland. His parents moved to Hobart, Tasmania, when he was an infant, and he completed his schooling at Clarence High School - which I did as well, though a little later - in 1965. In 1966 he commenced work

at the Postmaster General's PMG department in Hobart and retired from Telecom Australia in 1991. He received the Special Rate Totally and Permanently Incapacitated Disability pension from the Department of Veterans' Affairs.

His military service: in 1970 Bob was conscripted into the Australian Army as a national serviceman and he was deployed to Vietnam as a gunner, with 12th Field Regiment, Royal Australian Artillery, from 10 March 1971 to 18 November 1971 - 254 days. He served with distinction as a relief artillery forward, observer detached to the 2nd, 3rd and 4th Battalions of the Royal Australian Regiment, the 3rd Cavalry Regiment, the 1st Australian Reinforcement Unit, and the Australian Army Training Team, Vietnam. For his service in Vietnam, he has been awarded the Australia Active Service 1945-1972 Medal, the Republic of Vietnam Campaign Medal, the Anniversary of National Service 1950-1972 Medal, the Army Combat Badge, and the Returned from Active Service Badge.

Bob joined the Kingston sub-branch of the RSL in 1977 and he has been a member of the Lindisfarne RSL sub-branch incorporated since June 1980. He has served as a committee member and as a vice-president during this time. In 1998 he was appointed as the Lindisfarne RSL Pensioner Welfare Officer, and he has been responsible for assisting RSL members lodge claims with the Department of Veterans' Affairs for over 23 years. He attended numerous courses over 16 years, culminating in his attaining the highest level of advocacy to veterans in Australia by completing a course run by OVA at the University of Canberra in 2007. The qualification enables him to represent veterans and community members at the Veterans Review Board and the Administrative Appeals Tribunal. The legalisation covering the entitlements for veterans for compensation, pensions and entitlements under the Veterans' Entitlement Act 1986, the Safety Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 1988 and the Military Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 2004 are quite complex, even for legally qualified personnel.

His comprehensive military background, expert knowledge of the DVA processes and legislation, combined with his superb advocacy skills, against qualified and knowledgeable people appointed by the DVA to run the VRB and the AAT have enabled him to successfully obtain benefits for members initially denied by the DVA to the highest order.

In addition to his pension and welfare work, he has also represented the RSL as state Vice-Chairman ten years, and the Chairman three years of the Training and Information Committee which is funded and overseen by DVA. He is also responsible for training ex-service organisations and RSL members on DVA pensions welfare, and he has been responsible for training over 200 ESO RSL members in pension and welfare matters. As Chairman he was responsible for the redevelopment of the TIP course to meet changes in DVA legislation. The foundation that he set produced and continues to produce ESO RSL members qualified to assist veterans and ex-service personnel. The work that Bob has done for ESOs and veterans, ex-service personnel has been completely voluntary and unpaid, and he has and continues to volunteer significant time in performing his work duties.

In 2015 Bob was appointed as a JP, and through his military service and service to veterans and the community Bob has demonstrated achievement at a very high level.

Time expired.

Ouse - Access to GP Services

[7.06 p.m.]

Ms WHITE (Lyons - Leader of the Opposition) - Mr Speaker, I rise tonight to raise a matter that is very important for the Central Highlands community. That is their lack of access to a GP. Members of this place would be aware, including the Minister for Health, that the Ouse GP service closed down recently, leaving over 1000 patients in that district without access to a local general practitioner. There still remains a massive gap in service there with a lot of people being forced to try to find a GP at Brighton, Sorell, New Norfolk, or Glenorchy. The concern is that situation remains unresolved and may remain resolved for some time.

There is a contract that is in place between the state Government and the previous provider of that service, which is the Morton Group. Obviously, they are no longer providing that service, and there have been some attempts to engage another general practitioner to go work in the Ouse community and to provide a GP service. Those attempts have been unsuccessful.

The reason I raise this tonight is I have been speaking again with the Mayor of the Central Highlands, Lou Triffitt, who is incredibly concerned about the lack of action by the Government to replace the service; the concerns that have been raised with her by her community about the lack of healthcare; and the worries she has that it will continue to be ignored and nothing will change.

My question, and I hope the Premier and the Minister for Health is listening, is why the Government has not enforced the contract that I believe is still in place between the provider and the state Government to ensure there is a service available in that community for people to access a GP.

We know that access to healthcare is fundamental for people to be able to maintain their health. And a lot of people in that community have poor health and need regular access to a GP. For them to be able to try and find another practice to access one not only puts an enormous burden on them because of transport issues, because they are further away from a primary healthcare provider, but also the cost of fuel is adding to that concern for many of those individuals, and then there is also the wait times that people have trying to access a new GP, and that is if their books are open.

I ask the Premier why it is taking so long to find a replacement for the service? I also ask the Premier if he can give a guarantee that the patient health records that have been held by the previous provider will be transferred to whoever may provide that service in the future. The patients from the practice in that community are very worried about their private health information. They presume that the previous provider holds the information, but they are not sure. They have asked me to raise that question on their behalf about who has their private medical records, and whether they are still in that building or with the previous provider who was contracted by the state Government. I think who has their private health information is a very important question for them to know the answer to.

The council has at every step been a very fierce and strong advocate for their community and their need to have a local GP. The council puts their hand in their pocket; they provide \$30 000 to support that local practice in Ouse. They provide a car; they even pay for the ECG machine for the Ouse practice. They have a very deep and keen interest in making sure that

GP service opens again to provide access to local healthcare for their community. They cannot do very much more.

I am worried to learn that they have not had regular updates from the Government about what is happening in Ouse and whether there is going to be an interim service offered. It is my understanding that the Government is trying to finalise a locum to commence work in that community, but it may not be until August, which means that people in Ouse will be without a local GP for months to come.

There has to be a way for the agreement that was in place between the Government and the provider, a contract, for that to be given effect and honoured. If it is unable to occur, then why can the Government not provide a visiting service in the interim until some more permanent solution can be found?

The problem is, people up there have no access to anything else; they are relying on their friends and family to drive them around if they do not have a car, on volunteer services through the community health centre, or ambulance services that are already under the pump. It is neglectful and quite rude of the Government to ignore the requests from the mayor and the council in Ouse to take action more swiftly.

That is something that the mayor Lou Triffitt raised with me directly today: that she felt that the government had been dismissive and she thought it was rude that the Premier and the Minister for Health has not provided any update to the community about what he is doing to rectify that problem, not even a notice to the community about how long it might take to fix it.

I urge the Government to address the questions I have put forward today on behalf of the community, on behalf of the mayor Lou Triffitt and at the very least provide an update to the community about what is happening with health services in Ouse.

Carlton Park Surf Lifesaving Club - Annual Dinner and Awards Night

[7.12 p.m.]

Mr TUCKER (Lyons) - Mr Speaker, on Saturday 21 May I had the honour of attending the Carlton Park Surf Lifesaving Club 2022 Carlton Park Surf Lifesaving Annual Dinner and Awards Night with Jane Howlett.

Ms White - I thought you were going to talk about spending the day with me.

Mr TUCKER - Yes, it was on the federal election night after I had had a great afternoon with Bec at Sorell.

Ms White - That is right, you did.

Mr TUCKER - The 2022 Carlton Park Surf Lifesaving Annual Dinner and Awards Night was celebrated in their newly refurbished club house with their members. What a great vibe it was. There were 15 life members and eight ex-presidents in attendance. It truly was a celebration of over a decade of hard work towards their master plan.

The evening celebrated the achievements of club members and the completion of the newly refurbished club house funded by the Tasmanian Government. I will not mention all the awards because there was quite a number of them and I am bound to miss someone out so I thought I will leave that alone. I congratulate all the award winners on the night.

There is one person I do want to single out, and that is Christine Gaby, the president of the surf lifesaving club and the amount of work that she did in bringing this all together, this great achievement, and hats off to her.

The Carlton Park Surf Lifesaving Club was officially established in 1975, following the merger of the Hobart, Carlton, Park Beach Surf Lifesaving Clubs. Hobart, Carlton, and Park Beach made significant and colourful contributions to surf lifesaving in Tasmania, and original members of both clubs can still be found in Carlton Park today.

The Carlton Park Surf Lifesaving Club received funding of \$250 000 in November 2018, which was a Liberal Government election commitment. The funding was for a redevelopment of the club house, including a lift to access the top floor with disabled toilets upstairs and a dedicated training room. This redevelopment is a huge asset for the area, not just for those involved in surf lifesaving, as it will also be utilised by many community groups and locals.

Between April and May 2019, the club was also successful in securing a grant for \$233 000 from the Tasmanian Community Fund to go towards the same upgrade. The estimated cost of the upgrade in 2018 was \$629 000. There were extensive time delays with the preliminary planning documentation and associated permits for the project to enable tenders to be sourced as well as the COVID-19 halting the development in its tracks. Three tenders were received in March 2021. All three were around \$1.2 million, significantly higher than their 2018 estimate.

Due to the funding received, the club had \$600 000 available to commit to these works with the assistance from selling off their Arlenar Street land.

The re-elected Liberal Government provided a further \$400 000 for the Carlton Park Surf Lifesaving Club to complete the redevelopment of the clubhouse and training room. The wheelchair beach-matting will be rolled out next patrol season. The club will continue to work with the council to improve access from the car park to the beach.

The redevelopment and improvements to the Carlton Park Surf Lifesaving Club are truly remarkable and their dedication and commitment are something to be mightily proud of as it continues to grow from strength to strength. As I said earlier, I really do take my hat off to Christine Gaby, because she was, in my opinion, the real push in that club to get these things done. It is well worth having look. There is a great view from the club house now.

The House adjourned at 7.16 p.m.