



# **PARLIAMENT OF TASMANIA**

## **HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY**

### **REPORT OF DEBATES**

**Thursday 26 August 2021**

**REVISED EDITION**



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**Thursday 26 August 2021**

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

## **QUESTIONS**

### **Border Closure Critical Support Grant Program**

**Ms WHITE question to MINISTER for SMALL BUSINESS, Ms HOWLETT**

[10.01 a.m.]

We have been imploring you all week to increase support to small businesses affected by border closures and lockdowns in other states. These small businesses have taken a hard knock to their confidence. It was revealed yesterday that the number of workers stood down from the Hobart and Launceston airports had climbed to more than 100. This includes people employed in small businesses such as coffee shops. You said yesterday that if more needs to be done, you will do it. What additional support have you considered, specifically, and how many more people will have to lose their jobs before you will act?

## **ANSWER**

Mr Speaker, I thank the member for Lyons for her question.

It is with great pleasure that I stand here again, three days in a row, to talk about the support the Government has provided and continues to provide to our small businesses that are facing hardship, as we continue to face the ongoing challenges of COVID-19. Our Government is about supporting small businesses.

It has been seven years since we have seen an alternative budget from the Opposition. I look forward to hearing your alternative budget, particularly what is in it for small business, next week.

**Ms White** - What is in your budget for small business today?

**Ms HOWLETT** - You will have to wait and listen very carefully this afternoon and you will hear.

**Ms White** - Good, so there will be something to support these workers?

**Mr SPEAKER** - Order.

**Ms HOWLETT** - Many of our small businesses rely on interstate and overseas visitation and trade. They have been impacted by the border restrictions that we have put in place. As a government, we care about small business. That is why we acted swiftly to launch a jointly funded \$20 million Border Closure Critical Support Grant Program aimed at providing much needed relief to Tasmanian businesses. The program only opened just over a week ago. Already, more than 520 applications have been submitted, 259 businesses have been approved,

and 158 have already received funds. I am proud we are getting money out the door to these small businesses that need it.

I am advised that most businesses were eligible for the \$5000 grant. Yesterday, the Small Business Council of Tasmania's executive officer, Mr Robert Mallett, said the feedback he has received has been that the latest round of support has been welcomed. Mr Mallett said yesterday:

The \$20 million package will provide relief for many small businesses who are struggling with the current border closures. The feedback that I have received about the package has been extremely positive. I believe the criteria is generous and appropriate for the time.

Do you not want to hear that, Mr Winter?

**Ms White** - Do you agree?

**Mr SPEAKER** - Order.

**Ms HOWLETT** - We have already provided more than \$80 million in business grants since the COVID-19 outbreak, but we also acknowledge -

**Ms WHITE** - Point of order. Standing Order 45. It does go to relevance. This question relates to 100 people who have lost their jobs in airport support in Launceston and small businesses there. They are not supported by this Government. What is the minister going to do about it?

**Mr SPEAKER** - That is not a point of order, Ms White.

**Ms HOWLETT** - There are businesses, as we have noted, that fall outside the original eligibility criteria for this small business support. As I clearly said yesterday, we are using this feedback from businesses to inform how we can adapt the current program's eligibility criteria. State Growth is currently looking at the guidelines. As the Premier and I have both stated, if more needs to be done, we will do it.

### **Cradle Mountain Cableway**

#### **Ms WHITE question to PREMIER, Mr GUTWEIN**

[10.06 a.m.]

Your Government's inability to deliver on its infrastructure promises is well known. During the 2018 election, more than three-and-a-half years ago, you promised that the Government would build a cableway at Cradle Mountain. Later that year, the federal Liberal Government announced that it, too, would contribute funding towards the project. The Tourism Industry Council CEO, Luke Martin, said at the time that he wanted to see the Government:

Work towards a cableway opening date of 2021 to coincide with the arrival of the first of two new *Spirit of Tasmania* vessels.

Which will be delivered first? The new *Spirits*, or the Cradle Mountain cableway?

**ANSWER**

Mr Speaker, I thank the Leader of the Opposition for her question and her interest in what is an exceptionally strong infrastructure program. The cableway is progressing, and the tourism industry is well aware of that. We are taking the necessary steps to ensure that a development that is in a sensitive area can progress appropriately. I make the point -

**Dr Broad** - Why is it sensitive?

**Mr GUTWEIN** - Why is it sensitive? Because it goes into a national park. Goodness me. People have said to me, as Treasurer, that I was insensitive at times, but once you become the shadow treasurer - goodness gracious me - you do not just drop any consideration of sensitive areas.

We are progressing that project. I am working closely with the federal government and taking every necessary step to ensure that, as I have said, the sensitive nature of that proposal can be considered and that we do it properly.

Regarding infrastructure more broadly, this gives me an opportunity to speak about the great results we are seeing in our economy at the moment. I reflect back to last year when we brought forward the most significant infrastructure program in the state's history, in response to the lack of confidence that we could see developing due to COVID-19 - the fact that both federal and state Treasuries were forecasting recession, unemployment at record levels and a lack of confidence. We stepped up because we felt, quite reasonably, as did the sector, that we would see an exit of private investment as a result of the impact of COVID-19.

We outlined an infrastructure program and, importantly, what happened was that confidence remained high. As a result of confidence remaining high, the banks continue to support our private sector. They piled in in spades. They rolled into the space and we now have record private investment in the state.

Importantly, and I have made this point on many occasions, infrastructure underpins jobs. Right now, in this state, we have work looking for people. This a long way from where we were in 2012-13 when, on the other side, they decided to smash confidence, cost jobs and take us into recession. That is what the other side did, Mr Speaker.

When you look at what has been occurring in the last little while, I am certain that Tasmanians looking back and reflecting on 1 May are simply so happy and pleased that they never gave that toxic lot on that side the opportunity. That side of the House has changed leaders and, in fact, had the shortest-serving opposition leader in the history of the state. The Leader of the Opposition now holds a record of being the shortest opposition leader to be dumped then returned, which is extraordinary.

On this side of the House we will continue to ensure that confidence remains high, that investment continues to flow and, importantly, that infrastructure across the state supports record jobs.

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### **Recognition of Visitors**

**Mr SPEAKER** - Honourable members, I acknowledge that we have members of home education families in the gallery. Welcome. It is my wish that they go away from their time in the gallery with a pleasant and memorable experience of visiting parliament. I am sure we will all look after each other.

**Members** - Hear, hear.

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### **Climate Crisis Effects on Mental Health**

**Dr WOODRUFF question to MINISTER for MENTAL HEALTH and WELLBEING, Mr ROCKLIFF**

[10.12 a.m.]

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change has called a code red for humanity. The United Nations said greenhouse gas emissions from fossil fuel burning and deforestation are choking our planet and putting billions of people at immediate risk. The viability of our societies depends on leaders uniting to limit temperature rise to 1.5 degrees Celsius.

Yesterday we moved to declare a climate emergency. The Premier and Minister for Climate Change vacated the Chamber, as did you. In question time he accused us of scaring children by repeating the scientific facts. Sam Eccleston, a school climate strike organiser, wrote yesterday that 'declaring a climate emergency will not scare or intimidate young Tasmanians, it will only help tackle their fears. It sends a strong message that the government is truly committed to climate action and the future of all Tasmanians'.

Do you recognise the IPCC report's findings? As Minister for Mental Health and Wellbeing, do you agree that many young Tasmanians are highly anxious about the accelerating climate crisis and that your Government's failure to acknowledge it and act accordingly is increasing their anxiety?

### **ANSWER**

Mr Speaker, I thank the member for her question. With respect to the last part of the question, this Government is taking action. In fact, Tasmania is a leader in climate action and we will continue to be. We have the lowest per capita emissions in Australia and some of the lowest in the world.

The Premier and Minister for Climate Change outlined a number of areas of which we can be very proud over the course of the last number of decades regarding our commitment to climate change. Agriculture is one of those areas the Premier highlighted.

On day one as Premier he made it very clear that climate change is the top of this Government's priorities. Indeed, we have a Premier who is the first premier to hold the Climate Change portfolio. I cannot remember a premier between 2010 and 2014, during the Labor-Greens government, who held the Climate Change portfolio.



I am well aware of the views of young people. In fact, you, Ms O'Connor, and I were in Launceston last year listening to young people when it came to the matters concerning climate change.

What the Premier very clearly said yesterday - and I agree with him - is that more than ever we need to offer hope to our young people in these uncertain times, -

**Dr Woodruff** - Listen to them about how they want to get hope.

**Mr SPEAKER** - Order.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - not increase their level of anxiety. I know very well, through the matters raised with me from members across the Chamber, the people who communicate with me through various means, social media, email, correspondence, of the challenges within our mental health system, particularly the anxiety being experienced at this time by young people and adolescents -

**Dr Woodruff** - They want to hear the truth. The facts.

**Mr SPEAKER** - Member for Franklin, order.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - They want to hear from leaders, they want to hear from Government -

**Ms O'Connor** - They would have liked to have heard from the Minister for Climate Change yesterday. He did not turn up.

**Mr SPEAKER** - And the member for Clark.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - that we recognise the importance of acting on climate change. We are a world leader and we will continue to be, Mr Speaker.

**Dr WOODRUFF** - Point of order, Mr Speaker. Standing order 45: relevance. Would the minister please respond to whether he agrees with the IPCC report's findings?

**Mr SPEAKER** - That is not a point, member for Franklin. However, the preamble was long and the minister has the opportunity now to respond to the overall question you have put. He has the opportunity without interjections. I know people are passionate about it but if you continually interject, you know what the ramifications of that are.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - I recognise Mr Speaker, that people are passionate about this issue. I recognise that it is a health issue. I actually sat down with a Greens candidate following this election in the north-west and spoke to him about these matters, including climate change and the effects in the short, middle and long term with respect to our health services.

Rather than declaring a climate emergency, this Government is one of action. We do not just talk about it. We do not increase the level of anxiety through very emotive language which actually does scare and add to the anxiety of young people. Young people need to be assured and reassured that we take climate change seriously and that we are acting, which we are doing. What we will do is continue to take action in a responsible and sensible way, which has been the hallmark of this Government.

The transition to a low-emissions economy will take time. It might not happen overnight, as the Premier has previously said, but the Government is supporting this transition and concerted actions across a number of sectors.

I want to repeat that I recognise it is a very complex world now that our young people and adolescents are in. Given the pandemic over the course of the last 20 months, the anxiety and uncertain future plays on our young people's minds. That is why, as Minister for Mental Health and Wellbeing, I am very conscious of the fact that we need to do more to support our young people through leadership in this area and also across government with respect to the economy, ensuring that, despite the pandemic, we are offering hope and we are having an environment where people can learn, grow and thrive through their education. Also we need to ensure that we have the skills and the public education training to support our young people to be employed and make a positive contribution to the future.

We can do all those things. We can recognise the importance of action on climate change. We can also ensure that we are doing our job instilling hope in our young people by providing them with opportunities.

That is what they want to hear from a government: to take leadership, not only through the challenging times of the pandemic but also post-pandemic, and ensuring we are setting our community up for the future right across our economy, through the environment, our social sector and our economy. That is exactly what we will do. We will never give up on our young people. We will always be a government that instils hope into our young people.

### **Bass Highway - Condition**

**Ms DOW question to MINISTER for INFRASTRUCTURE and TRANSPORT,  
Mr FERGUSON**

[10.20 a.m.]

The state of the Bass Highway is unacceptable. It is so poor that the speed limit had to be reduced to 80 kilometres per hour between Devonport and Deloraine. There have also been long delays to the Wynyard to Marrawah upgrades and the Cooee Crawl upgrades. Commuters and communities are frustrated and want to see work commence. Would it be fair to say the only four-wheel drive track the Liberal Government has opened is the Bass Highway?

### **ANSWER**

Mr Speaker, I am glad to see that the Deputy Leader of the Opposition has a sense of humour. That is a new insight to the member for Braddon. I thank her for her question.

I know what is occurring here. The Labor Party, which hates each other and is a toxic environment, is looking for a distraction on Budget day because we know that they have not had an alternative budget in all their seven-and-a-half miserable years in opposition.

We have a plan. The people of Tasmania recently endorsed that plan that includes significant upgrades for the Bass Highway. We cannot do it on our own. That is why I am very grateful for the massive funding that we are getting from the federal government. I am pleased to tell the House that we are putting immense pressure on our contractors to deal with

the maintenance challenge, particularly, as I said yesterday, between Deloraine and Devonport, which has been unacceptable to me and to the Government. The department has been instructed to intervene in that matter. We are not happy about it. It is being addressed. We are committed to delivering the major upgrades scheduled for Deloraine to Devonport. That has had the benefit of the recent corridor study we have done so we can identify the highest priorities.

We will allow people, not just of the north-west coast, but from all of Tasmania to enjoyably travel that highway, the most beautiful part of Tasmania, in safety. Furthermore, our governments are now committing \$280 million to improvements on the Bass Highway. This specifically encompasses Deloraine to Devonport, Cooe to Wynyard and right through to Marrawah.

I am also pleased to tell the House and you, Ms Dow, that the department is now well advanced in its planning for the upgrades along this corridor. Two months ago I sat down with the mayor of Circular Head Council and our project lead in the department, Ms O'Cain [TBA], and provided an update to the community, which I understand was published in the local paper, about our plans. People are pleased. A number of people asked, 'With all this funding, with all the corridor studies, when will we see the upgrades appearing?' I might provide them to the House after question time since Ms Dow unfortunately did not get that information. These are investments of a magnitude that have not been seen before.

**Ms White** - She wants you to get on and do the job.

**Mr FERGUSON** - I am not sure what Ms White's interjection is, but she wants us to spend not more but less on infrastructure. That is what she said. I expect to see a very solid job.

The achievements we are making on the Midland Highway are the kinds of achievements that the Government is now turning to on the Bass Highway, on the Tasman Highway, the Channel Highway and the Huon Highway through the advancement of 10-year action plans.

We are interested in long-term infrastructure, not short-term petty politics. I will be clear and unequivocal in relation to the maintenance failures. I will not take a backwards step on it. Why did it take this long for Labor to get interested in that issue? Why did they take until yesterday to pop their head up about the state of the Bass Highway between Deloraine and Devonport? Not only has the Government been clear on this, going back weeks and months, I can answer the question. They have been too busy hating on each other. They have been too busy destroying each other, with their left-right factions arguing over who controls this party.

It is writ large in this Chamber. You can see the two camps right in front of us. There is a group of three and there is a group of four. Oh, and there is a group of one. There is the group of the Labor Opposition thoroughly rejected at the recent election, Rebecca White's leadership thoroughly rejected by the voters. Why is that, Mr Speaker? Two reasons. One is, Ms White does not have a plan for Tasmania. The second is the voters saw straight through the dishonest privatisation claims regarding TAFE and her futile promises that they would never do a deal with the Greens.

I ask the member to look forward to the Budget today. She will be, I hope, pleased to see that we have a very strong plan for infrastructure, including in my portfolio of roads and bridges and construction across government. I hope that in her Budget response she will

welcome the Government's initiatives and start telling the truth to her local community about our plans for the Bass Highway

### **Securing Tasmania's Future**

#### **Mr STREET question to PREMIER, Mr GUTWEIN**

[10.26 a.m.]

Can you please update the House on how the Government is delivering our clear plan to secure Tasmania's future, as put forward to Tasmanians in the May state election campaign. Are you aware of any alternative approaches?

#### **ANSWER**

Mr Speaker, I thank Mr Street for his interest in this important subject. Today marks 100 days since the state election, but on that side of the House it must feel like 100 years. On 1 May Tasmanians voted for a majority Liberal Government, just as they did in 2014 and 2018. It was a significant and historic election victory. It was another humiliating defeat for them. You all understood it was such a humiliating defeat that you sacked your leader, twice.

Tasmanians voted for certainty and they voted for stability. They voted for the clear plan we laid out at the election. They rejected the chaos they saw during the election campaign from those opposite. Thank goodness, because there has been even more chaos since then. Ms White has lost more members in the last 100 days than she did at the election.

Our plan focused on delivering confidence for Tasmanians. Confidence that would underpin investment and jobs. In this state there are more than 263 000 employed - a record. The unemployment rate at 4.5 per cent is the second equal lowest in the country and below the national average.

Our COVID-19 strategy is progressing well. We kept people safe last year and we will continue to work very hard to keep people safe. Vaccination is progressing well. We currently lead the country in the number of fully vaccinated people on a per capita basis, with 38 per cent of Tasmanians having received their second dose. I thank Tasmanians for rolling up their sleeves. It is very important. That is why we rolled out the six-week vaccination blitz. We aim to have 63 per cent of Tasmanians vaccinated by 12 September and we are well on track to better that. We want 70 per cent of eligible Tasmanians vaccinated by October and 80 per cent in November.

We will stick to the national plan. It is a sensible four-step plan and we will continue to do our bit. Other states and territories have significant challenges in front of them. We will continue to take every step we can to keep Tasmanians safe and to ensure they are vaccinated so we can progress to a more normal way of life when the opportunity presents itself. Vaccination is not a silver bullet but it is a very important piece of the puzzle as we emerge from the challenges we have faced.

As part of our plan to secure Tasmania's future we laid out a 30-day plan. We ticked off every single initiative in those 30 days. As part of our plan, we had a 100-day plan, and we

ticked off every single initiative in that 100-day plan. We spent our time working hard - 132 initiatives, all ticked off.

I want Tasmania to be a state of opportunity, regardless of who you are, your background, your circumstances. We are working hard to deliver that. That vision is underpinned by our strong plan. It will deliver a more diverse and resilient Tasmanian economy, and importantly, it will create jobs. It is good news.

**Ms O'Connor** - You are bloviating. You can deliver a budget speech today. It is a Dorothy Dixier. This is question time.

**Mr GUTWEIN** - I was asked a question and I am answering it fully and honestly. I hope you can see the difference between this side of the House and that side. It is very clear; the starkness of it stands out. I was asked about alternative approaches. As I said, the last 100 days must seem like 100 years for those sitting opposite. The Leader of the Opposition, sacked by her team after another humiliating defeat. The shortest-serving opposition leader in history sits on the crossbenches now as a Labor member; he cannot even sit with the Labor caucus -

**Ms O'Connor** - Point of order, Mr Speaker. This is pathetic and it is a waste of question time. The Premier, who could not turn up for the climate debate yesterday, is now at six-and-a-half-minutes on a Dorothy Dixier.

**Mr SPEAKER** - It is not a point of order. I will allow the Premier to conclude.

**Dr Woodruff** - He should be embarrassed.

**Mr GUTWEIN** - If anybody should be embarrassed in terms of climate it is those members there for the performance they put on yesterday; they sat in government and did nothing.

This side of the House announced yesterday the most significant stepped change in creating renewables, climate and future industries for Tasmania. We will grasp those opportunities and give our children hope. We will deliver the investment and the jobs that come from having 100 years of investment in renewable energy and having the lowest emissions across the country, and one of the lowest emission's profiles in the world. We will do that. I do not think the fighting has stopped yet on that side of the House,

### **Office of Chief Engineer - Request to Establish**

**Ms JOHNSTON question to PREMIER, Mr GUTWEIN**

[10.34 a.m.]

There has been much talk this morning of significant spending on infrastructure and other capital works when you deliver your state Budget this afternoon. To give the public confidence that this spending will be delivered effectively, efficiently and economically, an adequately funded Tasmanian chief engineer should be appointed to advise on technical considerations and reduce the risk of service, project or policy failure.

We need an independent chief engineer to provide impartial and fearless advice on policy frameworks, workforce needs and important purchase decisions. Will you follow the example of the ACT, Victoria and New South Wales and establish an office of a Tasmanian chief engineer?

## **ANSWER**

Mr Speaker, I thank the Independent member for Clark for her question and her interest in this matter.

To answer frankly, no, we will not, because we believe very clearly that this is about overall industry capability, not the competency of one single person. We saw this tried by Labor some time ago with the state architect. It crashed and burned. It did not work.

On this side of the House, we established Infrastructure Tasmania in 2014 to provide expert advice to the government on infrastructure priorities and issues. That is exactly what it has been doing.

Regarding infrastructure, the state is going gangbusters. We are building hospitals and schools. We are investing in dams and irrigation systems. We are building roads and new bridges, and making them safer. We are doing ports and rail. It is fantastically rich with projects.

Infrastructure is obviously there to improve our roads, provide better buildings and better infrastructure for Tasmanians, but it is also there to support jobs. Regarding infrastructure and our building sector, we have a very rare situation at the moment, where the three sectors - residential, commercial and civil infrastructure - are all busy. That is good because it is underpinning jobs and supporting families. Importantly, it is also ensuring that we have strong levels of confidence. That means even more private investment is flowing into the state.

To come back to the member's question, as I have said, we believe it is about overall industry capability, not the competency of just one single person. We are getting on with the job of building Tasmania. The confidence that Tasmanians are seeing is supporting those inflows of private capital, private investment and more jobs right across the sector.

## **Launceston Crime Rate**

**Ms FINLAY question to MINISTER for POLICE, FIRE and EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT, Mrs PETRUSMA**

[10.38 a.m.]

The escalating problem with crime in and around Launceston is well known. Total crime is more than 30 per cent higher in the north than in the south. Of particular concern is the number of shootings that have occurred in recent years. Crimes against property, often targeting small business owners, are nearly 40 per cent higher in the north than in the south.

Nearly four years ago, your Government said it was launching a war on ice, yet the latest crime statistics show the number of serious methamphetamine offences in Launceston has nearly doubled in the past year. It is clear that vandalism, gun crime and methamphetamine

use is out of control in Launceston, and the measures that you have taken to date are not working. What are you going to do for the people of Launceston who have lost all confidence in you and your Government, and worry that you cannot keep them safe?

## **ANSWER**

Mr Speaker, I thank the member for her question. It is the utmost hypocrisy to come into this place and talk to us about police in Tasmania. We have to remember that it was the Opposition that cut the police force by 10 per cent. They slashed 108 police officers. They seem to forget that this Government is building the police force by an extra 308 police officers - a 30 per cent increase. If they want to go back to when they were last in government back in 2013-14, crime was off the chart -

**Members** interjecting.

**Mr SPEAKER** - Order. Interjections on my left should cease. Thank you.

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - Crime was off the chart. It has decreased dramatically under this Government.

I emphasise for anyone who listened to that question that Tasmania is a safe place. We have one of the lowest crime rates in the country. In regards to Launceston, crime trends for the northern district, including Launceston, are no different from most years in terms of statistics. In June this year, a total of 15 new officers were allocated to Launceston and are now on the beat in the northern district. We are actively bolstering our resources to help keep our community safe.

In Launceston, Tasmania Police is making significant inroads into tackling crime. The latest available data shows total offences are down 18 per cent, home burglaries are down 20 per cent, business burglaries are down 4 per cent, robbery offences are down 65 per cent, stolen motor vehicles are down 16 per cent -

**Members** interjecting.

**Mr SPEAKER** - Order. I cannot hear the minister, so I do not expect anyone else to be able to. Please, in silence and allow the minister to continue.

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - offences against property are down 21 per cent, motor vehicle burglaries are down 38 per cent. Tasmania Police also established a Firearms Task Force in the Launceston area. To date, the task force has charged 60 offenders in connection to firearms, confiscated 60 firearms for the community, seized more than 3070 rounds of ammunition and a quantity of illicit drugs. These are magnificent statistics.

I congratulate Tasmania Police and the great results they are achieving in Launceston. If we go back to the policy Labor took to the last election, they did not even fund more police officers in this state. It is the utmost hypocrisy to come in here and criticise us when they slashed 108 police officers, 10 per cent of the police force, and did not fund a single new police officer in their policy.

## **MMG - Integrity of State Mining Approvals**

### **Dr BROAD question to ATTORNEY-GENERAL, Ms ARCHER**

[10.42 a.m.]

All week you have been interjecting when we have been questioning why the Government is refusing to back MMG and, indeed, the integrity of all state mining approvals against the Bob Brown Foundation's legal threats. The Greens are accusing MMG of breaking the law despite them having all the state approvals in place for exploration drilling. Do you agree with the Greens that MMG was breaking the law? Or will you explain to MMG and its workers why you are unwilling to uphold the legal integrity of state mining approvals?

### **ANSWER**

Mr Speaker, I thank the member for Braddon for his persistence. At least I will give him the fact that he has an issue and, despite the fact that he is often wrong, nine times out of 10, he grabs that and will not let go.

I will explain it very clearly for the member for Braddon, who has attended numerous Budget Estimates on legal matters and asked the same questions over and over, and still will not accept the law.

It is critical that our Government ensures that Tasmania's laws are interpreted correctly. The Attorney-General, as the first law officer of the Crown, exercises both political and non-political functions. This includes the non-political role of needing to intervene in such proceedings to seek clarification from the courts on the proper interpretation of Tasmania's laws, represented by the office of the Solicitor-General. Such action is necessary to, at the very least, provide clarification to ensure our laws are interpreted properly.

I am aware of the dispute between the Bob Brown Foundation and MMG. I am not aware of the Bob Brown Foundation or MMG having commenced any legal proceeding. As first law officer, I have a unique and apolitical role under our system of government and that role is to be taken most seriously -

**Dr Broad** - So were they acting illegally or not?

**Ms ARCHER** - If the member will listen, I need to explain interventions to you so that you do not come back in here and completely misrepresent the purpose of interventions.

In the event that there are legal proceedings which challenge a decision of a state official or authority, and the challenge involves issues associated with the interpretation of legislation and the powers or duties of public officials, then as part of my role as Attorney-General in ensuring that the law is made clear and applied, I would look carefully at exercising the power to intervene or become a party. This is to make sure that all legal issues are properly canvassed so that the legal dispute is determined according to the law.

Currently that is not the case here, Dr Broad. As I have said, I am not aware of there being any legal proceeding relating to a state official or authority. Until then your question is premature.



Mr Speaker, I suggest Dr Broad speaks to his federal Labor candidate about this issue. Clearly they are divided not only at a state level - and in this House we have left faction, right faction divided at a state level - they are also divided on this issue federally.

That clarifies the law in relation to clarifying matters in relation to state positions and authorities and officials. I urge Dr Broad not to come in here and use his parliamentary privilege in that way to make silly claims about the role of interventions.

### **Hospital Emergency Department Staffing**

**Dr WOODRUFF question to MINISTER for MENTAL HEALTH and WELLBEING, Mr ROCKLIFF**

[10.47 a.m.]

The Department of Health dashboard for June shows the number of patients seen on time in our emergency departments was the lowest ever. Just 52 per cent of all patients, barely half, were seen on time. For category 3 patients - the life threatening and urgent cases - only four in 10 were seen on time. That is far below the national standard of 75 per cent.

Doctors and nurses in emergency departments are doing their best under intense pressure but they are being let down by your Government, which continually fails to listen. The Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation even had to take your Government to the Industrial Commission to force you to fund safe staffing levels at the Launceston emergency department.

Will you commit to fully staffing our hospitals for patient and staff safety, and to finally developing a statewide strategy for emergency departments, as called for by the Australasian College for Emergency Medicine?

### **ANSWER**

Mr Speaker, I thank the member for Franklin for her question. I am acutely aware of the challenges, demands and pressures on our health system. I have travelled the state over the course of the last few months as Minister for Health, listening and ensuring that I get a good understanding of the challenges within our emergency departments, whether it be in the North West Regional Hospital, the Mersey, the LGH or the Royal Hobart Hospital. I respect enormously the work of our clinicians and health professionals in what is a very challenging environment.

It gives me the opportunity, in answering your question, also to talk about the beds coming online that we have committed to in the course of the last few weeks. Some 50 new -

**Dr Woodruff** - The question was about staffing.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - It is important because this is also an access and flow issue, the pressures on our emergency department. The opening of Ward 6A last week is a positive step in the right direction, in terms of not only reducing elective surgery waiting lists but also ensuring there are more general beds available to support access and flow through our hospital.

In Launceston, 28 beds are coming online as well, once the infrastructure improvements are made, and a further eight beds in the North West Regional Hospital as well. You were not in parliament between 2010 and 2014, Dr Woodruff, but I can assure you the pain was felt during that time when, for example, the North-West Regional Hospital closed a ward.

The Government has put on more health professionals in our health system than any previous government. We will continue to do so. We will be opening more beds when it is safe to do so, and we employ more people. We have a health recruitment task force which has met twice. I was at the first meeting listening to representatives of HACSU, ANF, AMA and others talk about sustaining a workforce, the recruitment challenge and the retention challenge.

Despite the ongoing demand challenges due to COVID-19, as part of our strategy to manage demand at our public hospitals we have again announced over 50 additional beds to open in coming months across the state. We recognise that announcing new beds is not the only solution to improving access to care in our hospitals and support staff to manage patient flow.

In addition to beds, we need to prioritise improving community care through programs such as Community Rapid Response Service and to help people get home from hospital as soon as they can through programs such as Hospital in the Home.

We are focused on delivering our state-wide access and patient flow program including, where appropriate:

- direct admission of patients to wards in hospitals without the need for patients to go through emergency departments; for example, where patients can be transferred from hospital to hospital.
- criteria-led discharge to support safe and timely discharge; for example, discharge by junior doctors and nurses in line with the consultant doctor's recommendation.
- streamline transfer of patients from emergency departments to wards in the hospital to avoid patients who have been admitted to hospital longer than they should be in our emergency departments.
- engaging with private hospital providers to deliver services to help public hospitals to meet demand.
- developing a shared culture where every staff member is aware of the role they play in every patients' journey.

The member mentioned a state-wide approach. That is exactly what we are doing. The release of the state-wide surgical four-year plan, which was clinician-led and patient-focused, is an example of that. This takes our commitment to 30 000 elective surgeries. We have listened to clinicians who for the first time can have a detailed four-year plan because of

increased funding across the forward Estimates. A system-wide approach is needed to improve access in patient flow. We are working with the health staff and stakeholders to deliver that.

### **Housing Affordability**

#### **Ms OGILVIE question to MINISTER for STATE DEVELOPMENT, CONSTRUCTION and HOUSING, Mr FERGUSON**

[10.54 a.m.]

Can you please update the House on how the Government is securing Tasmania's future in housing affordability, to ensure every Tasmanian has access to a roof over their heads? Are you aware of any alternatives?

#### **ANSWER**

Mr Speaker, I thank the member for her question. We can agree that every Tasmanian should be able to expect to have a roof over their head, a safe place to stay and to live. The Government is delivering a record number of homes to provide for the growing demand that is occurring in our housing market. For those who need it, we want to provide in today's Budget an unprecedented and massive investment in public housing, home affordability and homelessness initiatives.

While acknowledging that increases in house prices are a national issue, our state is one of the safest. People want to live here. It is a great thing that Tasmanians who left the state want to come back home. It is a very desirable place; one of the most desirable places in the world to work and raise a family. That is why so many people want to live here. It is why we are seeing population growth when other places are seeing population decline.

While every state is facing the same challenges that we are, the Government has a plan to respond to rising house prices as well as housing pressures. It is occurring due to the strong economic growth we are having here in Tasmania - 4.5 per cent unemployment and more people getting jobs. We are seeing more people in work and we are seeing population growth, which our state has coveted for decades.

The strong plan that the Government took to the election includes a comprehensive approach to increasing housing supply in Tasmania. We want to help more people into home ownership. Since coming to office, the Government has provided 1180 more homes and supported accommodation, assisted 487 low-income families into home ownership for the first time, released 356 affordable land lots for low-income buyers and helped 301 families into private rentals. There are 542 new homes under construction. We remain on track to build 1500 new public homes by June 2023.

Our record investment is now \$615 million in public and affordable housing, and homelessness initiatives. This includes the recent election commitment - a record election commitment - of \$280 million to extend our building program of new public housing for Tasmanians in need. That is the biggest in the state for decades. This means we will build an extra 2000 new homes by 2027. That is on top of the 1500 already being built over the next three years, bringing the total to 3500 new homes by 2027 to help our most vulnerable.

Mr Winter, who has muttered all week in this place, might have missed the point that 542 new homes are currently under construction. I encourage Mr Winter to talk to the builders, talk to the HIA, talk to the community housing providers, talk to the MBA and he will find that they are very busy, and they are busy for a reason.

We are also following the recommendations of PESRAC and investing an allocation today of \$2 million to develop a comprehensive Tasmanian housing strategy. This is about driving practical actions to deliver -

**Ms O'Connor** - Another strategy.

**Mr FERGUSON** - Yes, Ms O'Connor, the new strategy, the Tasmanian housing strategy, which we committed to at the election. We will use that to drive more practical actions to deliver more sustainable housing market outcomes for all Tasmanians.

I thought this would be welcomed by the Opposition, but because they are so toxic, they are also so negative. The PESRAC report recommended this. We committed to it at the election.

Today I am pleased to give the update. The report also provided a spotlight on the growing concern that the Tasmanian housing market was becoming increasingly constrained. COVID-19 had not improved the situation. More Tasmanians have reported challenges related to increasing house prices and lack of affordable private rentals in recent years. The Tasmanian community is going to have its say on practical actions to improve the sustainability of the housing market through the development of the Tasmanian housing strategy.

**Ms White** - Like the parliamentary committee that was held?

**Mr FERGUSON** - You sacked Alison Standen. I do not think we have a lot to hear from you on that, Ms White. The Tasmanian Government is delivering on our first 100-day commitments with the scoping -

**Opposition members** interjecting.

**Mr SPEAKER** - Order.

**Mr FERGUSON** - Mr Speaker, they are in a mess. This is important. The Government is delivering on the commitment we made and the scoping for the comprehensive Tasmanian housing strategy has now been completed. The development of the strategy will also bring together experts in Government, research, community, business and construction to give advice on how to maximise influence in our housing market levers. Improving our housing system means investigating potential improvements to the housing market through regulatory systems, strategic land use planning, policies, taxes, subsidies and capital investment.

Unlike Labor, the Liberal Government has a plan to address housing supply and reduce waiting lists. We are acting on that plan and delivering on that plan to secure Tasmania's future. There is an opportunity for an alternative policy here. The policy that Labor took to the election was thoroughly rejected by the voters, but it does stand to offer the Labor Party the chance to redeem themselves - although they promised nearly \$100 million less than the Liberal Government and yet they promised to build the same number of houses with \$80 million less.

However, there is a chance for them. They can match the Government in their alternative budget if they could just stop arguing with each other.

### **Southern Outlet Upgrade - Costings**

**Ms HADDAD question to MINISTER for INFRASTRUCTURE and TRANSPORT, Mr FERGUSON**

[11.01 a.m.]

You have a cruel plan to bulldoze houses in Dynnyrne to build a fifth lane on the Southern Outlet. Can you please update the House on how much the entire project will cost, and confirm whether the project is fully funded?

### **ANSWER**

Mr Speaker, this Liberal Government has a plan to support end-to-end integrated transport solutions, particularly for the people in your colleague's electorate, Franklin, and for those who live in the Kingborough, Channel and Huon areas. They are struggling with the commute into Hobart. The infrastructure is constrained and out of date.

The capital city is booming with employment and residential zones in the southern suburbs. The regions of Huon and Kingborough are going gangbusters. People are moving here, they are building here, and the council has been releasing land and approving residential developments. More people want to live there and that is good. We need to support them with better infrastructure. It is a fact - the Labor Party do not want us to deliver.

**Ms O'Connor** - This is Labor now supporting the fifth lane on the Southern Outlet, just for the record.

**Mr FERGUSON** - No, they are not. They are split. Some do, some do not. This is the toxicity of the Labor Party.

**Members** interjecting.

**Mr SPEAKER** - Order.

**Mr FERGUSON** - Dr Broad wants the fifth lane, Ms Haddad does not.

**Ms O'Connor** - That is true. That is the most true thing you have said all morning.

**Mr SPEAKER** - Order.

**Mr FERGUSON** - If Ms White could just get her two little teams under control, then I will proceed.

We committed to addressing this. It is a serious issue. It is not even a black and white issue. We have a lot of work to do. It is a commitment by the Government - including with the signature of the member for Franklin, Mr Winter - to build the extra lane on the Southern Outlet - but it is not just a proposed additional lane for more cars and trucks. We need to

provide a preferred route for public transport. We need to see some mode shift. We need to increase utilisation of public transport. That is why, when Mr Winter and I were more friendly colleagues in his role as mayor, we did a joint release on this.

**Ms HADDAD** - Point of order, Mr Speaker. It goes to Standing Order 45: relevance. The question was whether the minister is committed to the project, because they have said they are, and is it fully funded in the Budget? If not, they should scrap it, which is what Labor has committed to do.

**Mr SPEAKER** - It is not a point of order, as you well know. Take your seat. The minister was answering the question.

**Mr FERGUSON** - They were the good old days when the member for Franklin and I were like brothers, more so than is now the case with Mr Winter and his left bank colleagues. We were like twins and those days were good. I will always treasure those days.

**Mr FERGUSON** - Mr Speaker, this is not a black and white matter. We need to go through a public consultation period on this and we will do so. I place on the record, as I have said to residents, particularly of Dynnyrne Road, face to face, that we will treat them sensitively, decently and generously. We want to support the people of Franklin who are struggling with their commute. I can detect we will not get an ounce of support from at least some of the Labor Party on this matter. We need to deliver better infrastructure. We are delivering the park and roads. We are delivering the express service from the Huon right now. We are delivering 70 new services out of Kingborough to the city -

**Mr Winter** - When?

**Mr FERGUSON** - From the first quarter of next year, Mr Winter. We need to build the infrastructure, but it cannot be just an extra lane. It must be an end-to-end solution and it has to provide a better utilisation and preference for public transport.

I recommend the member observes carefully the Budget at 3 p.m. today.

### **Burnie Court Complex and Police Officers in North-West Courts**

#### **Mr ELLIS question to ATTORNEY-GENERAL, Ms ARCHER**

[11.06 a.m.]

Will you please update the House on how the Gutwein majority Liberal Government is securing Tasmania's future by delivering our plan for a new Burnie Court complex and removing police officers from north-west courts?

#### **ANSWER**

Mr Speaker, I thank the member for his question and his ongoing interest in this important matter, particularly for the people of Braddon. Keeping Tasmanians safe and providing an efficient and effective justice system is a core priority of our Government.

We have a strong track record for investing in our justice system and building for our future. As part of the 2021-22 state Budget, we are providing an additional \$25 million to build a new Burnie Court complex at the former University of Tasmania site at Mooreville Road. By increasing the funding available from \$15 million to \$40 million, our Government is investing in the future of all Tasmanians and significantly improving access to justice in this region. Building a new court precinct -

**Members** interjecting.

**Ms ARCHER** - Clearly, members on that side and the two members for Braddon in the Labor Party do not support this significant investment for their electorate, because they are already interjecting and opposing this.

Building a new court precinct will provide a strong boost to the building industry on our north-west coast, and ensure minimal disruption to the important work going on every day in our courts, both criminal and civil. That is key. This increase from \$15 million to \$40 million will provide upgraded works that will enable the long-term continuation of the Magistrates and Supreme Court services in Burnie for both the civil and criminal divisions; improve safety and amenity for all court users, including the judiciary, legal practitioners and the community; improve disability access; enable the essential functional requirements of a modern court facility; and ensure that the building is fit for purpose.

Thorough consultation with stakeholders will ensure that the new facility meets the needs of the court, court users and importantly the community. We have engaged a local Tasmanian architect firm, ARTAS, as the design consultants. Further consultation and planning will continue throughout 2021, with the construction contractor expected to be appointed in 2022.

Community consultation will, as is standard practice, be integral to the planning process for the development application. We look forward to continuing our strong and transparent community consultation as we progress these exciting plans.

In September 2017 our Government determined that we would hand over prisoner transport and court security responsibility from Tasmania Police to the Tasmania Prison Service in the north and north-west regions. The first-phase task of removing police officers from prisoner transport and court security at the Launceston Supreme Court was successfully completed in July 2018, having correctional officers already based in Launceston.

The second phase included implementing 'police out of courts' policy in the north-west, which informed a review of the prisoner transport and court security arrangements for the Burnie Supreme Court. It is very pleasing that after significant work by many stakeholders, the Department of Justice has now implemented the first steps in achieving this important second-phase transition.

Three new court operations officers have already commenced work, and will assume responsibility for managing the public in the foyer and gallery areas on the Supreme Court in Burnie. Retired police officers have also now been engaged to provide in-dock security and assist with escorts of people in custody. These officers commenced duties on 19 August. I thank those people for putting in their expressions of interest, and showing their continuation of wanting to be employed in our state service, albeit in a different capacity.

While there will need to be some transitional arrangements to ensure a safe and orderly transfer of responsibilities once the new model is fully operational, the requirement for Tasmania Police to attend the court will be limited to emergency responses only, as is standard procedure in all other courts across this state.

I thank the many people from across my department, the courts, the Department of Police, Fire and Emergency Management and other stakeholders who have worked, and continue to work tirelessly and collaboratively, to ensure a safe transition of responsibilities. This has not been easy but it has now come to fruition. By relieving Tasmania Police from court security responsibilities, as has now been achieved, it will allow more police officers to be available for police duties and to keep the community safe.

Only our Government has a comprehensive plan to modernise our courts and get police out of courts and back on the beat, and only we can deliver on that plan.

### **New Bridgewater Bridge - Rail Line Exclusion**

**Ms BUTLER question to MINISTER for INFRASTRUCTURE and TRANSPORT,  
Mr FERGUSON**

[11.11 a.m.]

An overwhelming theme that emerged from the community consultation on the new Bridgewater bridge project was a desire to see the rail connection with Hobart maintained. Why was the rail line excluded from the scope of the designs for the new bridge?

### **ANSWER**

Mr Speaker, I congratulate the member for Lyons for getting a scoop on this. She ought to be aware that rail, as she suggests in the question, as part of the actual bridge structure has never been proposed as part of the replacement Bridgewater bridge in the life of this Government and the previous government. I understand it is the case, and I will stand to be corrected, that the former minister, David O'Byrne, was responsible for the first submission that went to the federal government in the dying days of the Labor-Greens government.

What we need is a new bridge. What we will have is a new bridge that addresses the functional user requirements I have informed the House about. We need to link four lanes, minimum, off the Midland Highway to four lanes of the capital city linking to the Brooker. That is what we will deliver. That is what is required from the eastern side of the river to the capital city.

People listening to that commentary would do well to remember that we are preserving the rail corridor for future potential. I am not aware of a current proposal that is viable for rail to cross the river. There is not a need. After all, it is the case that the government Ms O'Connor was part of, the Labor-Greens government, moved industrial rail to Brighton.

I do not want to be disrespectful about this matter because I know a lot of people love rail, but there is no current use for it. The idea of providing a rail link over a bridge that is designed for a 16-metre draught is not feasible. If we see in the Labor alternative Budget next week, several \$100 million more for such an idea, with extremely long ramps which would be



required, significant new land acquisitions, I look forward to seeing that on Tuesday and I would be prepared to respond accordingly.

### **Bushfire Preparedness Update**

**Mr TUCKER question to MINISTER for POLICE, FIRE and EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT, Mrs PETRUSMA**

[11.13 a.m.]

Can you please provide an update on the Gutwein Liberal Government's plan for a contemporary new fire act and the Tasmanian Government preparedness for the 2021-22 bushfire season?

### **ANSWER**

Mr Speaker, I thank the member for Lyons for his interest in this matter. The Fire Service Act 1979 is now 42 years old. This Government wants to ensure that the Tasmanian Fire Service is underpinned by contemporary legislation that reflects the service delivery expected by the community now and into the future. This is why the Tasmanian Government, during the 2021 election, committed to begin consultation on the development of a contemporary new Fire Service Act within the first 100 days.

Significant work has already been undertaken through the review of the Fire Service Act 1979 by Mr Mike Blake, as well as by the House of Assembly Standing Committee Inquiry into the State Fire Commission.

The Blake Fire Service Review includes 45 recommendations for the reform. This includes abolishing the State Fire Commission. However, this Government, as we stated during the recent election, is committed to retaining the commission as well as ring-fencing funding for fire and emergency services in legislation.

The review also includes the consideration of future arrangements for the State Emergency Service. Tasmanians want an accountable, flexible and responsive fire and emergency service. As part of developing a new contemporary fire service act, Tasmanians are now invited to have their say on their support or non-support of the Blake Fire Service Act Review and its 45 recommendations.

I am pleased to announce that Mr Michael Stephens will lead the next stage of this important body of work. Mr Stephens is uniquely qualified for this work, having undertaken the role of bushfire recovery coordinator for the devastating bushfires in 2013 and 2019. During his career, Mr Stephens has also held a number of senior leadership roles in the Tasmanian State Service and has also led a number of significant reforms.

As the review also made 16 financial management recommendations, the Department of Treasury and Finance, as part of the consultation process, will release a separate Options Paper on potential funding models to ensure that fire and emergency services are funded in an equitable, transparent and sustainable way.

With regard to funding, I am delighted to say that the 2021-22 Budget will deliver on our commitments to secure Tasmania's future as well as keep Tasmanians safe through providing \$111.5 million over the next four years for bushfire safety and prevention.

Tasmania's fire agencies are well into their preparations for the upcoming bushfire season. Our TFS remote area volunteers were deployed for the first time in March this year. By the end of October, we will have remote area capability of 160 firefighters, in addition to remote area fighters in Parks and Wildlife.

We have also invested \$2.1 million in remote area firefighting winch capability for Parks and Wildlife, allowing quick deployment and specialist firefighters to an exact location quickly, with the assistance of spotter flights and pre-positioned aircraft, especially for fires that result from lightning strikes.

The Government's fuel reduction program is nation-leading in its tenure-blind, strategic risk-based approach to fuel reduction. This Government has already invested over \$55 million in funding to this program since 2014 to ensure that our communities are kept safe from bushfires. We have also funded 12 new mitigation crews.

The 2021 fuel reduction program is well underway and 175 fuel reduction burns have been undertaken so far this year, of nearly 10 150 hectares. As at 1 August 2021, 133 bushfire protection plans and response plans covering Tasmania's highest risk communities have been developed.

I am also pleased to note that, as part of our \$111.5 million in the 2021-22 Budget, is our election commitments. This includes \$2.5 million for our successful Red Hot Tips Program, supporting farmers and large landholders to conduct private burnoffs, as well as \$2.5 million to support mechanical clearing. There is additional support for our hard-working volunteers, including \$250 000 for new-generation defibrillators, \$500 000 per annum for our grants program for equipment and facility upgrades, as well as \$2 million to provide the mission-critical equipment and PPE our volunteer firefighters need.

There is \$900 000 to expand the multi-hazard intelligence team, to be based in our new \$6.5 million state operation centre, providing a head start for planning responses to all types of hazards that impact our state.

The Tasmania Fire Service has also developed the 'Bushfire, why risk it?' campaign, as well as the Bushfire-Ready Neighbourhoods website, which includes a new five-minute bushfire planning tool to help people plan how to keep themselves and their households safe in the event of a bushfire.

From visiting the SES and a number of fire brigades around our great state, led by new Chief Officer Dermot Barry, I cannot speak highly enough of the exceptional work that our brave emergency services do to prepare and keep Tasmanians safe. As we approach the next bushfire season, to each and every one of them, from the bottom of my heart, I say thank you.

Finally, I wish to congratulate the Premier on handing down today his eighth Budget, actually the 12th budget that I have known that he has delivered in this House since I have been elected, as in opposition every year we did an alternative budget.

I encourage the Opposition to put their bitter divisions aside and do an alternative Budget for the first time in eight years.

## **ANSWER TO QUESTION**

### **Bass Highway**

[11.19 a.m.]

**Mr FERGUSON** (Bass - Minister for Infrastructure and Transport) - Mr Speaker, I would like add to my answer to the member for Braddon, Ms Dow.

The Cooe to Wynyard program of works consist of four projects being delivered over multiple financial years. The traffic signal optimisation has been completed. The contract for the Somerset to Wynyard realignment project was awarded to the proud Tasmanian company, Hazell Bros, earlier this year, with construction expected to commence in late 2021 and completed in late 2022. In relation to Wynyard-Marrawah, the first group of nine projects are due to be delivered in 2021.

Eight projects have now been awarded to Shore Contracts, another proud Tasmanian business. The projects include Gates Road junction improvements; Myalla Road realignment; Dallas Road overtaking lane; Speedwell Road junction improvements; Monateric Road overtaking lane; Mella Road junction improvements; Morris Road overtaking lane; and Salmon River Road to Park-Paceys Road junction. That is work for this construction season. In advance, we ask drivers to allocate extra time for their journey and to look after our traffic managers who are using the road as their worksite.

## **PETITION**

### **Health Crisis - New Norfolk and Derwent Valley**

[11.21 a.m.]

**Ms White** presented a petition signed by approximately 3317 residents of Tasmania, requesting the Government introduce nurse practitioners at the New Norfolk Hospital on full cover 24 hours per day, seven days per week due to the current health crisis occurring on the Derwent Valley and Central Highlands and, furthermore, requests the Government to advocate to their federal counterparts to reschedule New Norfolk under Medicare and the Modified Monash Model to a level 5.

**Petition received.**

## **MESSAGE FROM THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL**

### **Attendance of Legislative Council Minister for Estimates Committees**

**Mr SPEAKER** - Honourable members, I am in receipt of a message from the Legislative Council which I ask the Clerk of the House to read:

Mr Speaker,

The Legislative Council desires to inform the House of Assembly that it agrees to the request of the House of Assembly in its message dated 25 August 2021, and it is giving leave to the Honorable Jane Howlett MLC, Minister of Small Business, Minister for Women, Minister for Sport and Recreation and Minister for Racing to appear before and give evidence to the relevant Assembly Estimates Committee in relation to the budget Estimates and related documents.

C Farrell  
President  
Legislative Council  
25 August 2021

**SUPPLY BILL (No. 3) 2021(No.32)**  
**SUPPLY BILL (No. 4) 2021 (No. 33)**

**Bills returned from Legislative Council without amendment.**

**MOTION**

**Suspension of Sitting**

[11.24 a.m.]

**Mr FERGUSON** (Bass - Leader of the House) - Mr Speaker, I move -

That the House be suspended at the conclusion of the Matter of Public Importance until 3 p.m. as per the resolution of the House yesterday.

**Motion agreed to.**

**MATTER OF PUBLIC IMPORTANCE**

**Keeping Tasmanians Safe and Confident**

**Mr STREET** (Franklin) - Mr Speaker, I move - That the House take note of the following matter: keeping Tasmanians safe and confident.

It is a pleasure to bring this matter of public importance of keeping Tasmanians safe and confident. The Government's priority throughout COVID-19 has been to keep Tasmanians safe and to make them secure. The pandemic, unlike anything experienced at a global scale for almost a century, has sent shockwaves across the world, across our country and across our communities.

It has been a health crisis and an economic crisis. When faced with challenges, the Government has acted swiftly and decisively. We have followed public health advice at every

step to put in place the safeguards to keep the virus at bay and we put in place support packages to sustain our economy and support jobs.

This pandemic has claimed almost 4.5 million lives across the world. We have never shied away from the advantages that we have in Tasmania as an island. That is why we have used it to put in place border restrictions to protect our state against outbreaks, outbreaks that we know deliver serious consequences for lives, health systems and economies. We also did not hesitate to use our strong balance sheet to support our community and underpin our economy with a package of economic and social support measures in excess of \$1 billion. This was the largest support package as a proportion of the economy of any government in Australia.

More than that, we led the way through strategically investing when we saw confidence waiver. We took steps that rebooted our economy quickly through our \$3.1 billion construction blitz. Private investment responded. It grew a state leading 8.4 per cent in the December quarter followed by another 2.5 per cent in the March 2021 quarter. There have been over 4200 building approvals in the last year, the highest in over 25 years. Retail trade is now higher than pre-pandemic levels, with recent growth outstripping national growth.

Exports have grown. In last month's CommSec State of the State report the Tasmania economy was ranked the strongest in the nation for the sixth quarter in a row.

The performance indicators in Tasmania are pointing the right way. Confidence is up, jobs are up and unemployment is down. There are now more than 263 000 people employed in Tasmania and our unemployment rate at 4.5 per cent is below the national average.

As much as those opposite would like you to believe it, these do not happen by accident. Tasmania continues to be safe and secure but we cannot take these things for granted. We cannot be complacent.

We recognise that the lockdowns in other states are having a flow-on impact in Tasmania. That is why we recently announced the new \$20 million Business Support Package in partnership with the Australian Government, to support businesses affected by the lockdowns interstate and we will, as the Premier and Minister for Small Business have both said, do more if we need to as the situation progresses.

It is why we maintain strong controls of our borders. I would like to acknowledge and thank Tasmanians in our frontline, in public health and our state control centre, our COVID-19 coordination centre, those in hotel quarantine management and biosecurity at our borders who are working tirelessly to keep our state safe.

It is up to all of us also to follow the public health advice to keep on top of COVID-19 by practising good hygiene, checking-in at venues, staying home if you are unwell and getting a test, even with mild symptoms, and by getting vaccinated. It is so important. It is our strongest safeguard.

If COVID-19 does come into our community the best and fastest way we can get on top of it is through rapid contact tracing. It is why the check-in app is so important. Under section 16 of the Public Health Act businesses are required to register for Check in Tas and provide access to a QR code. All people aged 16 years and older are required to check in. Anyone who refuses to check in faces a fine of \$778.50. It is so important. Over the next three days

Tasmania Police will be conducting a monitoring compliance blitz. The three days of action will be conducted in Hobart today, Launceston tomorrow and Burnie on Monday.

This is about actively monitoring compliance and increasing awareness that this not a choice and that people must check in to ensure that we are keeping all Tasmanians safe from COVID-19. If you need a reminder look to NSW for the need to remain vigilant and to not be complacent. This Delta strain is different.

Most Tasmanians are committed to keeping Tasmania COVID-19-free and understand that Check in Tas is a tool that will support us to identify and follow up with people if we learn they may have been exposed to a positive case of COVID-19. The responsibility is on both businesses and patrons to support the Check in Tas arrangements. Businesses that display the Check in Tas QR code and encourage their workers and patrons to check in will be able to demonstrate to Worksafe inspectors that they have a method of contact tracing in place. It is important that businesses, workers and patrons support each other by being COVID-19 safe to help keep Tasmanian workplaces and the community safe.

We were accused yesterday afternoon in this place of not having a plan by the Labor Opposition. He repeats again that we do not have a plan. It is the most ridiculous and hypocritical claim that you could come across.

We do have a plan. It is the plan that we took to the election, and it was voted for in May by an overwhelming majority of Tasmanians. Mr Winter knows that. To accuse us of not having a plan is rank hypocrisy from Labor.

This afternoon, the Premier and Treasurer is going to deliver the 2021-2022 Budget. We will adjourn this afternoon. We know what the two members of the Greens are going to be doing with their staff. They will spend the next four days, Mr Winter, putting together an alternative budget to present to this place next week. They always do it. You can hold up that as well, Mr Winter. The Greens will make decisions on the things they agree with in our Budget, and the decisions they would make differently. I will disagree with the vast majority, if not all, of those decisions, but when they present it we will know what they stand for.

The question for Mr Winter, for Dr Broad as the shadow treasurer, and for Labor as whole is, what are they going to do after the adjournment this afternoon? I used to think their lack of an alternative budget was laziness; then I came to the conclusion that it was because they did not really believe anything.

What I think now is that at the adjournment today they are going to go back to their favourite sport, which is ripping the insides out of one another. They are an inward-focused party with no interest in the people they serve, which is all Tasmanians. Quite frankly, they ought to be ashamed of themselves.

**Time expired.**

[11.32 a.m.]

**Mr WINTER** (Franklin) - Mr Speaker, I was a bit disappointed until the end. He went where I thought he would go, the 'alternative budget' rabble, ramble, that we hear every year.

I want to start with the safety component of this, 'keeping Tasmanians safe and confident'. I wonder if that might be a precursor to the title of the Budget. I could be wrong but I have a suspicion.

The minister for Police, in her answer this morning, said words to the effect - I need to confer exactly what the words were - that Labor had not committed to any additional police during the last election. That is wrong. It is an inaccurate statement and it has misled the House. In fact, during the election campaign, Labor announced that a Labor government would employ an additional 70 specialist police officers to work across the priority policing areas.

In line with the Standing Orders, I think the minister should come in and correct the record today at the earliest opportunity. The Standing Orders say:

A member must not mislead Parliament or the public in statements they may make.

Whether any misleading was intentional or unintentional, a Member is obliged to correct the Parliamentary record, or the public record, at the earliest opportunity in a manner that is appropriate to the circumstances.

- and this is a matter of public record.

**Mr Ferguson** - Are you aware that this rule applies to all members?

**Mr WINTER** - Of course it does. Labor committed to 70 specialist police officers. In fact, a Labor government would additionally maintain the commitment of a full rollout of an extra 125 police officers, and hire seven additional police officers to put an end to the regional backfill issues that keep regional communities safe. I would expect the minister to come in and correct the record on that at the earliest opportunity today, given the misleading that occurred.

In preparation for Mr Street's MPI -

**Mr Ferguson** - Are you are aware that the Standing Order applies to all members?

**Mr WINTER** - Of course it applies to all members, and it will apply to me in what I am about to say as well.

I suspected that Mr Street would talk about an alternative budget, so I read the 2013-14 Change for a Brighter Future alternative budget of the Liberal Party. It is an absolute joke. Barely anything in here ever actually happened. I will read some of it. I will start the first one: fix the planning mess with a statewide planning scheme.

**Ms Finlay** - How has that gone?

**Mr WINTER** - I will tell you how it is going, member for Bass. It is not. In the last update the House heard from the minister, only six of the 29 councils had moved to the new statewide planning scheme, seven years since it was announced. There will not be a single statewide planning scheme, as in this alternative budget. There will not be.

**Mr Ellis** - Do you support the statewide planning scheme?

**Mr WINTER** - Do you? You are not doing it. You are not delivering the policy that was promised in the alternative budget. It says, 'We will slash red and green tape by 20 per cent'. Anyone who has read any of these budgets over the term of this Government knows that the way they report on this is a joke as well. I have no doubt it will be a joke later today.

They say there is a plan to rebuild our essential services. They talk about their goal that, by the end of the first six years of a majority Liberal Government, Tasmania will be at or above the national standard in every NAPLAN measurement and meet the national benchmarks. What an embarrassing week for the Government. This is the signature policy of this alternative budget - fail, absolute failure. It was the second worst of, I think, about 14 out of 20 of the reporting criteria, as reported by various media outlets last night. It is a disgraceful result highlighting the failure of education policy that was set forth in this alternative budget that never happened. They identified more than \$507 million worth of total savings. That was claimed on page 5 of this ridiculous document.

The most comical part of the document is found on page 32, where they get the decimal point wrong. They claim they can make savings in the 2013-14 budget of over \$1 billion - because they get the decimal point wrong. That is what their alternative budget was.

It is available if you want to read it. If you want to talk up an alternative budget, do not forget what a joke it was.

**Mr Street** - Do you understand the hypocrisy of attacking something that you are not prepared to provide yourself, Mr Winter?

**Mr WINTER** - Do you understand the hypocrisy of asking for something that - we can only find two examples where an alternative budget has been handed down? The first one was by the former member Peg Putt, and it looks like she was the inspiration for this idea by Mr Gutwein to do an alternative budget.

**Dr Woodruff** - The Greens are the inspiration for all the good ideas in this place, Mr Winter. You should know that by now, and if you do not, you will find it out.

**Mr SPEAKER** - Order.

**Dr Woodruff** - It is true, absolutely true. Voluntary assisted dying, same sex marriage - all the good things in this place.

**Mr SPEAKER** - Order. We are on limited time on this debate. Please do not interrupt the member.

**Mr WINTER** - We will go to page 10 of the plan. It says -

Say yes to sensible development which creates jobs including tourism development in national parks and sensitive development on Mount Wellington.



That was the commitment. I remember the Premier standing on top of the mountain saying we will build the cable car because of planning reform primarily - the interim planning scheme that the Premier, when he was planning minister, set in place. He cannot deliver that either. He cannot deliver the fifth lane.

The only thing they managed to do was create this farcical idea that they came up with a workable alternative budget. The greatest sham of all was \$100 million saved in supplies and consumables. They were going to save \$100 million from supplies and consumables. That never happened either.

Almost everything in this document never happened, because you could not deliver any of it - just like the rest of this Government. No delivery, huge promises; could not deliver a single thing.

[11.38 a.m.]

**Mr ELLIS** (Braddon) - Mr Speaker, that was a hopeless contribution for someone who does not even want to deliver an alternative budget. It will not happen next week. From the sound of things, he does not want to do it for the next four years. If he wants to be relegated in Opposition like he and his party have been for the last seven years for failing to deliver an alternative plan, then go for it.

You do not have to. No-one on our side will shed a tear when you do not offer a plan. The people of Tasmania deserve better from their Opposition. We know that a strong Opposition is helpful for a strong government. It is sad that we have this weak, divided, toxic Opposition sitting over there: people who do not even know what they believe other than stabbing each other in the back and playing petty factional games.

The other Labor member for Franklin over there did not deliver a single alternative budget for seven years. That is the standard you are hoping to live up to by saying these things are really hard to deliver. We might put a decimal point in the wrong spot. Maybe we are not going to be able to get this done. At least the Greens, with two members over there, and maybe one staff member are able to deliver an alternative. You are not going to deliver anything. Yet you spent seven minutes trying to justify why you will not. It is pathetic, it is lazy, and it speaks to a deeper cultural problem in the Opposition.

That is reflected by the vision that they had, by the chaos that we have seen, by the toxicity that has meant that one of your upper house members, the shadow Opposition spokesperson for health has quit. He does not want anything to do with it. There are rumours, Ms Butler, that you are going to get kicked out of the party because you are speaking out against the Labor member for Franklin. It is a sad indictment.

When the Premier delivers his Budget today it will be a budget about securing the prosperity of Tasmanians and about keeping people safe. That is the contrast. That is why people have voted for another four years of majority Liberal Government. They want people who deliver a plan, whether they are in government, or whether they are in opposition. They want people who will increase their prosperity, who will create jobs, who will defend their way of life and who will improve the health system. That is what they want. They do not want an Opposition that sacks nurses, closes wards, sacks cops and makes sure that 10 000 jobs are lost, so that young people have to leave Tasmania just to find work. That is what people saw under your mob. That is why we put in place alternative budgets.

We believe that having a plan allows you to deliver. That is why there are more than 28 000 new jobs in Tasmania than when you were in government. That is why people are moving to Tasmania. They want to be part of it. They are coming home. They can see a plan that works. You do not move your whole family down to Tasmania, to some tiny little island at the bottom of the world because you think it might just work out. You move there because you believe that the people running the show have a plan. That is why they are coming. That is why they believe in us.

The people of Tasmania voted for us 100 days ago; because they could see delivery, they could see Tasmania improving. They are sick of in-fighting, of back-biting among an Opposition that is too lazy to even provide an alternative plan.

We are proud that in today's budget there will be support for new climate change measures and there will be support for infrastructure programs right across the state. We are proud that we are going to be developing and redeveloping hospitals. We are proud that we are going to bring modern facilities into more schools, so the kids can learn in safe and welcoming modern environments. The Opposition's last plan about schools was to close them. They closed 20 schools in Tasmania: in your electorate, Mr Winter, and in your electorate, Ms Finlay. That is what you did. You were so keen to be part of that plan that you stood for Labor.

I am keen to be part of the plan for a government that wants to open schools, that wants to redevelop them, that wants to support our hospitals and to create jobs. That is what we have done. Those are the records, they are the facts. Today the Premier will hand down one of the most important budgets in a generation. It is a budget for the times; it is a budget for one of the worst pandemics we have seen in 100 years. If you are going to manage in challenging times, you need a plan. If you are going to lead this state, you need to do better than sitting back, resting on your laurels and trying to find a missing decimal place.

We want to see a budget today that delivers for Tasmanians. That is exactly what this House will see.

[11.43 a.m.]

**Dr WOODRUFF** (Franklin) - Mr Speaker, I feel like I can speak for the Leader of the Greens, Ms O'Connor, and say that this week we have felt we are living in a grotesque Shakespearian tragedy. It is unbelievable that yesterday the Greens moved a motion to declare a climate emergency on the back of the IPCC's alarming report, which is a code red for humanity. The Premier and Minister for Climate Change demonised us, saying we were scaring Tasmanian children. Yesterday -

**Mr SPEAKER** - Dr Woodruff, you cannot reflect on a previous debate.

**Dr WOODRUFF** - I am not reflecting on the debate. I am reflecting on the circumstances around it. I am not here to talk about that. I am here to talk about Tasmania being safe and confident.

**Mr SPEAKER** - It is not what I have heard up until this point in time.

**Dr WOODRUFF** - Yesterday the member who moved this motion sat in the Chair and had the casting vote. He chose to side with the Government against our motion to declare a

climate emergency. Today that same member comes in here with a motion about Tasmania being safe and confident. I find that astonishing. I have never been more surprised of two circumstances together than this.

**Mr FERGUSON** - Point of order, Mr Speaker. This has to stop, reflecting on not just the vote but the Chair. I have seen it happen throughout the week. I have carefully balanced when to raise and make this point of order because the House's job is to protect the role of Speaker. I ask that the member cease reflecting on the Chair.

**Mr SPEAKER** - On the point of order, you did reflect on a member who was in the Chair. That is not allowed. You cannot reflect on the debate that happened yesterday. If you want to talk about other things as far as safety goes that is fine, but do not refer to the decision of yesterday or the debate of yesterday.

**Dr WOODRUFF** - Thank you very much, Liberals, for taking 50 seconds out of my time to speak.

**Mr SPEAKER** - If you knew the standing order you would not have gone there in the first place.

**Dr WOODRUFF** - Mr Speaker, I have not done anything other than to talk about the incongruity of the Government refusing to declare a climate emergency yesterday and today wanting to talk about how we can make Tasmanians safe and confident. It is revolting to see the lack of attention to the reality that we are confronted with. It is appalling to imagine that young Tasmanian people do not get it. They read on social media, they read what the Secretary General Antonio Guterres has said. They understand it is a crisis.

In order for them to be safe and confident we not only have to look at COVID-19 and not only have to look at protecting ourselves from COVID-19. We must declare a climate emergency. We must have a Minister for Science and Technology who does not sit looking uncomfortable at the Science Meets Parliament dinner when Jess Melbourne-Thomas, the Tasmanian Australian of the Year last year, gave an excellent speech about marine sociological systems and climate change. The Minister for Science and Technology has been challenging the climate science.

We have a problem in this Government when there are not just climate deniers but people who are using the new technique of the fossil fuel industry. It is what segregationists did in the United States. They did the slow walk to change, it is the mumble, they will even say the words 'climate change'. They know that is the minimum standard required. It is not enough. We must globally halve our emissions by 2030. Think about what we were doing only nine years ago, it is just a second ago.

We have something in Tasmania, young people know. We have been blessed with an incredible opportunity, an incredible circumstance that was gifted to us by conservationists demanding that we protect our forests, and the signing of the Tasmanian Forest Agreement. We have a good emissions profile. The Commissioner for Young People's consultation with young people showed they want native forest logging banned. We must keep those emissions there. We cannot contribute to global emissions by continuing to harvest native forests. We cannot do that. The science tells us that, the young people tell us that and the Greens will keep

talking about this because everyone over there actually knows that but they do not understand that we do not have time to go slowly.

Incrementalism has gone. That opportunity was there in the 1970s, maybe the 1980s, but not now. Every single tonne of carbon we admit into the atmosphere is a tonne too much. We do not have the time because we care about our children. I am really caring about these children. The Minister for Mental Health and Wellbeing knows that, and despite what he said this morning, we have to act and speak about this.

### **Time expired.**

[11.51 a.m.]

**Ms FINLAY** (Bass) - Mr Speaker, I welcome the opportunity to speak to this because it is such an important topic about keeping Tasmanians safe and confident.

After three days of questioning the Small Business minister and an opportunity to ask a question of the Premier regarding the circumstances of small business operators across Tasmania, my concern on behalf of the people of Tasmania is that there is a lack of confidence in the Government's ability to keep them and their families safe because of a lack of understanding of what it takes to operate a microbusiness, a small business: what it takes, not only to be a sole trader but a sole operator.

This Government professes that they are here for people, no matter their circumstances. However, I question whether people on the other side understand the lives of families right now, after three days of bringing to the Government's attention the concerns, worry and stress of many individuals and families across Tasmania who are struggling due to border closures.

We shared stories this week of Mr Lewis, a gentleman who has an independent taxi licence, operating out of Perth to the Launceston Airport, the Launceston Airport that, with Hobart, has gone from 30 to 100 contracted workers stood down now. What for them and their families? How do they feel confident about their circumstances, their ability to bring home an income to their family, to provide food on the table, fuel in the car and to keep a roof over their head?

After questions this week, I am calling on the minister to join me in Launceston, to meet with people in this circumstance, to understand and hear directly from people the certainty that they need to be confident in their futures.

It is okay to say we feel confident about Tasmania, for many people are doing well. But for those who are not, people in our community need a government for all Tasmanians, Tasmanians who are struggling today.

Overnight I received correspondence from someone eligible for the grants, a successful business, long-time operated in Tasmania. However, the closures have had an immediate and devastating impact on their income. They were eligible for \$2000, despite just recently losing \$20 000 of income.

The grants are welcomed for the small impact they make but we must go further. Any investment we make now defers the need for a greater investment in the future, when there is

time to recover, when that moment returns that people need to find their employees again; when they need to reskill, in order that they can be confident to do that.

We heard yesterday from a very successful operator, Bianca Welsh, from Stillwater and Black Cow. She is experiencing a 60 per cent decrease in weekly income right now. She is worried about being able to sustain her business right now and worried about other operators who cannot go on and worried that there is a lack of understanding about the serious concerns and the real impacts right now. Many of our families, our individuals operating small businesses, are worried and concerned and have no confidence that there is an understanding.

All the reserves, for many, were spent last year. Many people who had businesses that were able to accumulate reserves spent those and invested them in their futures last year. Now they are operating without the federal government support, without reserves, on a weekly basis, worrying about how they can provide for their families.

For me it is not just in the obvious often-mentioned impacts on hospitality and tourism. I have had the opportunity over the last month to travel across Tasmania to speak to businesses of all scales, in all sectors.

A worry that came to me was in a conversation about a fisheries business - a great industry for Tasmania, an important industry not only for the economy but for the brand. This individual employs 15 people. That is 15 families in regional Tasmania with a worry, a lack of confidence in their immediate future right now. The business owner has had no cash sales, despite a brilliant business over many years, due to the impact of the New South Wales lockdown for six weeks and has the responsibility of 15 families at their hand.

My concern is for the individuals in Tasmania, the small businesses, the person that is the only income producer in their family. The person that stays up at night and is worrying, concerned and not confident about their future. What can we do now? Not 'how can we reassess criteria, how we can consider this for frameworks into the future?', but what action will be taken today? What will we invest now for the many people in Tasmania who are worried, stressed - and we understand the impact of stress: the concern for mental health, the concern for other impacts and collapses in families and communities.

Although we all work for and want to be part of creating a safe and confident Tasmania, we need to do that for all Tasmanians, not just those with the reserves remaining, not those who have support from others, but those feeding their family, those who are part of our community and who deserve our support right now as well.

We, on this side, seek for the Government to make sure they hear this message now from the many Tasmanians writing to both sides of this House about their immediate circumstances and we act now to invest, to create certainty and confidence. The investment required to make when it breaks down, when there are increased job losses, where there is business failure, where people are spiralling into concerns with their mental health - the cost in the future to rebuild from this - will be far greater than the investment that we need to make today.

[11.57 p.m.]

**Mr ROCKLIFF** (Braddon - Minister for Health) - Mr Speaker, I thank Mr Street for bringing forward this matter of public importance. I could not think of a more appropriate

matter of public importance than keeping Tasmania safe and confident. That is exactly what this Government will be doing and are doing.

I will speak briefly in the time I have about the health and safety of Tasmanians, particularly relating to the pandemic. While we have no cases in Tasmania we know that the Delta variant is different and it is incredibly contagious. The impacts of the Delta strain on people, the health system, the economy and community are extremely serious. We are seeing that play out in New South Wales. My latest report is that New South Wales has just recorded over 1000 cases. Our thoughts are with all the communities across that state.

Our border restrictions, to the point about keeping Tasmanians safe, worked well. They protected us. However, it is important that we continuously review these procedures and strengthen them in the face of the Delta variant, and as more people seek out Tasmania's relative safety. That is why the Premier released the Delta Shield Plan a few weeks ago: stronger border controls; a vaccination blitz; strengthening our testing, tracking and tracing; and of course, pertaining to the previous speaker, a business support package.

We recognise that stronger border controls and restrictions in place to keep Tasmanians safe have an impact. That is why the Premier, and indeed the Minister for Small Business, have said that while the \$20 million package is on the table, we will continue to listen and engage with those people and businesses doing it tough.

Our target is to reach more than 63 per cent of Tasmanians with their first dose of vaccine by 12 September 2021. We are travelling well, with the number of doses available each week in state clinics increasing by almost 20 per cent. We have increased availability as well, through Pfizer, through GPs, with our pharmacies now coming on board delivering Astra Zeneca. We have seen around 20 per cent lift in the primary care vaccination rate and thank you Tasmanians for rolling up your sleeve, as the Premier has said today, doing extremely well and leading the nation. The vaccination rate for eligible Tasmanians for their first dose is almost 57 per cent in the latest figures that I have. Over 38 per cent of Tasmanians are fully vaxxed and I commend Tasmanians for that.

**Time expired.**

**Matter noted.**

## **SUSPENSION OF SITTING**

**Mr FERGUSON** (Bass - Leader of the House) - Mr Speaker, I move -

That the House be suspended until the State Budget at 3 p.m.

**Motion agreed to.**

**Sitting suspended from 12.00 p.m. to 3.00 p.m.**

**APPROPRIATION BILL (No. 1) 2021 (No. 36)**

**APPROPRIATION BILL (No. 2) 2021 (No. 37)**

Her Excellency the Governor recommended expenditure for the purposes of the bills from the Consolidated Fund.

**First Reading**

**Bills presented by Mr Gutwein and read the first time.**

**Mr SPEAKER** - In accordance with the resolution passed by the House on 25 August 2021 I now invite members of the Legislative Council to enter the Chamber to listen to the Treasurer's speech.

**APPROPRIATION BILL (No. 1) 2021 (No. 36)**

**Second Reading**

[3.04 p.m.]

**Mr GUTWEIN** (Bass - Treasurer) - Mr Speaker, I move -

That the bill be read the second time.

Mr Speaker, now more than ever it is vital that we secure Tasmania's future, that we secure the health and safety of Tasmanians, that we secure our economy and the jobs it supports and that we secure our future by providing better and more modern services to the Tasmanian community. Earlier this year we put forward our clear plan to secure Tasmania's future. Tasmanians supported that plan, re-electing a majority Liberal Government for a historic third term. To receive the confidence of the Tasmanian community in such challenging times is something we are humbled by, that we do not take lightly. We will not let our community down.

I want to thank all Tasmanians for rising to the challenges we have faced and working together in these extraordinary times, to look after each other and to keep our community safe. Thank you to all who worked so hard to keep our community safe at our borders and in our health system and in the provision of other essential services. Thank you to those in our business sector for having confidence in our future and for the jobs that you provide for Tasmanians. Thank you for all of those working in the public, private and not-for-profit sectors for the work that you do supporting Tasmanians. Your contribution is vital to this state each and every day.

Much has changed in the 10 months since the 2020-21 budget was delivered. At that time there were no vaccines available against COVID-19. Now we have those vaccines and Tasmania is leading the nation in vaccinating its population. While this is a budget speech, I cannot emphasise how important it is that people get vaccinated. It is the most important safeguard we can provide for ourselves, our loved ones and the whole Tasmanian community. Since the last budget we have also been successful in keeping Tasmania free of community transmission. This has been in the face of ongoing lockdowns in other states which have had

a devastating impact on their economies and the lives of those affected. Achieving this outcome has required us to take rapid and decisive action. Tasmania is, as a result, one of the safest places in this country, and without doubt one of the safest places on the planet.

Last year we leveraged our strong balance sheet to support our community and underpin our economy with a package of economic and socially supported measures in excess of \$1 billion. This is the largest support package as a proportion of the economy of any government in Australia. Confidence levels have been nation-leading and we now have more jobs here than we did before the pandemic began. Our economic recovery has been remarkable, but there is more to be done.

Notwithstanding the significant steps we have taken, the challenges posed by the pandemic remain an immediate and real threat to our future. The potential for an outbreak of the virus which would require us to lockdown is very real. There can be no doubt that we must continue to face these challenges with strong and decisive action; action that is based on advice from our public health officials and focused on keeping our community safe; action as reflected in our plan to secure Tasmania's future.

The 2021-22 Budget is based on strong foundations. It is based on the success of our financial and economic management over the past seven years and our success in facing the challenges of COVID-19. Importantly, we can and we will deliver all of the commitments we made at the recent election. These commitments will keep us safe, deliver better hospitals and schools, provide more houses for those in need and support better education and training outcomes, while also investing in the necessary road and community infrastructure that we need.

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a profound impact on the global economy. Leading up to the pandemic we were one of the strongest performing economies in the country. Last year our economy continued to grow, albeit below expectations. However, since that time our economy has come roaring back. Even with the current challenges facing New South Wales and Victoria, Tasmanians are, in the main, confident. There are now more than 263 000 employed in Tasmania and our unemployment rate, at 4.5 per cent, is below the national average.

Confidence is up, jobs are up and the unemployment rate is down. Over the course of the Budget and the forward Estimates period our infrastructure program and other job creating initiatives are expected to support in excess of 28 000 jobs. At the height of the pandemic last year, we laid out a plan to kick start our economy and built our way out. That plan by any measure has worked.

In June 2021 dwelling approvals were up 43.7 per cent from the previous year. The value of retail trade, a good litmus test for the broader economy, increased 10.9 per cent over the year to June. When others were experiencing negative growth in their exports, the value of our goods exports increased by 5.2 per cent over the year to the end of June.

These results do not happen by chance. We worked hard to keep people safe. We invested record amounts in support and stimulus packages. Confidence stayed strong, investment increased and the jobs bounced back. However, we know we live in very uncertain times and there will be twists and turns as we move forward. That is why we have a clear plan



to secure Tasmania's future, to keep people safe, and to deliver an even stronger more diverse and resilient economy.

The strength of our budget position is one of the foundations on which this Budget has been built. Prior to the pandemic, we had a strong financial position. As at 31 December 2019, just months before COVID-19 hit, we held \$788 million in net cash deposits and investments - in stark contrast to the net debt every other government in this country held.

Our strong financial position and the strength of our economy has enabled us to deal with the challenges we have faced. The 2021-22 Budget delivers my plan to secure Tasmania's future and fully funds our 2021 election commitments.

It also provides funding for new initiatives which will help to meet increased demand for essential services, especially in our health system, as well as supporting vulnerable Tasmanians. Given the uncertainty of the COVID-19 situation, the Budget also provides the flexibility to ensure we can continue to respond to the impacts of the pandemic.

To this end, a total of \$300 million has been included in the Treasurer's Reserve in the 2021-22 Budget across the forward Estimates. In line with my commitment on election night to do even more in terms of health, we have delayed the Budget's return to an operating surplus by one year, so that we can invest even more into this critical service area for all Tasmanians.

I will say more on this in a moment; however, I am pleased that next year the budget will return to a cash operating surplus of \$368.8 million, and in 2023-24 we return to a modest operating surplus of \$39.4 million, increasing in the 2024-25 year to an operating surplus of \$126.8 million.

Going into this pandemic, our financial position was strong. Even though we have provided more than \$1 billion in economic and social supports, the budget is now on track to surplus, and will be back in the black over the forward Estimates period.

Let me be very clear: the health of Tasmanians is the Government's highest priority. Each and every year we have provided more funding for health than any previous government. We have today more nurses, more doctors, and we provide more services than ever before. When it comes to health, demand will always increase, and there is always going to be more to be done. That is why my Government's expenditure on health over the budget and forward Estimates will increase by \$900 million to \$10.7 billion. This additional funding will make an enormous difference to our health system, and the health and wellbeing of Tasmanians.

I said that we needed to do more, and we will. We have provided \$198 million in additional funding to meet the increasing demand and pressures being faced by our major hospitals, and to support opening beds in these key hospitals. We will open 50 additional permanent hospital beds to meet increased demand and support our elective surgery commitments. This additional funding is supported by \$18.3 million to implement a new safe staffing model in our vital district hospitals, and an investment of \$18 million in 2021-22 to enable private hospitals to support our public hospitals to manage increased demand, including elective surgery. Our hospitals will be supported by additional investment in paramedics and ambulances. In total, we will recruit an additional 48 paramedics, which will add significantly to the 170 additional full-time equivalent paramedics and dispatch officers we have recruited since 2014. Furthermore, \$9 million has been allocated for new ambulances and equipment.

During the 2021 election, we announced \$120 million in funding to deliver an additional 22 300 elective surgeries and endoscopies to bring the waiting list down to a sustainable level. That brought our elective surgery commitment to \$156.4 million. Now we will deliver even more elective surgeries - another 7000 on top of the 22 300 already committed through a \$40 million top-up, with a total allocation of \$196.4 million in this year's Budget. More than 180 staff statewide are expected to support this increase in elective surgeries, including more than 112 nurses, 10 doctors 16 allied health staff, as well as more than 40 hospital support staff.

While acute care in our public hospitals has been a necessary focus to meet demand, we are also committed to simultaneously investing in community in-home palliative care services and mental health services. We have allocated \$52 million to implement a range of vital initiatives, including community palliative care, home and community-based palliative care, and better palliative care services in partnership with private hospitals and service providers.

Over \$9 million has been provided to support the implementation of the Voluntary Assisted Dying act. We have allocated \$108 million in additional funding to mental health services across the state. This includes \$26 million to support mental health services, including \$8.5 million for a Mental Health Hospital in the Home pilot in the north-west of the state, while \$50 million has been allocated to fully fund the Government's response to phases I and II of the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services Review Report.

Other important initiatives to support those Tasmanians most in need include:

- \$5 million in 2021-22 to deliver an additional 20 000 dental appointments statewide across emergency dental, general dental care and denture clinics
- \$15.7 million to implement the Health Workforce 2040 strategy
- \$8 million for GP after-hours services
- \$8 million to support the North-West Regional Hospital second linear accelerator.

The Government is also working to secure Tasmania's future by investing in essential health infrastructure that will support the delivery of services to the community. In this Budget, we have committed additional funding of:

- \$117 million to the Royal Hobart Hospital for an expansion of stage two of the redevelopment, a new angiography suite and equipment upgrade
- \$20 million for a hospital equipment fund, and \$5 million for a rural hospital equipment fund
- \$12 million for the Launceston General Hospital mental health precinct
- \$20 million for the North-West Regional Hospital mental health precinct
- \$10 million for stage two of the Kingston Health Centre.

The 2021-22 Budget and forward Estimates also include funding of \$66.5 million to continue the Launceston General Hospital redevelopment, and \$30 million to complete the Mersey Community Hospital capital upgrades.

This Budget also provides more support for Tasmanians with a disability, with \$1.2 million to establish the first ever Tasmanian Disability Services Commissioner, and continues our strong support of the NDIS, with more than \$1 billion over the forward Estimates.

The Tasmanian Government is committed to helping more Tasmanians into homes by boosting the supply of new dwellings, supporting home ownership and putting downward pressure on rents. The Government is rolling out the most comprehensive affordable housing strategy ever undertaken in this state, but we recognise we need to do more. To meet the increased demand for social and affordable housing, we are making an unprecedented investment in housing supply.

We are investing a record \$615 million into social and affordable housing and homelessness initiatives, including our record election commitment of \$280 million dollars to build new social housing for Tasmanians in need. In total, we will have built 3500 new homes by 2027, adding an additional 2000 homes to our current plan to deliver 1500 homes by 2023.

We will also develop the first ever comprehensive Tasmanian housing strategy, which will consider demand across both the public and private sectors, and formulate strategies to deliver sustainable outcomes for all Tasmanians.

We already have a number of successful initiatives that are underpinning new building activity and new homes to live in, supported through ancillary dwellings, the First Home Owner Grant, and the HomeBuilder and Headworks Holiday programs. The strategy will consider a range of other initiatives including extending rent assistance programs, a 'build to rent' program, housing options for workers in critical industries, and commercial property conversions.

My Government has a clear vision for Tasmania to be a place of opportunity, no matter who you are, where you live, your background or circumstance. We know we must provide the education, training and skills to enable our people to get the jobs that will support them and drive our economy forward. Over the past seven years, we have reformed a system that had far too many young Tasmanians exiting education at year 10. While opposed by others in this place, our plan to roll out years 11 and 12 in our high schools has been a success. Importantly, we have continued to invest at record levels. Across the 2021-22 Budget and forward Estimates, expenditure on education, skills and training is estimated to be \$8 billion.

The Budget continues our investment in major existing strategies and programs, including Taking Education to the Next Level, child and family learning centres, as well as completing the extension of every Tasmanian high school to year 12 by 2022. Our record funding enables us to continue investing in 358 more staff, including 250 additional teachers and 80 additional teacher assistants.

Our election commitments will all be delivered. This includes \$5.4 million for school health nurses, \$6 million to support students impacted by trauma, \$2 million to roll out additional professional development in trauma for school leaders, teachers and teacher

assistants in Government schools and \$3.8 million to provide free access to speech pathologists, psychologists and social workers in child and family learning centres.

There is also \$100 million in additional funding to build and improve classrooms and essential facilities. This includes major projects: Cambridge Primary School, Exeter Primary School, Hobart City Partner Schools, Lauderdale Primary School, Montello Primary School, and at our support schools.

This Government has consistently emphasised the priority it places on training and skills development. The strength of this commitment is reflected in the increase funding each and every year for TasTAFE over the past seven years. We are investing in the \$21 million Energy, Trades and Water Centre of Excellence in Clarence and a \$5 million Agricultural Centre of Excellence in Burnie's Freer Farm. We have delivered on our promise of 600 additional training places for age care and funding in \$2 million for new TasTAFE teachers in critical industry areas and \$2 million to enable Drysdale to establish courses in Hobart's Northern suburbs. We are committed to ensuring Tasmanians can get the training, apprenticeships and jobs to secure their future right here in Tasmania.

That is why we support the PESRAC recommendation to transform TasTAFE into a Government business: Government business that is fit for purpose and will enable the organisation to be more nimble, more like the businesses and industries it is there to support, to ensure Tasmanians will be able to receive the skills they need to grasp the opportunities available in our fast-growing economy. To support this important reform in this budget, we are investing additional support of almost \$100 million over the next four years. \$37.6 million is been allocated to fund 100 extra TasTAFE teachers and \$45 million will be invested in TasTAFE facilities around the state. This includes new student accommodation in Burnie and Clarence; major upgrades of campuses at Allanvale, Burnie and Devonport; equipment upgrade, as well as the creation of a regional TAFE facilities development and transition fund to support and increase access for rural and regional students.

We will also work in partnership with industry and other organisations to support workforce development, including \$4 million to partner with each of the Civil Contractors Federation and Master Builders Tasmania; \$1 million to support the Housing Industry Association; \$2.25 million to work with the Tasmanian Hospitality Association; \$2 million to partner with the racing industry; and \$180 000 to support the Migrant Resources Centre.

We will also provide \$930 000 to establish a workforce development fund to deliver support for the community services sector's training capacity. In partnership with the Australian Government, we will provide \$1.5 million to support the expansion and facilities of the Sorell Trade Training Centre. Mr Speaker, \$20.5 million is also provided over the next two years for the Work in Tasmania program to support training interventions to address barriers to employment, support employers to employ and specifically assist young people and recent school leavers.

This Government believes all Tasmanians should have access to quality training and skills they need to live better and more fulfilled lives and this budget delivers on both the funding and the plan to achieve that. Tasmania, as a result of more than 100 years investment in the primarily hydro-generation has achieved a unique position of being able to generate 100 per cent of the energy we need from renewable sources. We have a target to achieve 200 per cent of our renewable needs as outlined in our Tasmania Renewable Energy Action

Plan, and in addition to the significant investment in infrastructure this budget delivers, Hydro is also progressing the \$700 million-dollar refurbishment of the Tarraleah Power Station, which will double its generating capacity from 110 Megawatts up to 220 Megawatts.

Our hydrogen action plan is also progressing. We continue to engage with companies from all around the world who recognise the benefit of investing in Tasmania, where we have the renewable energy and the plentiful water supply to make green hydrogen production a reality. Due to our low emissions energy base, as well as our carbon stores, we are also in a unique position, when it comes to climate change. We have achieved our 2050 net-zero emissions target for the last five years in a row, and in six out of the last seven years. We must continue to take sensible informed action to capitalise on the opportunities Tasmania's unique and advantageous position provides.

The four-year independent review of Tasmania's Climate Change Act is nearing completion. A key message from Tasmanians during this consultation is that our existing target of net zero emissions by 2050 could be much more ambitious given our emissions performance to date. My Government has heard this and we are finalising the consultation and we will be releasing the review of the act, the new target and our new action plan later this year.

We are at an important and defining moment, a moment that we must be prepared to grasp as it will define the state for the next 100 years. That is why today I am announcing that the Government is creating Renewables, Climate and Future Industries Tasmania which will be established by October this year.

Renewables, Climate and Future Industries Tasmania will be supported by Treasury with a whole-of-government view and a remit to capture the opportunities, jobs and investment that Tasmania's unique renewable energy and emissions position provides. Its formation will be guided by Treasury, my department of Premier and Cabinet, and the Department of State Growth and will include the responsibilities, resources and expertise for Renewables Tasmania in State Growth and the Climate Change Office in DPAC.

Renewables, Climate and Future Industries Tasmania will provide the necessary advice to ensure that investment in renewable energy, hydrogen, Marinus Link and Battery of the Nation projects, along with climate change adaptation and mitigation are strategically considered, and that Tasmania harnesses the opportunity available to underpin the investment and jobs these sectors will deliver.

This Budget includes additional funding of \$15 million to support the work of Renewables, Climate and Future Industries Tasmania. The chief executive officer will be responsible directly to myself as Premier and minister for Climate Change and will also report to the minister for Energy and Emissions Reduction. This strategic change will ensure that we are better placed to grasp fully these opportunities which will help secure Tasmania's future.

We are committed to protecting our environment which is why the 2021-22 Tasmanian Budget also provides funding for a number of initiatives, designed to build our circular economy and support the waste and resource recovery sector by providing the platform to attract investment and create jobs.

This includes the introduction of a container refund scheme, a consistent statewide waste levy, support for commercial composting and phasing out of single-use and problem plastics from government and council facilities and events on public land by 2023.

We are also investing \$3 million to partner with industry to invest in a crumb rubber plant to turn end-of-life tyres into product which can be used in the Government's road resurfacing program from 1 July 2022. These initiatives will enhance innovation, boost economic growth, create jobs and secure the future of Tasmania's unique environment.

To secure Tasmania's future, we must have a strong economy. There is no doubt, particularly during these challenging times, government can play an important role in supporting the sustainability of our businesses. We recently announced the new \$20 million business support package in partnership with the Australian Government to support businesses affected by the lockdowns interstate and we will, if need be, do more as the situation progresses.

This year's Budget also includes an extensive package to support Tasmanian businesses, support jobs, support our regions and help cushion the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. With 97 per cent of the 38 000 businesses in the state's small businesses, we are committed to securing their future.

The 2021-22 State Budget includes a suite of initiatives for our small business sector including \$2 million for a new small business incubator and accelerator pilot program; \$800 000 over four years to Business Tasmania to help better support businesses by resolving problems and reducing barriers and \$300 000 over three years for regional chambers of commerce to support their small business members.

In addition, \$150 000 will be provided for the Tasmanian Business Council to advocate and support its members and \$120 000 to the TCCI for an expanded Tasmanian survey of business expectations, providing data to help inform decision-making as we continue our economic recovery.

COVID-19 has presented significant challenges to businesses across the world and we have not been immune in Tasmania. The 2021-22 Budget includes \$1.2 million for access to specialist financial counselling because we know there are businesses facing challenging circumstances as a result of the pandemic.

We are continuing to support Tasmania's micro business sector with up to \$50 000 per annum over four years for the NILS no-interest micro business loan program and an additional \$25 000 per annum for four years to support additional staffing for this valuable service.

It is equally important we support our large industries. Our resources sector provides an economic foundation for many of our regional communities contributing billions of dollars in exports and supporting thousands of jobs and small businesses across the state. It is why we are extending our exploration drilling grants incentive until 2025 with \$1.5 million in addition to funding a refreshed geoscience initiative of \$2 million over four years and support of up to \$3 million through the federal government Exploring for the Future Program led by Geoscience Australia.

This Budget also recognises the need for more on-island processing and value-adding of forestry products to support and deliver more jobs with a new \$10 million fund over five years

to support this important industry in regional communities. We are also investing \$1.15 million over three years to the Tasmania Timber Promotions Board to value add and promote Tasmanian timber products across the world and we are investing \$150 000 over three years to address skills shortages and train the forestry industry leaders of tomorrow.

You would be particularly aware of how important the primary industry sector is to Tasmanians and to our state's future. Our election commitments build on our plan to accelerate our agricultural sector by investing almost \$50 million to drive the sector towards our bold annual fund back value target of \$10 million by 2050. This includes an additional \$30.2 million for water resources and irrigation and an additional \$23.7 million over four years to tranche 3 of the Pipeline to Prosperity program to meet increased demand for the Don, Tamar, Sassafras, Northern Midlands and Fingal irrigation schemes.

It also includes \$5 million for Tasmanian Irrigation to deliver a business case to deliver the South East Irrigation Extension Project and \$10.2 million will be provided for a new agricultural protection package to futureproof the industry and assist managed risks to primary industries. We are also investing \$5.6 million in a new community farming partnerships program including \$450 000 to extend the Safe Farming Tasmania program.

In addition, we have committed \$15 million towards a new Tasmanian agricultural precinct based at Newham which will bring together agricultural science, water management, industry development and biosecurity with an aim to boost growth in the sector. As well, \$2.6 million has been provided for a rural business resilience package and \$537 000 has been allocated to support the seafood industry recovery.

We are committed to supporting industries that generate broad-ranging economic activity and sustained jobs. That is why we are providing a \$100 million loan to support jobs at Incat for underwriting a new Incat vessel and \$20 million to the Building Project Support Program to bring forward community and commercial projects to help stimulate the sector to help support local jobs. We will also provide significant funding to support sector strategies that will drive future growth. This includes \$5 million to implement the Advanced Manufacturing Action Plan, \$3.75 million to implement the Tasmanian Trade Strategy, \$2.25 million to support international business development managers and \$2.4 million for the Great Customer Experience Program.

I am pleased to say that since we came to Government in 2014 merchandise exports have increased by close to 40 per cent. Supporting growth and business will continue to underpin our economy and generate jobs.

It is essential that when people can start to travel further afield again, Tasmania is front and centre as a travel destination. Our ongoing strong support for the Tasmanian tourism sector and our regional economies is reflected in the allocation of an additional \$18 million in funding to support tourism marketing. We have also provided significant additional funding to support events that attract people to all parts of Tasmania. We are providing a \$50 million tourism industry interest-free loan program and \$1 million will support travel agents affected by the extensive constraints on travel.

This Budget includes a \$145 million investment into parks and reserves to futureproof our natural assets. This includes \$4 million towards the development of the Freycinet National Park and visitor gateway, \$1.2 million to turn Ben Lomond into a year-round destination and

\$3 million to reimagine the Hastings Thermal Pool. In addition, \$2.8 million will go towards the Maria Island Rediscovery Project stage three and \$10 million to provide new and improved recreation and driving opportunities across the West Coast.

Our strong events sector also plays an important role in our economy by drawing visitors into regional Tasmanian communities. To ensure we secure the future of our major iconic events which generate economic activity of more than \$170 million, we have committed \$18 million along with a further \$1.2 million to support our business events market. We want to attract and support major events, and the Budget contains \$8 million to establish the events support Attraction Fund, while \$1.5 million has been earmarked to establish a Regional Event Recovery Fund.

The Government strongly supports our cultural and creative industries. We recognise the challenges the past 18 months have placed on the sector, which is why we have committed over \$12 million to support artists and art organisations. This Budget includes an additional commitment of \$6.3 million to support our cultural and creative industries, including a range of initiatives to support our vibrant artists to engage and inspire audiences, and add value to our cultural landscape and local regions.

The hospitality sector was one of the hardest hit during COVID-19. To ensure our world-class industry continues to provide outstanding visitor experiences, we will deliver \$8 million for a range of initiatives to support them as they recover. As we deliver our plan to secure Tasmania's future, we must ensure we cater for increasing visitor numbers and deliver outstanding visitor experiences, which will be driven by the skills of our workforce.

Infrastructure provides vital support to the delivery of services in our hospitals, schools and communities. It connects communities, supports jobs, and enables us to deliver our goods and services to the market. It helps keep us safe and provides homes for those who need them. Through sporting, cultural and recreational infrastructure, it supports the Tasmanian way of life. The implementation of a strong infrastructure program over the term of this Budget and forward Estimates, and beyond, is essential to creating confidence and certainty.

The 2021-22 Budget includes a \$4.6 billion infrastructure program, including a \$3.8 billion investment in infrastructure projects, and around \$800 million in equity injections to support infrastructure investment by government businesses and related entities. In addition, during the election we also announced in excess of \$1 billion in further investment by government businesses in hydro generation and ports infrastructure.

We are investing \$2 billion in our roads and bridges, including major intergenerational projects such as the Bridgewater Bridge, the Greater Hobart Traffic Solution, the Algona Interchange and Kingston Bypass, and the Midland Highway. We have also allocated substantial funds for infrastructure, maintenance, Roads of Strategic Importance and road upgrade programs in the north, north-west and west coast.

Our total investment in hospitals and other health infrastructure is \$503.7 million. Our total investment in schools, education and skills infrastructure will be \$336 million. Over the next four years, we will invest more than \$384 million in housing infrastructure for those Tasmanians most in need. We are supporting our essential justice system through expenditure of \$57.2 million on the new \$270 million northern prison; \$55.5 million on the \$85 million new southern remand centre; and \$39 million on the new Burnie Court complex.



Our infrastructure plan also includes significant support for infrastructure investment outside of the general government sector. Equity contributions of \$184.8 million to TasRail from the state and Australian governments will support ongoing work on Tasmania's freight rail network, and the upgrade of the bulk minerals shiploader at the Port of Burnie.

Equity contributions of \$199 million to TasIrrigation from the state and Australian governments will progress tranche-three irrigation projects, a business case for the South East extension scheme and the 'energy on farms' initiative.

We will allocate funding of \$64.6 million for the Macquarie Point Development Corporation to help bring this precinct to life; \$140 million to TasWater to support its accelerated infrastructure program; and \$40 million to assist with the Macquarie Point wastewater treatment plant relocation.

The Budget also provides an equity contribution of \$65 million over three years from 2021-22 to the new Stadiums Tasmania to oversee the development and management of Tasmania's stadium assets, to support Tasmania's place on the national sporting stage.

Our commitment to improving our infrastructure is unparalleled, and we are getting on with the job of building Tasmania.

Mr Speaker, a key element of our longstanding fiscal strategy, the competitive tax system, will be maintained. Taxes will always be lower under a Liberal government. Over the past seven years, the Government has implemented a number of important tax reforms, including payroll tax relief for apprentices and trainees, and stamp duty relief for first home purchasers and retirees downsizing.

We are also implementing important changes to land tax, including a foreign investor land tax surcharge on residential properties, which will come into effect next year.

In the 2021-22 Budget, we are delivering a number of new tax changes, including a reset of land tax thresholds which will mean that more than 4000 taxpayers will now pay no land tax and more than 70 000 will receive reduced bills of up to \$613 per year. This amounts to a nearly \$60 million reprieve for property owners over the next four years. The Commissioner of State Revenue will also accept the payment of land tax in three instalments for bills over \$500 and there will be a 50 per cent reduction in the premium component of the interest rate charged on unpaid tax.

We are also increasing from \$400 000 to \$500 000 the value threshold for the first-home buyer duty concession and pensioner duty concession, which means savings of up to \$9000.

Vehicle registration fees will now be able to be paid quarterly, taking pressure off household budgets. There will also be a two-year waiver of duty on the purchase of new and second-hand electric and hydrogen fuel-cell vehicles to incentivise the uptake of the vehicles by reducing upfront costs, expected to be around \$2000 on average.

In addition, Treasury has begun the process to deliver on the Government's election commitment to consider options for capping land tax from 2022-23 onward due to the growth in prices of our property market.

Tasmania is one of the safest places in the world. In these difficult times, people are looking to Tasmania to raise a family, work and live. They want to have confidence that they and their family will be protected from the impacts of crime, the pandemic and natural disasters. The Government stands with the Tasmanian community in taking action to keep our state safe and our people secure.

Over the past seven years we have funded 258 additional police officers. We have also commenced major investments in police IT and communications to provide police with better information to support their vital work. This includes investment towards the \$567 million Tasmanian Government Radio Network and \$46 million for the upgrade of critical police ICT systems. To build on this important work, \$9.4 million has been allocated across the Budget and forward Estimates to deliver an additional 50 police officers to bolster frontline services and deliver a greater focus on criminal investigation capability.

There has been \$10.6 million allocated to provide permanent funding to ensure that whenever police officers from rural and remote police stations are on leave, communities will continue to receive the same level of policing. A further \$2.5 million has been provided to enable frontline police to be freed-up by employing State Service employees in specialised roles, such as prosecution, cybercrime and digital evidence analysis.

An allocation of \$13.1 million has been made to deliver a prisoner transport and court security model to remove Tasmania Police from court security duties in the Burnie Supreme Court. The Tasmanian Liberal Government is committed to improving the state's correction system. Through our work to reduce reoffending and increase rehabilitative opportunities in Tasmania, we are establishing new partnerships with organisations to provide increased therapeutic support and programs in our prisons, maximising the chances of successful reintegration for people back into the community.

We are addressing demand pressures on the Tasmanian Prison Service with \$4 million per year over the next four years. This will allow for effective operation of our prison service and will support the major recruitment campaign under way to boost the number of correctional officers even further.

We are committed to keeping our community safe from the impact of fire and other natural disasters. In this Budget we will invest a further \$18 million to ensure our communities are bushfire safe and support our career firefighters and the 5600 volunteers in our fire brigades and state emergency service units around Tasmania.

We will provide an additional \$1.5 million per annum to the emergency services personnel and volunteers Health and Wellbeing program and double the investment in the Red Hot Tips program through the provision of an additional \$2.5 million. We will boost our nation-leading fuel reduction program with an additional \$2.5 million to support mechanical clearing. We will also fund a dedicated team of staff from the Department of Police, Fire and Emergency Management to bolster volunteer recruitment and administration in remote and regional communities with new funding of \$2.4 million.

Tasmanians should feel safe and supported in their home and community. A trial of electronic monitoring of high-risk family violence perpetrators demonstrated increased safety for victims, an 82 per cent reduction in high-risk incidents and increased accountability from

perpetrators. The 2021-22 Budget provides \$2.4 million over the next two years to continue this electronic monitoring.

We will also provide almost \$2.5 million to reduce reoffending and increase rehabilitation through new partnerships to deliver increased therapeutic support and programs in prison and help those in need of legal advice and support. We have allocated an additional \$8.8 million to the legal assistance sector to support its delivery of free or low-cost legal services to Tasmanians on top of the funding already committed under the National Legal Assistance Partnership.

Mr Speaker, during the course of the COVID-19 pandemic, we strongly supported our communities. The strong focus continues in the 2021-22 Budget with the provision of significant additional funding for Neighbourhood Houses, the extension of our school lunch program and an additional \$10.1 million to support youth housing initiatives. We have also supported an additional \$12 million for energy concessions to those most in need of support as we continue to recover from COVID-19.

The Government understands the importance of community. That is why this Budget completes the \$15 million local community facilities fund program which delivers on our commitment to strengthen the fabric of our communities especially those in rural and regional areas by supporting community associations and sporting clubs to improve their facilities and infrastructure.

My Government also believes very strongly that we must continue on our pathway to achieving reconciliation with the Tasmanian Aboriginal people. This commitment is reflected in the allocation of an additional \$200 000 to support the work of Professor Kate Warner AC in conjunction with Professor Tim McCormack to facilitate processes to understand directly from Tasmanian Aboriginal people themselves how best to take the next steps towards reconciliation. It complements the work being undertaken by the national agreement on Closing the Gap in the Tasmanian plan. To support this work we will provide up to an additional \$4 million towards building capacity in Aboriginal community controlled organisations to better meet the needs of Tasmanian Aboriginal people on top of the existing \$1.3 million committed in last year's Budget.

This Government strongly believes more women and girls should feel safe in our community and they should have access to all the opportunities our state provides. We are committed to removing barriers to participation whether they exist in education, business or elsewhere. The 2021-22 Budget includes a broad range of initiatives that deliver support and opportunity to women and girls including over \$1 million to support women's workforce participation to build on our already \$2.5 million investment, \$900 000 to promote Women in Leadership, \$5 million to double the funding for the Improving the Playing Field Grants Program, \$1 million to support the Karinya Young Mums 'n' Bubs program and the allocation of \$80 000 every year to provide free sanitary items in all government schools to ensure that a lack of access to sanitary products at home is not a barrier to learning.

We strongly believe these initiatives, among others, will help make a difference for the future of women in Tasmania. The wellbeing of children and young Tasmanians is critical to our community. To support our children and young people, \$100 million has been allocated to implement Tasmania's first long term whole-of-government child and youth wellbeing strategy. This strategy is being formed by a comprehensive consultation process which

included over 3500 contributions from children and young people, parents, carers, advocates and service providers. I would like to thank each and every person for their contribution to this process. We have listened to your views and we are taking action.

Mr Speaker, the time to secure Tasmania's future is here and now. We are facing one of the biggest challenges that Tasmania and the world has ever seen. While it is a time of uncertainty for Tasmania, it is also a time of opportunity. Our economy is strong, we live in one of the safest and most beautiful places in the world and our businesses and our people are confident. The awareness of what Tasmania has to offer the world of the future is growing day by day.

We are the state of the extraordinary where our unique is our advantage. We cannot let that opportunity pass us by. This is a budget that builds on the strong foundations this Government has established over the past seven years. It is based on listening to what the Tasmanian community wants and providing support where it is needed most. This State will achieve great things if we all work together to secure Tasmania's future. The time is now, the moment is here.

Mr Speaker, I commend the bill to the House.

**Members** - Hear, hear.

**Mr GUTWEIN** - Mr Speaker, I lay upon the Table a copy of the Budget Speech, *Securing Tasmania's Future Delivering Our Plan* together with the following papers:

Fact Sheet 1 - Budget and Economy  
Fact Sheet 2 - Getting More Tasmanians into Work  
Fact Sheet 3 - Education, Skills and Training  
Fact Sheet 4 - Health  
Fact Sheet 5 - Housing & Community  
Fact Sheet 6 - Keeping Tasmanians Safe  
Fact Sheet 7 - Infrastructure

Delivering Statewide; Delivering for Bass; Delivering for Braddon; Delivering for Clark; Delivering for Franklin; and Delivering for Lyons.

**The Members of the Legislative Council withdrew.**

**Debate adjourned.**

## **ADJOURNMENT**

**Mr FERGUSON** (Bass - Leader of the House) - Mr Speaker, I move -

That the House do now adjourn.

**The House adjourned at 3.51 p.m.**