



**PARLIAMENT OF TASMANIA**

**HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY**

**REPORT OF DEBATES**

**Thursday 20 August 2020**

**REVISED EDITION**



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

## **QUESTIONS**

### **COVID-19 - Essential Workers and Quarantine Requirements**

**Ms WHITE to PREMIER, Mr GUTWEIN**

[10.02 a.m.]

Yesterday you teamed up with the Greens to vote against mandatory testing for all essential workers granted exemption from quarantine. You have admitted that Tasmania's hospital system needs to be better prepared to manage a potential outbreak. You have said that our population is older and more vulnerable to infection and yet you have done nothing to close the loophole that does not require all essential workers to be tested. In the last month, 311 have come to Tasmania. Those who do get tested, do not have to quarantine before they get their test results.

If you are concerned, as you said, about fear in the Tasmanian community, why do you continue to justify allowing Victorian workers to walk straight off a plane and onto a worksite without being tested?

## **ANSWER**

Madam Speaker, I thank the Leader of the Opposition for that question.

I will start with the point that I have made regularly both here in the parliament and also publicly: we rely on Public Health advice. Regarding the question, just let me be clear: my understanding is that there have been 11 essential workers who have entered the state out of Victoria in recent times. They come under very specific circumstances and rules, as you are well aware. Importantly -

**Ms White** - It is not about that. It is about being tested.

**Mr GUTWEIN** - What is it about with you? It is about politics with you. That is what it is about. This Leader of the Opposition has flip-flopped from shut the borders to open the borders, to test, to not to test. Absolutely extraordinary. You have not had one firm position through this, and you know that.

We have relied on Public Health advice and that has stood this state in very good stead. We will continue to take advice from the experts, not from you who has one position on one day and then another position on another day.

**Ms White** - Says you.

**Madam SPEAKER** - Order, please.

**Mr GUTWEIN** - Madam Speaker, we are taking, and have taken, steps to strengthen the system. As I explained to the House yesterday about the amendment moved in respect of the motion the member brought, which again, the gall of the member opposite to attempt to force a change on Public Health. That was what you were attempting to do yesterday. You were attempting to force Public Health to do something, yet we have followed Public Health advice and it has stood this state in good stead.

We are a jurisdiction that stands alone, almost right throughout the entire world. We have no community transmission. We have followed the rules step by step, difficult as they have been.

Yesterday the Leader of Opposition tried to have parliament override Public Health on this particular issue. The Leader of the Opposition knows that, step by step, as we move through to the planned reopening date to safe jurisdictions on 1 December, we will gradually strengthen our border arrangements so that Tasmanians have confidence when we do open to those safe jurisdictions. The commonsense point I made yesterday concerning opening to those safe jurisdictions is that we will once again rely on Public Health advice, when and if it is safe to do so.

Yesterday, as I advised the House on 7 August when we had originally proposed to open to the Northern Territory, South Australia and Western Australia, we were introducing additional checks at the border. On 14 August we proposed that we would introduce additional checks again if we opened to Queensland. From 31 August, anyone entering Tasmania will have a health check at the border. If they are symptomatic, they will take a COVID-19 test.

The Leader of the Opposition knows that we have carefully and responsibly managed this. We are in a good position as a result of taking advice and acting on advice from the Public Health experts. We will continue to do that rather than listen to the Leader of the Opposition who flip-flops from day to day and continues to play politics with this very important issue.

### **Mersey Community Hospital - Emergency Department Opening Hours**

**Ms WHITE to MINISTER for HEALTH, Ms COURTNEY**

[10.08 a.m.]

Yesterday, under the cover of darkness, you made the shock announcement that the opening hours for the Mersey Community Hospital Emergency Department would be slashed further. This announcement has come as a shock to the north-west community that was already reeling from a loss of the 24-hour service.

You had ample opportunity to communicate this decision to the community, including when you stood in this place during question time to talk about the Royal Hobart Hospital, but you completely ignored the north west. Instead, you made the announcement in a press release at 9.30 p.m. last night.

Why have you treated the north-west community with such contempt? What assurances can you give to the people of the north west that their safety will not be put at risk as a result of this further downgrade of essential health services?

## **ANSWER**

Madam Speaker, I thank the member for her question. I assure the member, and those listening, that the reason the media release came out when it did is because senior members of the department, along with senior nursing and medical practitioners in the north of the state were working all day yesterday, as they have been for weeks, to try to work out a plan so we can keep that ED open.

I can assure the Opposition, and the community, that we have been working incredibly hard to make sure that we can deliver safe services across the north west. The allegation that it was under the cover of darkness is because we were also engaging with local stakeholders. We are making sure that we are keeping the local community informed and doing everything we can to deliver safe services to that community. I thank the AMA for its positive engagement, as well as other participants. We have had stress on this area for some time. Last time we were in this place I talked about my absolute commitment to that ED returning to 24 hours.

However, it was outlined yesterday afternoon by the secretary of the department in a press conference that the system is under pressure because we cannot get locums. This is not new information. I can assure all members as well as the local community, the Government and I are committed to that hospital. This is why this Government rescued that hospital and it is why the Government has committed funding to that hospital in the future when you sold it for a dollar.

### **Child Safety System - Funding of Services**

**Ms O'CONNOR to MINISTER for HUMAN SERVICES, Mr JAENSCH**

[10.11 a.m.]

In March this year the Greens raised the serious concerns of child safety staff that a lack of planning and resourcing in the child safety system would push children into situations of increased risk as COVID-19 restrictions were introduced. We urged you to take immediate action. This month we heard from Anglicare Social Action and Research Centre that once COVID-19 restrictions tightened children were indeed forced into more vulnerable precarious circumstances. Too many had no choice but to remain in unsafe environments or sleep rough.

Given the lessons of past months and indeed past years one would have thought you would understand the importance of a properly funded child safety system. Despite this, we understand new, heavy-handed expenditure constraints are being put on child safety staff. They have been told not all services may be provided to children in need in all cases and that they must manage the expectations of people in the system. Minister, can you confirm this? Can you explain why services are being cut to at risk children at any time, particularly in a time of pandemic?

## **ANSWER**

Madam Speaker, keeping our young children, families, carers and staff safe and secure is one of the Government's highest priorities and as minister my highest priority as we face the significant challenges presented to us by the spread of COVID-19 and the recovery period

which we are still in. My department has been well prepared with comprehensive business continuity plans to maintain essential services as well as ensuring the safety and wellbeing of clients and staff through all phases of the pandemic. We take it very seriously. COVID-19 does not pose specific safety risks to children and young people. The financial insecurity, family disruptions, household stresses and changes to roles and routines that have come about because of COVID-19 do have impacts. We recognise that. We have maintained close vigilance and monitoring of the children in our care and the system that is wrapped around them throughout the pandemic and the recovery efforts.

I want to talk about some of the matters that Ms O'Connor has raised about how we have handled our responsibilities to children in the state's care through COVID-19. As part of our social and economic support package we provided \$2.5 million to enhance child safety and wellbeing. Our funding commitment included \$260 000 in additional funds to ensure that children and young people in care have internet access and mobile technology for communication and home learning. It is also important to ensure they have the ability to reach out to other advocacy services and the services of things such as the Child Advocate and the Commissioner for Children and Young People.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - Point of order, Madam Speaker. We do not want to hear a list. It would be really good if the minister would address the question. Our understanding is there have been cuts made in child safety to the services that have been provided to at risk children.

**Madam SPEAKER** - That is not a point of order, but it is a very interesting question.

**Mr JAENSCH** - I am pleased to be talking about the increased funding that is being provided to these services, specifically during COVID-19. It is related to Public Health restrictions, the extra services that taxpayers' money has been directed to to ensure these kids, their families and their carers are safe through this period. It is totally relevant to the question that is being asked, and I ask you to let me continue.

Additional funding of \$200 000 was provided to establish an informal kinship carer liaison and support function, providing grandparents and other informal kinship carers with access to necessary advice and support, when they require it, recognising that the children in their care are also in the care of what may be a vulnerable cohort in themselves with older people. We all note those.

CREATE received \$50 000 that will allow enhanced engagement and advocacy for children and young people through this time. There was \$53 000 to extend the carer support hotline, \$260 000 to provide a one-off immediate \$200 payment to fostering kinship carers, \$480 000 to provide financial support to CatholicCare's therapeutic residential care service and \$70 000 for flexible active family funds to support children and families.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - Point of order, Madam Speaker, it goes to standing order 45. The minister cannot be allowed to get away with rattling off a list of funding that has no relation to the child safety question and the issues that we have raised. None.

**Madam SPEAKER** - I have no ability to tell the minister what to say, and I do not have any idea what is going to come out of his mouth, as you know. So, I cannot rule it in as a point of order. I am sure the minister is getting to that point.

**Mr JAENSCH** - What we are talking about is a large and complex responsibility for the Government during a very difficult time. I am showing how we have responded comprehensively, which is what your question went to.

Madam Speaker, \$1.2 million was also allocated for an enhanced after-hours response service.

In terms of the services and care that we are providing in this sector, additionally, Children and Youth Services took further action to increase safety and stability for children, young people and their families during COVID-19. For example, the Child Advocate accelerated the implementation of her services and access programs. There were more stakeholder forums and a register created by CYS to track emerging issues. There were regional joint agency meetings, which included the development of a vulnerable students panel between CSS, the Department of Education and Tasmania Police. A range of extra work was done to ensure there have been eyes on kids who were not able to have regular face-to-face contact with children and families in care during this period.

We have maintained the essential care services. We are pleased to be re-establishing all the face-to-face elements of that governance, care and support function, during this time now that COVID-19 restrictions are lifting.

I am not aware of any direction being provided to reduce services. I am confident that this Government has invested appropriately, heavily, in ensuring the safety and wellbeing of children in the state's care, through our various service providers and directly through this period. We will continue to do so.

### **COVID-19 - Financial Relief for Families in the Public School System**

**Mr TUCKER to MINISTER for EDUCATION and TRAINING, Mr ROCKLIFF**

[10.19 a.m.]

Can you please advise the House of what measures the Government has implemented as a result of COVID-19 to provide financial relief to families of students in the public school system?

**Members** interjecting.

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### **Statement by Speaker**

### **Allocation of Questions**

**Madam SPEAKER** - Order. To address that little mumbling going on back there, there is a tradition, it is not in the Standing Orders, that the first two questions go to the Opposition party, the third question goes to the Greens, and all the other questions are at my own discretion as to who jumps first. So that we do not have any more grizzling and carrying on and because I have to get through seven questions for the Opposition, four questions for the Government backbenchers, two questions for the Greens and one for the Independent member, from here

on in it is going to be the first two to Labor, the third one to the Greens, the fourth one to the Liberals, and the fifth one to Ms Ogilvie. Then it will keep rolling on.

You have to understand that I must get through all of those fairly and I am sure we do not want a whole lot of backbenchers' questions all in one block. This will save any more dramas. Ms Ogilvie, you will be after the Liberals.

**Dr WOODRUFF** - Madam Speaker, as a point of clarification on what you just said, I understand that the role of question time is to scrutinise the Government. I would have thought that following the tradition of the House, which you say is not in the Standing Orders correctly, nonetheless it would be in accordance with that tradition, if the Independent member was given the fourth question because this is about questioning and scrutinising government.

**Madam SPEAKER** - With all due respect, that is possibly the most ridiculous thing I have ever heard. I have to get through each and every one of these amounts of questions and I am the Speaker, I am in charge of the proceedings and it will go according to my rules. Thank you. Please proceed.

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## ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank Mr Tucker, the member for Lyons, for his question.

COVID-19 has caused financial hardship for many Tasmanians, which is why our Government responded quickly with support measures which include waiving school levies for this year at government schools. This was very well welcomed and equated to approximately \$14 million in fees that parents and carers were either refunded or no longer required to pay.

To further support families, in June we announced that we had also waived all Tasmanian government school debts for 2019 and prior. These historical debts total approximately \$2.8 million. Combined as part of the Tasmanian Government's unprecedented Social and Economic Package, this represents more than \$17 million in school levies and related charges that have now either been reimbursed or waived.

Today I am pleased to announced a significant expansion of the Student Assistance Scheme, or STAS, which waives the cost of Tasmanian government levies for eligible students. For the 2021 school year the eligibility for STAS will change to now include parents and carers who hold a current health care card from the Department of Health and Human Services or equivalent. The previous method has been a means test assessment based on family income. It is estimated that the number of students eligible for the STAS will rise to just over 50 per cent of total students from the current percentage, which is approximately 38 per cent.

To put this into perspective, we are talking about upwards of 9000 additional students who will no longer be required to pay school levies. This will provide much-needed relief for many families who are struggling to make ends meet. As an example, for a family earning \$50 000 with three school-age students, this could provide a saving of over \$1000 per year. The ongoing cost of changing eligibility criteria is estimated at \$4 million per annum based on the current figures. However, this will be met by the Government and schools will not be financially impacted. I want to be very clear on that.



It has been over a decade since there has been a change to the Student Assistance Scheme and we believe it is time to change it now. Further information about the implementation of the changed eligibility criteria and the revised application process will be provided to families over coming weeks.

Our Government is committed to lifting educational outcomes and we understand that education is the passport to a better life. The latest action we are taking to assist families in need is part of our plan to ensure inclusive, affordable and equitable access to public education.

### **COVID-19 - Repatriation of Tasmanians from Overseas**

**Ms OGILVIE to PREMIER, Mr GUTWEIN**

[10.24 a.m.]

I have spoken in this place about the heart wrenching situation that Tasmanian families, the Riseleys and the Bleathmans, have been facing stranded in the Philippines, but I have quite literally just received an email message from the Riseleys that says:

We are in the air heading home - you beauty. Premier, thank you for your work making that happen.

As you know, I have been working hard, as I am sure others have, to help Tasmanians who have been stranded overseas to return home. The problem we have is the nebulous process that is extremely difficult for anyone to navigate, let alone people who are stressed, desperate and anxious. I know we are all doing our best to support our community members to get home but we can do more and do better.

Premier, perhaps you would consider setting up a single point of contact with a helpline for Tasmanians who are stranded overseas, as you have done with the successful Business Tasmania hotline and Public Health hotlines, so that Tasmanians know who to contact to go to for help and support in their home towns.

### **ANSWER**

Madam Speaker, I thank the member for Clark for that question. I must say I am incredibly pleased that they are now on a flight and, as I understand it, will be arriving at 11 a.m. this morning in Sydney.

The first thing I should do is thank you, Ms Ogilvie, because you have worked extraordinarily hard in bringing these matters to our attention. I thank DPAC for their engagement with DFAT. They have reached out on every occasion. In fact, after you raised that question earlier this week, we made contact with DPAC immediately after question time and was advised that there would be a flight available in September, which was communicated back to you that day, only then to be advised that there might be a chance that it might happen much sooner.

I said on that day, because I was not certain how matters might play out, that some things are outside the reach of Premiers. I make that statement again on the basis that not in every case will we be able to get successful outcomes. In this case I am very pleased that it has been

able to work its way through and, importantly for the Riseleys, the work you have done on their behalf has been outstanding, so thank you.

Regarding your question, I will speak with DPAC about a single point of contact for Tasmanian families. I know we get a number who come directly through either my office or through the DPAC website but I will speak with them about what we might be able to do to make access easier.

### **Mersey Community Hospital - Emergency Department Opening Hours**

**Dr BROAD to MINISTER for HEALTH, Ms COURTNEY**

[10.28 a.m.]

We have been asking for months for a time line for the restoration of the Mersey emergency department to a full 24-hour service. You have not answered and instead you have announced a further downgrade in opening hours. You have ignored concerns from paramedics about having to travel longer distances to transport patients to the LGH and the North West Regional Hospital, where they are often ramped because these hospitals are already at capacity.

Yesterday you said you would work with Ambulance Tasmania to ensure there were adequate resources provided to support the change. Why was this work not done before the decision was made? What additional resources will be provided to the LGH and the North West Regional to manage the increased demand? Staff at these hospitals cannot work any harder than they already are. When was the business case for the recruitment of new positions approved, when did the recruitment process start and will these positions be funded with new money? Critically, when will the Mersey Community Hospital be restored to a full 24-hour service and will you rule out further downgrades?

### **ANSWER**

Madam Speaker, I thank the member for his question. I sincerely thank the staff at the Mersey Community Hospital as well as the LGH and North West Regional Hospital. They have had, along with other health care staff across Tasmania, the most extraordinary year. I know from speaking to clinicians, particularly across the north-west, that many of those are still feeling the impact of the stress that happened earlier in the year. I am very conscious of that, and very conscious that our other hospitals also had a very large load through COVID-19, particularly when the North West Regional Hospital was closed and patients were transferred to other hospitals including the Mersey and the Launceston General Hospital. I want to make sure that is on the record. Those staff have worked extraordinarily hard and continue to work hard. We know that during winter we have a greater load across our system with winter illness.

I assure the House that with regard to the Mersey Community Hospital there has been very senior contact with a number of clinicians. I know that the secretary of the department as well as the chief medical officer have both been directly engaged with this matter with senior medical and nursing staff - both to find a solution to be able to get the Mersey back to 24-hours but also to work with them to ensure we can deliver safe services. That is what this comes down to, Dr Broad: safe services for patients and also the staff on the North-West Coast. I note that Dr Helen McArdle, the head of the Australian Medical Association, has said that

hospitals risked losing doctors from burnout, and ED services at both Mersey and Burnie risked being unsafe without a change of hours.

I am not going to sit on advice like that and have unsafe services delivered to the people of the North-West Coast. I know that the secretary and the chief medical officer are directly engaged with staff on that site to see what can be done. We are continuing to be focused on recruitment. The Department of Health has been and is actively involved in recruiting for the Mersey, including a staff specialist in emergency medicine, and a career medical officer - emergency medicine. We have also a number of active statewide recruitment campaigns under way for staff, including resident medical officers and medical interns, which will benefit the Mersey.

I can stand here today and say I am absolutely committed to that hospital -

**Ms White** - What about the paramedics?

**Ms COURTNEY** - I am absolutely committed to making sure that it is safe and I hear by interjection from the other side asking about Ambulance Tasmania. We have already put in additional resources from the start of this year into the north-west because we know the pressures they have been under. We had the helipad working at the Mersey Community Hospital to ensure that we have urgent access to care available. We are going to continue working with Ambulance Tasmania to see how we can further support their hard-working paramedics to make sure that community is supported.

It is very disappointing that Dr Broad is choosing to create fear in a community that is already impacted by COVID-19. I have been pleased by so many other community leaders coming out to support this. This is an incredibly difficult decision. This is not something that is taken lightly. This is why the secretary has been engaged. This is why the chief medical officer has been engaged. We want that ED open 24-hours but we are not going to do it when it is not safe.

**Opposition members** interjecting.

**Madam SPEAKER** - Order, please. Order.

**Ms COURTNEY** - Madam Speaker, if Dr Broad wants to pick a date out of the air for unsafe delivery, that is a matter for him. I will continue to do what is right for that community. Some of these decisions are tough. I do not like making them but I am doing in the best interest of that community.

### **Child Safety Services - Notifications Procedure**

**Ms O'CONNOR to MINISTER for HUMAN SERVICES, Mr JAENSCH**

[10.34 a.m.]

The impacts of an under-funded child safety system on those it is designed to protect are too often tragic and terrible. We understand that on Monday a coronial investigation will begin into the deaths of seven babies and young children who were known to Child Safety Services. These children died between January 2014 and December 2018. The question of whether

notifications were followed up by your agency in the appropriate time will form part of that investigation.

Can you tell the House what percentage of notifications that come through to the advice and referral line end up bounced to third party providers with no intervention from Child Safety Services? Is it, as we understand, a significant proportion? How many vulnerable and at-risk children would that be, on average, in a year? Has anything changed in terms of child safety practices and procedures since the deaths of those children who will be the subject of the coronial investigation and since you became minister?

## **ANSWER**

Madam Speaker, I thank Ms O'Connor for her question. These are important and serious matters. I am aware of the process underway and hearings starting next week, which I understand cover a number of cases over quite an extended period, a four-year period reaching a fair way back. What we find with many of the coronial processes that come to light and that generate interest around the issue of child safety is that they are looking back at issues and practices that have arisen in the past. The most important thing to arise from those are the findings of what was done in the follow-up to those events and what has changed in the service system in response to that. It does not for a second diminish the seriousness and gravity of those situations but it should not be about looking to apportion blame. We have to apportion responsibility and we have to see that the system has responded responsibly to the issues being raised.

**Ms O'Connor** - That is the question: what has changed since December 2018 and how many notifications are sent to third-party providers?

**Madam SPEAKER** - Excuse me, through the Chair.

**Mr JAENSCH** - As Ms O'Connor knows, recent coroners' reports have repeatedly referred to the Strong Families, Safe Kids redesign of the child safety system in Tasmania as a series of positive developments which have addressed a large number of the matters that have arisen in coronial inquests regarding deaths or serious injuries to young children over recent years.

The aim of those reforms, which were broadly supported, I understand, across the political divides here, have been to reduce the number of young people entering the child safety system and opening the front end of that system not just to cases of known critical abuse and neglect but to catch those cases, those families and circumstances, earlier and to refer them to services that can help prevent the deterioration of a safe family environment, including through non-government organisations and therefore avoiding kids entering the system, rather than as has been inferred, that we are bunting them off to another player. We are getting in earlier so that the system is not solely about child rescue and coming to snatch the kids away when they have been harmed, but identifying those families and those situations earlier and wrapping more services around them using non-government services of various kinds in a joined-up way to wrap around those families.

The Strong Families, Safe Kids redesign of that front end of the child safety system has largely concluded as a project but the Strong Families, Safe Kids reform process is continuing. We have the advice and referral line up and running. We have fewer children entering the child

safety system. We have more children and families being referred to other services that can assist them to be safe places for those children to remain and to be under supervision so that children can be removed, if needed, as a last resort. We know that sometimes, even under the worst circumstances, when children are removed from families the trauma of the removal for the child and for the family is lifelong and sometimes there is a fatal attraction that will draw those children back to their families. The aim of the game is to prevent the breakdown of conditions in families that lead to risk for children, to bring children into -

**Ms O'CONNOR** - Madam Speaker, a very respectful point of order. Perhaps if the minister is unable to provide the information on the percentage of referrals to the advice and referral line that go to third parties, maybe he could bring that back to the parliament.

**Madam SPEAKER** - That is a decision for the minister.

**Mr JAENSCH** - This is the sort of information which is routinely prepared and provided as part of the Estimates process. I do not want to take an arbitrary point in time, especially as you are referring to a coronial inquiry process which spans a number of cases over many years and many different issues -

**Ms O'Connor** - Sure, but we have asked you for the information on the percentage of calls to the referral line that are sent to non-government providers. As minister you should make a commitment to bring that information back to the parliament.

**Madam SPEAKER** - Order, let the minister finish.

**Mr JAENSCH** - You are asking for data on the number of cases that should have gone to Child Safety that have gone to non-government organisations as if that is a bad thing. I am happy to review the question you have asked and see what information is publicly available at this time that we can bring to your attention, otherwise we will talk about that in Estimates.

### **Burnie Court Complex - Community Consultation**

**Ms DOW to MINISTER for BUILDING and CONSTRUCTION, Ms ARCHER**

[10.42 a.m.]

The performance difficulties across your ministerial responsibilities are well documented. There have been complaints of bullying and appalling culture in Heritage Tasmania which you have failed to address. You completely botched consultation on the original Westbury prison site and already have landowners offside in relation to your new preferred site. The common thread across all these performance difficulties is your failure to consult with the community and with key stakeholders.

It appears you have learned nothing from your failures to consult with the community with your most recent announcement about the relocation of the Burnie Court. At the last state election your Government committed \$15 million to upgrade the Burnie Court complex, a much-needed project which Labor also supported. Now without any consultation with council, the community or the legal profession, you announced the Burnie Court complex would be relocated to a residential area.

Will you consult with the people of Burnie on the future of the court, or will you treat the people of Burnie with the same contempt you have shown to the people of Westbury?

**ANSWER**

Madam Speaker, I think that Labor having the gall to ask a question like that about abandoning the people of Tasmania, abandoning northern Tasmania and the north-west of Tasmania - we have Dr Doom up there and now we have Ms Doom - in relation to -

**Madam SPEAKER** - Order, please. Name-calling is inappropriate. We are a safe workplace and it is not very parliamentary.

**Ms ARCHER** - Then I will make a general statement about the prophets of doom over there for northern Tasmania. Dick Adams was right and Paul Lennon was right. You have abandoned northern Tasmania. You have no interest in job-creating projects and in delivering an efficient and effective justice system -

**Ms O'BYRNE** - Point of order, Madam Speaker. Perhaps the minister could address the question, which is the lack of consultation with the Burnie community about the Burnie Court. The minister may not wish to talk about her lack of consultation but that is the question.

**Madam SPEAKER** - That is not a point of order.

**Ms ARCHER** - Madam Speaker, I am addressing the question. The door was opened by Ms Dow when she was basically making false allegations about me not consulting or caring about the Tasmanian community. I will not use the 'L' word but it was as good as, so I will say the misleading of parliament and, quite frankly, Ms Dow should withdraw because there has been extensive consultation on the Burnie Court, including with the Burnie City Council. I cannot help it if the former general manager did not advise the council or the mayor or the current councillors. They have been consulted -

**Opposition members** interjecting.

**Madam SPEAKER** - Order.

**Ms ARCHER** - It is disappointing seeing the misinformation and the continued scaremongering being the focus of this Labor Opposition regarding this positive announcement that has come to the Government because of UTAS relocating its Burnie campus.

The current Burnie Court complex is not fit for purpose; it is not a modern facility. Despite the constant naysaying from Labor, who continue to neglect major infrastructure projects to the north and offer no solutions, as Attorney-General and Minister for Justice, I look forward to progressing this exciting project to deliver facilities for Burnie and the north-west region. It ensures an effective and efficient civil and criminal justice system. It is not just about the criminal justice system; it will house the judiciary, the magistracy, the administration and the court security. It is a multidisciplinary court facility.

Much has been said by the Opposition, working up fear in the community. It is really disappointing because the Department of Education and legal stakeholders have been consulted. You have misled the House. Legal stakeholders, including the Law Society, have

come out and embraced this decision and this opportunity, and, with the Burnie City Council, they have been advised through the general manager. They will be the independent planning authority in relation to any development that goes on that site.

**Ms White** - So it is a done deal as far as you are concerned.

**Madam SPEAKER** - Order.

**Ms ARCHER** - Members opposite know that during a planning process that the community consultation is extensive in relation to these sorts of matters.

**Members** interjecting.

**Madam SPEAKER** - Order. Will Labor please control themselves?

**Ms ARCHER** - It is extensive. Rather than UTAS leaving a facility empty for a period of time, this not only creates an opportunity of filling the facility, it also creates an opportunity for the current site and what might go on that site as well.

**Ms O'Byrne** - It is Westbury all over again.

**Ms ARCHER** - It is not Westbury all over again, Ms O'Byrne.

With some of the scaremongering going on, which is disappointing to say the least, I want to clarify that with the current Burnie Court complex, three childcare facilities are within 200 metres of the court facility.

I assure and reassure Tasmanians that the court complex is a multidisciplinary facility. There are tight security arrangements in place for individuals who attend court who are on remand. I have clearly stated, nobody needs to be scared of a court complex.

I call on the Labor Opposition to stop their constant scaremongering and fearmongering that goes on in the community. Stop abandoning the interests of the north and the north-west region of this state. Start supporting job-creating projects for your regions, have a plan, start having policies and stop opposing projects.

They do not support the TT-Line in their region; they do not support the Bridgewater bridge; they do not support what goes on at Macquarie Point and now the Burnie Court complex.

### **Electronic Monitoring of Offenders - Family Violence**

**Mr ELLIS to MINISTER for POLICE, FIRE and EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT, Mr SHELTON**

[10.48 a.m.]

Will you please update the House on the use of electronic monitoring of offenders as part of the Government's goal to eliminate family violence?

## ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the newest member of the parliament for that question and welcome him.

It pleases me to be here to talk about family violence. Violence in our community in any form is not tolerated. Living free of violence is everyone's right. Taking action to prevent it is everybody's responsibility. Domestic and family violence in Australia is widespread. Sadly, one in six women and one in 16 men have experienced physical or sexual violence by a current or previous partner since the age of 15.

Family violence damages the physical and mental health of victims and has significant negative impacts on children. As a part of the Government's goal to eliminate family violence, Tasmania Police, in collaboration with the Department of Justice, has conducted Australia's first trial of offender monitoring to protect victims of family violence in Tasmania. The Government is extremely proud that we led Australia with this important initiative.

Using electronic monitoring in family violence matters is a new concept and offers an innovative approach to enhancing the protection and safety of victims of family violence. Legislative changes enable the courts to approve electronic monitoring as a condition of a family violence order upon application by police. The trial involves high-risk priority perpetrators as likely participants who meet the specific criteria required. The electronic monitoring device tracks the offender's movements and ensures that they are excluded from entering certain areas where victims reside and work.

Under the trial, selected victims of family violence also have the opportunity to voluntarily opt into the program. Victims were provided with a small portable device with duress capability to promote early police intervention where there was potential for a breach of a current family violence order. The initiative has not only provided extra comfort and safety to victims, but provides additional evidence in court, corroborating the truthful version of events, in some cases, preventing victims from having to attend the court at all to give evidence.

Of the 73 perpetrators involved in the trial, 52 were subjected to electronic monitoring for at least six months. The preliminary trial suggests a 70 per cent reduction in assaults, an 80 per cent reduction in threats, an 89 per cent decrease in allegations of emotional abuse, and a 100 per cent decrease in reports of stalking. Additionally, the trial saw a 7 per cent reduction in family violence incidents across the state, and an 82 per cent decrease in high-risk family violence incidents.

The trial also looked at offending patterns by perpetrators after the GPS tracking device had been removed. Of the 52 perpetrators who had been monitored for at least six months, 80 per cent did not reoffend following the removal of the GPS tracking system. This tells us that electronic monitoring not only modifies a perpetrator's behaviour whilst being monitored but also after removal of the device.

These are preliminary results and we look forward to the outcomes of the independent review of the trial, which is being undertaken by the Tasmanian Institute of Law Enforcement Studies with the final evaluation report due later this year.



This new and innovative trial, utilising electronic monitoring, is part of the Safe Homes, Families and Communities Action Plan for Families of Sexual Violence. The Government's commitment of \$26 million to the action plan to progress the long-term changes in attitude and behaviour that led to family and sexual violence was bolstered in response to the COVID-19 pandemic with a further \$2.7 million added for key support areas in family violence response.

The trial is another initiative that is helping police and other agencies target high-risk family violence perpetrators as part of the Government's commitment to keeping Tasmanians safe.

In closing, I acknowledge the leadership of the current and former premiers in relation to this issue. I recognise the work of all ministers and the work of their departments in contributing to the delivery of this Australian-first trial.

### **Risdon Prison - Custodial Inspector's Report**

**Ms HADDAD to MINISTER for CORRECTIONS, Ms ARCHER**

[10.54 a.m.]

A leaked custodial inspector's report into Risdon Prison paints an incredibly damning picture of the Corrections System under your watch. It makes a mockery of your claim to be tough on crime. The system is on the brink of collapse, with this report revealing that 46 per cent of staff in the prison system have been making workers compensation claims; unsafe levels of overtime; and several extremely concerning allegations of unlawful treatment of staff.

The Custodial Inspector has made 64 recommendations but you have not yet addressed any of them. One of the most concerning observations is that the process of calculating prisoner sentencing is manually cumbersome and this has resulted in errors occurring with some prisoner releases. This is made all the more damning by the fact that this same issue was raised in a custodial inspector's report last year. This second report's findings suggest you have done absolutely nothing in the meantime about prisoners being released early as a result of your negligence. What immediate actions have you now taken to ensure prisoners are not wrongly released into the community?

### **ANSWER**

Madam Speaker, it is a draft report. It was leaked. It has not actually been delivered to my department. The member is calling on me to address recommendations I have not yet formally received from the Custodial Inspector. I remind members opposite that we would not have a Custodial Inspectorate if it was not for our Government. It was not your government -

**Ms O'Byrne** - That does not mean you can ignore the report, minister.

**Ms ARCHER** - I am not saying that. We developed the Office of the Custodial Inspector. Madam Speaker, it is impossible to answer questions with the constant harping from Ms O'Byrne opposite. You know you are getting under their skin when they cannot handle hearing the fact that it was not their government that did the work in Corrections. In fact they went to the last election and did not even offer one additional correctional officer. They just ran the system into the ground and did not invest in our correctional system at all.

Our Government, on the other hand, invested \$350 million into infrastructure and constant recruitment of correctional officers to ensure we have the additional staff to meet the issues we have with overtime and workers compensation. Nobody says this is easy. Our Corrections system was left in an absolute shambles -

**Ms O'CONNOR** - Point of order, Madam Speaker. That is actually untrue. The minister is misleading the House. The Corrections system was in good shape. Recidivism was down. People were not triple-bunking at Risdon Prison. The prison was not overflowing when RPC was handed over to this Government.

**Madam SPEAKER** - Thank you, but that is not a point of order.

**Ms ARCHER** - I can understand the Leader of the Greens taking offence to that because the former minister was a Greens minister.

**Members** interjecting.

**Madam SPEAKER** - Order. If you are not going to allow the minister to respond to your accusations I will have to ask her to sit down, so I think you should allow her to respond.

**Ms ARCHER** - Everybody knows that the former corrections minister was a Greens minister so that particularly gets under Ms O'Connor's skin. He was responsible for closing a prison. They closed Hayes prison.

**Ms O'BYRNE** - Point of order, Madam Speaker, under standing order 45, relevance. A very serious question has been asked not only about the leaked report but the report that was produced a year ago, last year, and the minister has not yet addressed the things she has done to ensure that prisoners are not wrongly released into the community.

**Madam SPEAKER** - That is not a point of order either but I have allowed it on *Hansard*.

**Ms ARCHER** - Madam Speaker, it is impossible to address a question straight away when the question is loaded with misleading statements and mistruths. I am simply setting the record straight that the position of Custodial Inspector would not exist if it was not for our Government. We created that so we could identify the problems in our Corrections system to address them. The very purpose of the Custodial Inspectorate is so that we can improve the Corrections system, which I was establishing was left in a complete shambles by the last government.

The safety, security, and the health and wellbeing of our Tasmanian Prison Service, our staff, our inmates and the visitors is of the highest priority for our Government. The Government has not yet received the draft report. As Ms Haddad said, it was a leaked report that they are choosing to rely on. Claims that are being reported by the media are concerning and that is why I have said we will do everything possible to address the recommendations. Everybody deserves the right to work in a safe environment and we will make it a priority to ensure challenges cited in the report are addressed.

It is important to remember that prior to the election there was no Custodial Inspector to provide this advice or to monitor service provision. We created the role so that we could do that and improve our prison service and identify what needed fixing. Hence our policies,

including \$350 million for infrastructure. By the end of this year we will have put on an additional 200 correctional officers since May 2016 and that goes to the direct question Ms Haddad had. That will address overtime and it does address rostering issues.

**Mr O'Byrne** - No, it doesn't.

**Ms ARCHER** - Nobody said that was easy but you cannot do it without resources, Mr O'Byrne. You cannot do it when you sack police officers - 108 you were responsible for, so to be lectured by that side of the House on this particular issue is truly galling.

**Ms WHITE** - Point of order, Madam Speaker, under standing order 45, relevance. I ask you to please draw the minister's attention to the question, which is what immediate action she has taken to ensure that prisoners are not wrongly released into the community.

**Madam SPEAKER** - I do think that is a point of relevance so I ask the minister to try to address it.

**Ms ARCHER** - Madam Speaker, with regard to workers compensation claims, there is an employee assistance program available that we have instigated for all staff and for additional staff that have been recently allocated to improve the management of workers' compensation claims and to support staff to recover and return to work as soon as possible.

The department's increased resources in the workplace health and safety and workers compensation management teams placed its workers compensation team at the Risdon Prison itself. We have put in place TPS staff, welfare officers and are exploring a TPS-specific staff support and wellbeing program. We have expanded TasTAFE education programs for our inmates. In relation to staff shortages, I have said we will have in excess of an additional 200 correctional officers by the end of this year. Recruitment courses are occurring despite COVID-19 -

**Ms O'Byrne** - You are disrespecting the Speaker's ruling.

**Ms ARCHER** - I am addressing the question, Madam Speaker.

**Madam SPEAKER** - No, you were not addressing the question that was asked last.

**Ms O'Byrne** - Madam Speaker, that is the point I was going to make. You ruled in favour of the point of order and the minister is ignoring the ruling.

**Madam SPEAKER** - Okay. The minister has now had about six minutes. I know there were a lot of interruptions, minister, so I am sorry about that, but I will draw this to a close and go to another question.

### **Teddy Sheean - Awarding of the Victoria Cross**

**Mr TUCKER to MINISTER for VETERANS' AFFAIRS, Mr BARNETT**

[11.03 a.m.]

Can you provide an update on Ordinary Seaman Edward (Teddy) Sheean and further plans to see this exceptional Tasmanian honoured?

## ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the member for his question and special interest in this matter. I make a special acknowledgement in the Chamber today of Ray Will, secretary of the Latrobe RSL and a 20-year Navy veteran. It is wonderful to have you in the Chamber on this special occasion.

**Members** - Hear, hear.

**Mr BARNETT** - Ordinary Seaman Edward (Teddy) Sheean was anything but ordinary. He demonstrated extraordinary bravery in the face of overwhelming odds. Teddy was just 18 when he died on the HMAS *Armidale* on 1 December 1942. He refused the chance to board a lifeboat while his ship was sinking, returned to his Oerlikon gun and went down with the ship while defending his shipmates from enemy attack.

Teddy Sheean's bravery will be honoured with a posthumous Victoria Cross, following the recommendation by the Prime Minister Scott Morrison to the Governor-General, which was accepted by Her Majesty, the Queen, last week. Teddy's Victoria Cross will be the 101st awarded to an Australian, the 15th Victoria Cross for a Tasmanian and the first ever for the Royal Australian Navy.

Teddy's VC comes after 32 years of advocacy by Garry Ivory on behalf of the Sheean family and today I pay tribute to Garry Ivory, the nephew of Teddy Sheean. Thank you, Garry, for spearheading this campaign for the last 32 years. You deserve the tribute we are giving to you today. It has been an honour for me to be involved in supporting Garry and the family these past 17 years. Although Garry cannot be here today for personal reasons he wanted me to pass on his thanks, not just to this chamber and the Tasmanian parliament but to the Tasmanian people. I do that on behalf of Garry Ivory today.

Garry, on behalf of the Sheean family, has already indicated that Teddy's Victoria Cross will be donated to the Australian War Memorial in Canberra so that it can be shared by all Australians. That is a very generous act.

**Members** - Hear, hear.

**Mr BARNETT** - I support the family's desire for Teddy's Victoria Cross to be placed on display in Tasmania but I note that there are very serious and important security arrangements around that. These protocols are still to be agreed.

Now is the right time to further consider how best to honour Tasmania's most recent Victoria Cross recipient. Following discussions with the Sheean family and the local federal member, Gavin Pearce, I can advise that a life-size statue will be erected in Latrobe of Teddy Sheean, VC. It will be similar the one erected for Harry Murray, VC, in Evandale and unveiled by the Governor-General in February 2006.

I have also written to the federal government asking that when the Collins Class submarine, HMAS *Sheean*, is decommissioned that it is then gifted to Tasmania and relocated to Latrobe. This will be a great opportunity to recognise Latrobe, where Teddy grew up, and also provide a fantastic tourism opportunity and an educational opportunity for the region.

Additionally, the merits of a Teddy Sheean scholarship and an education package with information on Teddy has also been considered. We are encouraging the Royal Australian Navy to facilitate a visit of the HMAS *Sheean* to the Port of Devonport when able. I will also be working on the fifth edition of my book *Our Heroes - Tasmania's Victoria Cross Recipients*, with a special chapter on Teddy Sheean.

Together with Garry Ivory, I welcome feedback from members of the public on how we can honour Teddy Sheean, our Tasmanian and Australian hero.

I thank the Prime Minister for his support and acknowledge the federal Minister for Veterans Affairs, Darren Chester, who supported our efforts every step of the way. Thank you to the federal Tasmanian Liberal team, with a special shout-out to Gavin Pearce, local member and returned serviceman. Thank you to RSL Tasmania, the Naval Association of Australia, Senator Jacqui Lambie, and many others across all the sides of the political divide, plus all the sides in this parliament and in the federal parliament and elsewhere at local government. Thank you to all members of the community across the decades for your support.

Finally, to Dr Ray Leonard, the only remaining survivor of the HMAS *Armidale*, who still lives in Melbourne with his wife, Beryl. He is 97 years of age, Beryl is 92. They have been married for 76 years. He has been determined all the way to support Teddy Sheean to get a VC. I pay tribute to Ray. Thank you for your service and for never giving up your quest to support Teddy on behalf of your shipmates.

To all Tasmanians, the Royal Australian Navy and the veteran community, we are immensely proud of this extraordinary young man. Teddy sends us the story of courage, of mateship and of sacrifice. I say justice for Teddy. Lest we forget.

### **Corrections Amendment (Prisoner Remission) Bill 2018**

**Ms HADDAD to MINISTER for CORRECTIONS, Ms ARCHER**

[11.09 a.m.]

You have played shameless politics with the issue of prisoner remissions for years. You have used this issue repeatedly to desperately cover up tragic failures in the prison system. It is typical of your Government's approach to give the appearance of action, to make promises to people but never follow through.

You first introduced a bill to abolish remissions in 2017 but never brought it on for debate. In 2018 you introduced the Corrections Amendment (Prisoner Remission) Bill 2018, which was passed through this House more than two years ago. You then delayed debate for a full year before that bill was finally passed by the upper House in September last year. It is now almost another whole year since the bill was given Royal Assent on 2 October 2019.

Given your previous comments about the urgency and importance of this issue to you, can you explain why this law has not yet been enacted?

### **ANSWER**

Madam Speaker, it is also another surprising question from the Opposition, particularly Ms Haddad, when they kept voting a different way on this. When that bill, from recollection,

went through this House, Labor did not support it in this House. In the upper House Labor members did support it. They are flip-flopping on this as well. I am a little confused.

**Ms Haddad** - Do you support it?

**Ms ARCHER** - Of course I do. There is quite a bit of work that goes into dealing with the phasing out of remissions. As we know COVID-19 also has had a significant impact on the Tasmania Prison Service. I would not expect members to understand the full extent of what needs to occur in the prison environment. For privacy reasons I do not talk about the prisoner issues and what goes on in that environment.

**Members** interjecting

**Madam SPEAKER** - Order.

**Ms ARCHER** - I confirm that we have not had any positive cases of COVID-19. I take this opportunity to thank the hard-working staff of the Tasmania Prison Service. The nub of this issue is that we would have liked this to have been dealt with a lot earlier. There needs to be preparation in place, not least for prisoners who might be eligible for consideration of remissions. Remissions is not a right in our prison system. It is something that is still at the discretion of the Director of Prisons.

**Members** interjecting.

**Ms ARCHER** - Currently under the Corrections Act 1997 a prisoner can be granted remission of up to three months of their individual sentence. The phasing out of this does need to be taken into consideration.

**Members** interjecting.

**Ms ARCHER** - I confirm the Government's commitment to the proclamation -

**Ms OGILVIE** - Point of order, Madam Speaker. The constant interjections make it very hard to hear what is being said in the Chamber. I draw your attention to it.

**Madam SPEAKER** - Thank you, I had noticed.

**Ms ARCHER** - It is not surprising that half the time they do not acknowledge the answer to a question because they do not hear it. I have just confirmed the Government's absolute commitment to this. I have also confirmed the delay and the need to phase this in appropriately for the prisoners.

**Opposition members** interjecting.

**Madam SPEAKER** - Order please.

**Ms ARCHER** - There has been small thing such as global pandemic. The passage of bills through this place do not always occur in close succession because other urgent matters occur. We have had COVID-19. Members know there are certain things throughout the

process of a bill's passage through parliament which causes us to part debate things and then debate things.

They are clearly not interested in anything that is said in response to this. I fully expect that they are going to issue some silly media release even though I am unequivocally stating that the Government is absolutely committed that remissions will be brought in. The other side does not want to acknowledge that the Tasmania Prison Service has been dealing with a global pandemic. That is the cause of the delay.

### **Climate Change Research - Jobs and the Economy**

**Mr ELLIS to MINISTER for CLIMATE CHANGE, Mr GUTWEIN**

[11.14 a.m.]

Can you update the House on how the Government is supporting climate change research locally to grow the economy and to create jobs?

#### **ANSWER**

Madam Speaker, I thank Mr Ellis for the question. I am pleased to see you in the House.

Before I start, on indulgence, I say to Mr Barnett that for nearly two decades you have fought the Teddy Sheean fight. I am proud of the work you have done. You have been resolute in your approach to this. While you were very graceful in thanking many people, the work that you have done should be acknowledged.

**Ms O'Connor** - Gracious, maybe not so graceful.

**Mr GUTWEIN** - Gracious, thank you.

We are a leader in Tasmania on climate change; something that is not often acknowledged by the Greens as it should be. We have achieved net zero emissions for four years in a row. The most recent data from 2018 indicates that our emissions are 111 per cent lower than they were in 1990.

As we continue to manage and rebuild from COVID-19, we are focused on growing jobs in those areas that we have a competitive advantage, doubling our renewable energy production, exporting clean hydrogen as outlined in the Government's action plan and reducing Tasmania's emissions even further.

Capturing the economics benefits as a result of our response to climate change includes renewable energy, hydrogen, electric and hybrid vehicles and clean industry. Project Marinus and Battery of the Nation are important projects in our recovery plans. They will generate billions of dollars in investment and thousands of jobs in Tasmania. Climate action is good economic policy that plays to our strengths.

The Government is also adapting to climate change and its risk. This includes a nation-leading fuel reduction program. We know that the windows to apply that program are getting

smaller. That is why we are bringing forward new legislation, which will come into the House later this year to improve preparation for bushfire and risk reduction. As well, in coming months we are focusing on a review of the Climate Change (State Action) Act; a review our future emissions profile to determine if we can achieve our emissions reduction target earlier than 2050; and we are developing a new whole-of-government climate action plan as well.

We are investing into electric vehicle charging infrastructure, ready for when electric vehicles are widespread. Our Government's charge smart program is stimulating over \$2.5 million of investment into new statewide charging infrastructure supporting jobs right around the state. Just this week two ultra-fast 15 minute, 350 kilowatt charging stations were installed in Campbell Town. I am pleased that I will have more to say in coming weeks about new charging infrastructure in the Huon Valley and in Hobart as well. We need to continue reducing our transport emissions and this Government will lead by example.

Around 5 per cent of vehicles currently in the government fleet are now hybrids. We only have a few electrics. As a next step the ministerial fleet will transition to include four hybrid vehicles over the next two years. I will be the first Tasmanian Premier to have travelled by hybrid. We will also be extending the opportunity to the Leader of the Opposition, should she wish to have a hybrid vehicle as well as part of this transition. As I said earlier this year, in the upcoming Budget we will lay out an ambitious target for electric and hybrid vehicles across the government fleet and a road map to get there.

In the last four years we have experienced significant natural disasters, including two significant bushfire events and the worst state flooding seen in 40 years. In coming years, we will likely face longer fire seasons, more variable rainfall and higher temperatures. It is important that we respond.

The future's climate challenge is real. Today I am pleased to announce that we have a number of successful recipients of the Tasmanian Government's Climate Research Grants Program with \$750 000 in grant funding going toward 16 research projects to improve our understanding of our future climate so we can better manage the risks and we can better capture the opportunities.

The funding will stimulate over \$1.4 million in climate research and it builds on our world-class capability at the Institute of Marine and Antarctic Studies, UTAS and CSIRO here in Tasmania. The Climate Research Grants Program will support Tasmanian businesses, industry and the community through research on risks and opportunities for key industries, biosecurity, bushfires and health impacts. Some of the research projects, and I will not run through them all, are: fire regimes for planned burns being conducted by UTAS; carbon reduction strategies by Dairy Tas; marine heatwave risks to aquaculture by IMAS; and one that I think will resonate with our tourism industries is Tasmania's future as a carbon neutral destination, a project and research that will be run by the Tourism Industry Council of Tasmania. A full list of the recipients will be available online.

As I said we need to continue to invest in science and innovation as we recover to grow the economy and create the jobs. I am pleased that the research grants announced will enable us to do that.



## **Prisoners Released on Remission**

**Ms HADDAD to ATTORNEY-GENERAL, Ms ARCHER**

[11.20 a.m.]

The coronial inquest into the death of North Hobart shopkeeper, Voula Delios, is as tragic as it is damning of the systemic failures of the prison system under your watch. It is clear from reading the coroner's report that Daryl Cook was deeply and dangerously unwell and should never have been let out onto the street. The report reveals systemic problems from the moment he entered the prison system to the moment he was released. Coroner Cooper said -

Mr Cook was released into the community suffering from a serious but untreated mental illness, and while suffering from that illness he killed Mrs Delios. He was released early, having been granted a remission for good behaviour, when his behaviour had been the antithesis of good. He was released with, in effect, no support at all.

He went on to say -

All of these factors seem to me, at least, to have been factors which individually, and collectively, contributed to the circumstances which led to Mrs Delios' shocking, tragic and needless death.

Our hearts go out to the family of Voula Delios, who have been forced to live with this unimaginable pain of losing a loved one in the most shocking of circumstances.

As minister, what responsibility do you take for the systemic failures that led to the early release of Daryl Cook? What are you doing right now to ensure a tragedy like this is never allowed to happen again?

### **ANSWER**

Madam Speaker, I begin by extending my sincere sympathies, as well as the Government's deepest sympathies to the family and friends of Mrs Voula Delios.

The Government notes the release of the coroner's comments following the investigation into the tragic death of Mrs Delios. We are carefully considering the coroner's comments to determine whether any further action to that already being undertaken is appropriate. I acknowledge that the coroner has acknowledged that there has been a significant amount of work that has been done in the interim.

The Tasmanian Prison Service is continuing to work to improve support provided to people released from custody. This is a shared responsibility, with the mental health component of our service at Tasmania Prison Service.

In September 2018, the departments of Justice and Health established the Prisoner Mental Health Care Taskforce. It was my initiation, with the then Minister for Health, for that taskforce to be formed immediately so that what could be undertaken, and what occurred, was

a robust review of processes and procedures relating to prisoners' psychiatric care and assessments and prisoner discharges to identify options for ensuring that these processes are as vigorous as they can be.

Implementation of the 19 recommendations from the taskforce itself is well underway, with many in the final stages of implementation. For example, Correctional Primary Health Services, the Health Service within the Corrections System, delivered by the Department of Health, in negotiation with the Tasmania Prison Service, was able to effectively double the time for which the prison hospital is open to see patients. Multidisciplinary team meetings have been introduced to identify prisoners with particular mental health needs and mechanisms for ensuring those needs are met. Work is also being undertaken on an updated service level agreement in relation to the provision of health services in the prison. Regular multidisciplinary team meetings comprising Correctional Primary Health Services, and Tasmania Prison Service personnel will continue dealing with these processes and procedures.

As we know, the offender involved had been released on remissions. We have abolished those. In my last answer, I explained to the House the delay in that regard and our absolute commitment to it. The legislation removes eligibility for remission of sentences for all offenders yet to be sentenced to the date of commencement. The legislation will certainly be proclaimed by the end of this year.

I remind members of this House of the seriousness of this case. Immediate action was taken by the Government between the Department of Health and Tasmania Prison Service through the Department of Justice. Those recommendations have been delivered now by the task force with the relevant experts on that, including the Chief Psychiatrist, and I have asked that task force to remain intact and have regular meetings.

**Time expired.**

## **CORRECTIONS AMENDMENT (ELECTRONIC MONITORING) BILL 2020 (No. 27)**

### **First Reading**

Bill presented by **Ms Archer** and read the first time.

### **SPEAKER'S WARRANT**

#### **Deputy Chair of Committees - Appointment of Mr Ellis**

**Madam SPEAKER** - Pursuant to Standing Order 14, I hereby nominate the member for Braddon, Mr Ellis, to act as Deputy Chair of Committees in the absence of, and when requested to do so, by the Chair of Committees.

Given under my hand this day, 20 August 2020.

## **MOTION**

### **Committee Membership**

[11.28 a.m.]

**Mr FERGUSON** (Bass - Leader of Government Business - Motion) (by leave) - Madam Speaker, I move -

That -

- (a) The honourable member for Braddon, Mr Ellis, be appointed to serve on the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works in pursuance of section 4(2) of the Public Works Committee Act 1914 (No. 32);
- (b) The honourable member for Franklin, Mr Street, be appointed to serve on the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Accounts in pursuance of section 3(3) of the Public Accounts Committee Act 1970 (No. 54); and
- (c) The honourable member for Braddon, Mr Ellis, be appointed to serve on the Joint Committee of both Houses to manage the Library in place of the honourable member for Franklin, Mr Street.

Madam Speaker, I put on record my appreciation for our departed member, Joan Rylah, on behalf of her constituency of Braddon. She was a great friend of mine in this place and I think we should say good things about people who have served our House and parliament and this is my opportunity to do that. She served this House with distinction and worked on issues that were of importance to her community.

I also again welcome Mr Ellis to the House and thank him and Mr Tucker and Mr Street for their willingness to serve on these committees on behalf of us all in this House. They have a task in front of them and the simple reality is that these committees are important for the functioning of our House. I wish them well and thank them for their service.

**Motion agreed to.**

## **MATTER OF PUBLIC IMPORTANCE**

### **Threatened Species in Tasmania**

[11.31 a.m.]

**Dr WOODRUFF** (Franklin - Motion) - Madam Speaker, I move -

That the House take notice of the following matter: threatened species in Tasmania.

The world including Australia and Tasmania is confronting a wildlife extinction crisis. It has been the subject of extensive scientific research and it is now well documented that we

are running out of time to protect habitat and species that are under threat around the world because of human activities.

Forests and the life that they sustain must be maintained for their intrinsic value and for the complexity of the web of life that sustains us human beings, our survival, our happiness, our spiritual wellbeing and our very essence of life.

Threatened species and species protection under this Government has been woefully poor at best. It has been moribund, essentially. We have had a series of Environment ministers that seem to be directly given the task of doing what they can to unstitch the protections that have been in place in Tasmania, poor as they have been, and things have got worse under this Liberal Government. What we have seen over the last six years is an attempt to try to spin a reality, one which pretends to be protecting species, while at the same time opening the doors even wider to development in national park and World Heritage areas, trashing places of global intrinsic value like takayna/Tarkine and attacks on the habitat and feeding opportunities for threatened species across the state.

In an attempt to try to gain some credibility on the national stage and get back global markets and consumer confidence and the confidence of the Tasmanian public, Forestry Tasmania, the Government's logging GBE, has been trying for the last six years in vain to get Forest Stewardship Council certification. The audit that is done to get FSC - and one was done in 2014 and another one was done last year - is really the only possible independent assessment we can have in this space of how this Government is tracking on its failure to protect rare and threatened and endangered species in Tasmania.

Forestry Tasmania's activities are essentially opaque to Tasmanians. All we can see is the reality of what is logged. All we can see are the coupes not standing that once housed habitat for swift parrots, Tasmanian devils, grey goshawks, masked owls and so many other beautiful species, including giant blue lobsters. We had an FSC report that was undertaken last year and we now know that the report was finalised in February and the Greens and conservationists have been asking: 'where is that report?' since then. The Government sat on it for six months. We put in a Right to Information request last Wednesday, and late on Friday we had a media release talking about a PAMA arrangement, which is a Public Authority Management Agreement, between two government departments - Primary Industries, Parks, Water and Environment, and Forestry Tasmania. This was an attempt to provide the latest veil of protection for the swift parrot and over the logging activities in southern forests. If you lift the veil you will see the same death and destruction underneath, and the same tragic clear-felling of known swift parrot nesting and breeding habitat. After our staff members spent the whole of yesterday running around various government departments trying to access this document, the PAMA, we can see it is nothing more than another document that pretends to be doing something when the Government is in effect doing nothing.

We know swift parrots do not reuse the nests within a three-year period. They do not fly from the mainland to Tasmania and use the same nest and eat food from the same trees every year. The Government has chosen to protect areas that it has identified in the southern forests. The whole of south-eastern Tasmania, according to the Government's own maps, is identified swift parrot nesting and breeding habitat. The whole of the East Coast and the southern forests ought to be protected. Instead, the PAMA selects a tiny area in the southern forests and seeks to set aside those places which are already essentially unavailable for logging. We are talking

about Bruny Island which has not been logged now for some time. This is part of what has been included on the map.

Forestry Tasmania has given itself a 'get out of jail card'. If it sights a swift parrot in an area that has been logged, it must cease logging activities within 50 metres until the department makes a decision about whether operations can proceed in accordance with the agreement. If the department makes no decision, then logging operations can proceed at the next breeding season. It is a joke. It is not serious, and it will not help to protect the swift parrot or other animals.

**Time expired.**

[11.38 a.m.]

**Mr JAENSCH** (Braddon - Minister for Environment, Parks and Heritage) - Mr Deputy Speaker, I am very pleased as minister for Environment, the minister responsible for threatened species, to speak on this matter of public importance. I thank Dr Woodruff for bringing it on.

We are very proud of PAMA - the new Public Authority Management Agreement - for the management of potential swift parrot nesting habitat on permanent timber production-zoned land in the southern forests. It was referred to there as an insignificant commitment, but it involves the exclusion of almost 10 000 hectares of swift parrot potential nesting habitat from wood production on land managed by Sustainable Timber Tasmania. Importantly, the precautionary approach of not harvesting on STT-managed land on Bruny Island is also maintained, recognising that it is an area free from introduced sugar gliders which are a threat to the species, and therefore it is a critical breeding base for the species. That signed PAMA will be available on the STT website shortly. It is not something you need to be running around to find. It is certainly not hidden.

Tasmania has a very strong set of environmental laws to manage sustainable developments and protect our natural and cultural heritage. Among a suite of natural resource management legislation, we have the Threatened Species Protection Act 1995, the Nature Conservation Act 2002 and the Whales Protection Act 1988 that all contain specific provisions to manage threatened species and threatened native vegetation communities.

In addition to state laws, the Commonwealth Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1995 (EPBC) provides a legal framework to protect and manage nationally important flora, fauna, ecological communities and heritage places. The EPBC Act defines matters of national environmental significance, which include a list of nationally threatened species and ecological communities and migratory species.

Any group or individual whose actions may have a significant impact on a matter of national environmental significance needs to seek approval under that act. We are confident that the provisions of the EPBC provide -

**Ms O'Connor** - Until you people stitch it up and make it a one-shop stop.

**Mr JAENSCH** - A one-shop stop? An additional layer of assessment and approval that ensures our threatened species are appropriately managed.

There are currently 680 flora and fauna species listed under the Tasmanian Threatened Species Protection Act 1995. Of these, currently over 170 species found in Tasmania are

covered by a recovery plan. The development and review of these plans is carefully prioritised. The process of review and development of a new wedgetail eagle recovery plan is now underway.

The Tasmanian Government's investment in the protection and management of threatened species is significant, ongoing and highly integrated. In the Natural and Cultural Heritage division alone, the daily business of more than 30 staff is dedicated to the conservation of threatened species. I thank them for their very important work.

This includes the orange-bellied parrot program, the Save the Tasmanian Devil program and the threatened species and private land conservation section. Other staff in the Natural and Cultural Heritage division monitor threatened species in the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area. More than 300 staff are employed by the Tasmanian Parks and Wildlife Service to play a vital role in managing habitat for threatened species across our reserve estate, as well as ensuring visitors to our parks and reserves are well educated and behave in a manner that is respectful and protective of the values of those unique assets.

There has been some news this week about the orange-bellied parrots. We are committed to investing in efforts to help save the orange-bellied parrot, which is why we have committed \$2.5 million to develop a fit-for-purpose facility at Five Mile Beach to double Tasmania's captive breeding capacity and to help maintain a viable insurance population in the long term.

We also continue to undertake a range of innovative, on-ground management and recovery actions in the species' sole breeding grounds in the remote south west of Tasmania. These Tasmanian efforts are essential for preventing extinction in the wild of this critically endangered species, while we continue to work with interstate partners to identify and address causes of mortality during migration and the time orange-bellied parrots spend over winter on the mainland.

Recent research confirms the value of the ongoing conservation efforts here, including supplementation using captive bred birds and on ground management actions at the breeding grounds in south west Tasmania.

The research undertaken by the ANU shows that despite improved breeding successes, around 80 per cent of juveniles still die during the migration and over winter in other states further north, post migration. This highlights more than ever the importance of working with our partners on the conservation and recovery of the species.

We are an integral member of the national recovery team that oversees a collaborative, adaptive management focus to recovery effort for the species across the breeding and migratory range, drawing on expertise from a range of disciplines and jurisdictions.

We contribute to the program through significant investment. In addition to the new breeding facility, the department leads a range of management recovery actions for the wild population, including seasonal monitoring, enhancement of breeding and foraging habitat, captive release to the wild program, consisting of spring release of adult birds and release of juveniles in late summer.

Despite COVID-19 challenges towards the end of the season, 2019-20 was arguably one of the more successful seasons in recent times, with a record number of fledglings produced at

the Five Mile Beach facility and a collaborative release campaign at Melaleuca resulting in the biggest flock in many years, with over 100 individuals departing on their migration to the mainland in April and May.

We and our recovery team partners are looking forward to the start of the breeding season in spring to learn how many orange-bellied parrots have survived the return journey to the mainland to breed. There is still a long way to go but we are committed to supporting the complex and innovative efforts to save the orange-bellied parrot. That is an example of just one of the threatened species our department and Government are committed to saving.

[11.45 a.m.]

**Ms STANDEN** (Franklin) - Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise on behalf of the Opposition in relation to this MPI on threatened species. In the first sitting week of parliament after a winter recess where the state has been absorbed with matters of COVID-19 recovery, economic and social recovery and how we can all do our best to support our community through this disaster, of all things threatened species has not been highest -

**Ms O'Connor** - Do you want to be any more obvious about the fact that you do not give a shit about these animals?

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** - Ms O'Connor, please. Unparliamentary.

**Ms O'Connor** - I know.

**Ms STANDEN** - I care about threatened species in this state.

**Ms O'Connor** - Keep wringing your hands, Ms Standen.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** - Ms O'Connor, please.

**Ms STANDEN** - What do you expect me to do, Leader of the Greens?

**Ms O'Connor** - Just wring your hands. It is what you do best.

**Dr Woodruff** - Try to say something that is not political for once.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** - And Dr Woodruff. You were heard in silence. Please afford the member the same.

**Ms STANDEN** - This speaks to trust in Government. This is really what we are talking about. It speaks to the ability of a stretched public service, particularly under these extraordinary circumstances, to walk and chew gum. I have, within my shadow portfolios of Environment, Parks and Heritage, been more focused recently in the area of Heritage Tasmania. There have been very serious issues around bullying and a culture change process that has taken more than 12 months to address, arising from the under resourcing and extraordinary pressure Heritage Tasmania was under since 2014. It speaks to the inability of this Government to walk and chew gum, to pay attention to those important functions of government that must continue irrespective of the focus on the current pandemic.

It also speaks to the priority of the Greens who, let us face it in relation to forestry, would go to any length to stop progress and to reignite old fights. In my electorate, in the permanent production zone of forestry in Castle Forbes Bay there has been a fear campaign whipped up within the community, for something that might or might not happen two or three years down the track. The veil is around threatened species but let us call it for what it is. This is an effort to stop progress and to whip up fear within the community.

I want to talk about the strain on the public service. DPIPWE in particular has been under particular pressure of late with high-profile issues regarding the issuing of exemptions for essential travellers, duck shooting, parks and EOI processes. This speaks to the trust that people have in its government to be able to uphold the laws in this state.

One thing of concern to me, I did identify that there is a threatened species strategy for Tasmania, and although I haven't read it in detail -

**Ms O'Connor** - Of course you haven't.

**Ms STANDEN** - Have you?

**Ms O'Connor** - No, it is Dr Woodruff's portfolio, and she will have read it.

**Ms STANDEN** - Although I am not poking holes in the document, the minister says there are 30 staff dedicated to threatened species protection. This document was prepared in 2000 and a review is well overdue. Dr Woodruff is quite right in identifying that as a concern, and it must be a concern to the hardworking staff within the Department of Primary Industries, Parks, Water and Environment, and conservation areas for that matter. I am sure those hardworking people would like to see a review and update of an area that needs attention for the 680 or so threatened species of plants and animals within Tasmania.

Wombat mange is one thing that has come across my radar in recent times - a sad scourge on a beautiful species. Some 80 per cent or 90 per cent of the wombat population in the narawntapu National Park has been wiped out. I understand there are programs and collaborative efforts with the university to address that particular issue. The Greens are right about this. For these sorts of species that are so very precious to us in Tasmania, we only get one chance to ensure protection. Once they are wiped out, that is it. We do not get another chance. The wedge-tailed eagle is a beautiful, majestic species.

The community is demanding the protection of these threatened species right across the state and we all need to do more. Action on climate change - legitimate, strong action on climate change - is a good place to start -

**Time expired.**

[11.52 a.m.]

**Ms O'CONNOR** (Clark - Leader of the Greens) - Mr Deputy Speaker, the reason we brought on this matter of public importance debate is that we can walk and chew gum at the same time. We have certainly been asking questions, raising issues in relation to the Government's COVID-19 response, but we are also able to come into this place and do our jobs as Green MPs and speak up for rare, threatened, and endangered species in Tasmania, as we should. If we do not raise these issues, as matters of public importance, no one will.



I wanted to go back to something the minister said earlier about the EPBC Act and remind him that the independent Samuel Review of the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act found, and this was only handed down two weeks ago, that 80 per cent of federal environmental approvals were non-compliant or contained errors.

This is the Australian Audit Office, saying the Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment has failed in its duty to implement sound regulation to protect Australia's unique wildlife. This is a process that is already failing, and yet you have the Morrison and Gutwein governments talking about signing up to a one-stop shop approval process. Not an assessment process. An approval process. If we had that in place when the pulp mill was on the table, we would have a pulp mill in the Tamar Valley, and we would have a canal estate in Ralphs Bay because it was the critically-endangered spotted handfish, protected under the EPBC Act, that finally, ultimately, helped us save that bay after years of hard slog.

So, having a one-stop approval should send a shudder of concern through every Tasmanian who wants to see our rare, threatened, and endangered species, not only protected but flourish.

We have here the Public Authority Management Agreement, which as Dr Woodruff said, our policy adviser spent most of yesterday trying to find, and interestingly, and the minister has not addressed this, this agreement is undated. Zero date. It is signed by the Acting Secretary of DPIPW because the secretary, Mr Baker, is on sick leave. That means that this document has been pulled together in somewhere less than a month. What this document confirms is that Sustainable Timber Tasmania is not even 'sustainable' in name only any more, because this makes it clear that Sustainable Timber Tasmania, or STT, means Forestry Tasmania being a corporation established pursuant to section 6 of the Forestry Act of 1920.

Even on the PAMA front page we have 'Forestry Tasmania', so it is an agreement between DPIPW and Forestry Tasmania - a corporation established pursuant to section 6 of the Forestry Act. We will never again call that dodgy entity Sustainable Timber Tasmania. It is Forestry Tasmania and that is what it will be known as herein.

There is no firm commencement date for this PAMA. It provides exemptions for the parties, and alarmingly, as Dr Woodruff pointed out but not enough people were listening at the time, this agreement makes clear that if a swift parrot is sighted within an operational area, all forest harvesting will cease within 50 metres of that area until further notice is obtained from the department as to whether operations can proceed in accordance with this agreement. If no decision has been made by the department by the end of the breeding season, operations may proceed before the next breeding season. There is your 'get out of not logging a forest free card'.

This Public Authority Management Agreement is not going to save the swift parrot and that was acknowledged in print by the auditors SCS Global in their rejection of Forestry Tasmania's FSC certification.

Mr Deputy Speaker, what we know is there was a PAMA that was talked about, and the auditors heard about the PAMA -

**Mr Jaensch** - When did they audit?

**Ms O'CONNOR** - The audit was handed to Government six months ago, and Forestry -

**Mr Jaensch** - So how could that auditor have taken -

**Ms O'CONNOR** - Forestry Tasmania sat on it for six months, they knew about a PAMA -

**Mr Jaensch** - How could the auditor be saying that the PAMA has no value like you assert?

**Ms O'CONNOR** - The PAMA has no value in protecting the species, which is what the auditors assert. The auditors say that it is not enough to protect the species.

**Mr Jaensch** - The audit was was before the PAMA.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - No, the audit was not before the PAMA. Minister, you need to get across your portfolio because the auditors knew that the PAMA was coming. They referred to it specifically in their audit report and they say it is not enough to protect the species. For what it is worth, this PAMA tells us that there are 40 000 hectares at a minimum of potential nesting habitat, core breeding range and potential nesting habit. And yet, not 10 000 hectares but 9300 hectares has been identified as an area in which there may or may not be logging because you have the escape clause in the Public Authority Management Agreement.

It is important that the House remembers we are not just talking about the swift parrot here, a species that is reduced to 1000 breeding pairs. We are talking about iconic, endemic species like the grey goshawk, the giant wedge-tailed eagle, the Tasmanian devil, the giant freshwater crayfish. Our forests are miraculous treasure troves of life, and under this government, and in fact successive majority governments in Tasmania, you have seen our beautiful high-conservation-value carbon-rich habitat-rich forests being trashed.

**Time expired.**

[11.59 a.m.]

**Mrs PETRUSMA** (Franklin) - Mr Deputy Speaker, I welcome the opportunity to respond to today's MPI. I congratulate the minister and his staff and all the hard-working members of the team of his department for all the excellent work they are doing and all the measures they are undertaking to enhance threatened species conservation in Tasmania.

As the minister quite clearly articulated, Tasmania has a very strong set of environmental laws to manage sustainable developments and to protect our natural and cultural heritage and I know the minister and his team are very committed to ensuring that they can do everything this Government can do within its powers to protect and enhance threatened species conservation in Tasmania.

I want to go back and reflect on some of the comments with regard to the swift parrot and to add a bit more to what the minister was saying before. The swift parrot is a major focus for this Government, especially the protection of the swift parrot. In response to the numerous threats faced by this species, the Tasmanian Government is implementing a whole-of-government approach to ensuring that management of swift parrot habitat in this state is

consistent and effective. This is building on actions we have undertaken previously to address threats to the swift parrot and its habitat.

This Government has provided \$150 000 to trial methods of trapping sugar gliders, which are a major threat to these birds, and this project has been successfully completed. These findings have also enabled Natural Resource Management (South) to leverage \$700 000 of Australian Government funding for further swift parrot conservation work over the next three years.

As Mr Jaensch has stated, we have also ensured that the swift parrot will be better protected, with almost 10 000 hectares of potential nesting habitat to be excluded from wood production. Sustainable Timber Tasmania and DPIPWE have recently signed the formal Public Authority Management Agreement for the management of potential swift parrot nesting habitat on permanent timber production zoned land in the Southern Forests. This landmark agreement outlines various measures to protect the swift parrot, including an exclusion of almost 10 000 hectares of potential nesting habitat from harvesting within land managed by Sustainable Timber Tasmania. Importantly, this precautionary approach of not harvesting on, for example, STT-managed land on Bruny Island within my own electorate of Franklin, recognises that this area is free from sugar gliders and is therefore critical breeding habitat.

The PAMA sets out the roles and obligations of DPIPWE and STT with regard to forestry operations on permanent timber production zoned land in the Southern Forests, which consists of 58 000 hectares of mature regrowth and regeneration forests. STT is also developing a swift parrot management plan for public production forests as part of a broader strategy of conservation for the swift parrot and the protection of swift parrot habitat was identified as part of STT's audit report for Forest Stewardship Council certification which is publicly available on the STT website.

The audit report noted that STT demonstrated an ethos of responsible management for and stewardship of a robust array of values and resources, that STT also demonstrated a culture of innovation and adaptive management through dedication to continuous improvement and that significant changes and improvements are recognised from 2014 to 2019. It also noted that STT met 93 per cent of the indicators required to achieve certification.

This Government is committed to a responsible and sustainable forest industry that protects our threatened species, while recognising the sector injects billions into the Tasmanian economy and provides thousands of jobs into our regional communities.

I am also advised that DPIPWE also works closely with the Commonwealth to ensure that research findings provide practical conservation benefits for the swift parrot and that conservation tools such as the Swift Parrot Recovery Plan are up to date. This plan is currently under review by the Australian Government.

Additionally, in the past three years staff from Minister Jaensch's department have worked with local governments, regional NRM organisations, Tasmania Police, STT and other stakeholders to tackle the problem of illegal firewood harvesting which has impacted several of the breeding sites.

I can assure members of this House that there are effective systems and procedures in place by the minister, by the Government and by the department to protect existing swift parrot habitat and to conserve the species.

With regard to eagle conservation, the Tasmanian Government takes the protection of our iconic eagle species seriously and is working closely with a wide range of stakeholders to minimise the risks to these majestic birds. This includes working with windfarm operators, TasNetworks, researchers, the EPA, the Forest Practices Authority and the Australian Government to ensure the best available technology and assistance is in place to mitigate the threats to these and other birds of prey. The Government is also committed to working alongside industry to identify evolving technologies to minimise impact on our eagles. Our Government has complete confidence in the expertise of the EPA to assess any windfarm proposals and to determine any conditions that are required to protect birdlife, including wedge-tailed eagles.

On top of this, the minister and his department have implemented a range of initiatives to enhance knowledge and protection of eagles, including undertaking surveys for eagle nests within the TWWHA, introducing legislation to significantly increase the penalties for anyone who deliberately kills an eagle and also funding support for Raptor Refuge to maintain its hotline to ensure as many injured birds as possible are rescued and successfully rehabilitated for release. The Government is also working with several organisations to support research and citizen science projects to improve our knowledge of eagle population size, distribution, behaviour and also to quantify threats to their survival.

The Government is also very aware of the strong community and stakeholder interest in the status of threatened Tasmanian eagles' recovery plan and the minister's department is developing a staged and consultative approach to reviewing the plan to evaluate progress against identified recovery actions, to review successes and lessons learned to date and also to identify any key gaps in knowledge that need to be addressed in preparation for updating the plan and other relevant conservation planning tools.

**Time expired.**

**Matter noted.**

## **COVID-19 DISEASE EMERGENCY (MISCELLANEOUS PROVISIONS) AMENDMENT (QUARANTINE DEBT RECOVERY) BILL 2020 (No. 29)**

### **Second Reading**

[12.07 p.m.]

**Mr JAENSCH** (Braddon - Minister for Human Services) - Mr Deputy Speaker, I move

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That the bill now be read a second time.

The Tasmanian Government has introduced tough border restrictions and mandatory hotel quarantine to manage the risk of importing COVID-19 into Tasmania. These measures have been crucial to containing the spread of the virus and to protecting the lives of Tasmanians.

In March 2020 the Premier introduced the COVID-19 Disease Emergency (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2020 which sets out measures to reduce the risks to the state

and the risk to hardship suffered by our community as a result of the spread of COVID-19 in Tasmania.

As we continue to rebuild a stronger Tasmania, we must continue to ensure that safeguards are in place to limit the spread of COVID-19 into Tasmania. Mandatory hotel quarantine remains one of the most effective measures to prevent the importation of COVID-19.

In July 2020, National Cabinet agreed to work towards a uniform model for charging for hotel quarantine across the country. Since that meeting, a model for charging for hotel quarantine is being progressively implemented by other states and territories.

Subsequent to national discussions, the Premier announced that the Tasmanian Government would start charging for hotel quarantine effective from 31 July 2020, except in certain circumstances. By limiting unnecessary and discretionary travel by introducing these fees, it is our hope that we can limit the spread of COVID-19 into Tasmania from affected regions.

Anyone coming into Tasmania and entering into government quarantine will no longer have the state pay their hotel expenses, but will be required to pay for their quarantine. Currently the requirement to quarantine in government-designated accommodation applies to Tasmanians travelling from affected regions such as Victoria and other non-essential travellers.

The COVID-19 Disease Emergency (Miscellaneous Provisions) Amendment (Quarantine Debt Recovery) Bill 2020 outlines the parameters for charging for hotel quarantine. New Part 6A of the bill sets out the mechanism for charging a person or family and the process through which the issuing of invoices and granting of any exemptions will occur. The secretary of the Department of Police, Fire and Emergency Management will be responsible for the decision-making within the Tasmanian Hotel Quarantine Payment Scheme. This will enable the scheme to run in accordance with the emergency management response.

Section 25B sets up the requirement to pay for hotel quarantine. It provides for the secretary to issue a Quarantine Debt Order to declare that a person or class of people to pay an amount of money for their quarantine. The secretary, or delegate, will also be responsible for making decisions with respect to issuing invoices to people and granting waivers or extensions to payment in certain circumstances.

Under the scheme, a person will be asked to pay an invoice which will outline the payment amount and due date, which is to be a minimum 30-day period. As announced publicly, the following fortnightly rates will apply:

- \$2800 for a single person;
- \$1000 for an additional person; and
- \$500 for an additional child.

There will be no charge for children under three years of age and accommodation charges will be capped at \$4800.

The bill provides for pro-rata payment and therefore these figures are reflected as daily rates. This approach is intended to allow for circumstances where a person or family may not be required to quarantine for the full 14-day period. The daily rates set out in the bill are as follows:

- \$200 for a single person;
- \$71.40 for an additional person; and
- \$35.70 for an additional child.

These payment amounts may be adjusted by the secretary, which is permitted by issuing an order under section 25C. This is designed to provide flexibility to adjust the fee for a range of circumstances, including increases or decreases in the associated costs to government. The charges do not reflect the entire cost for hotel accommodation and associated services.

Our Government recognises that there needs to be some exemptions to these fees in certain circumstances. We understand that people may need to undertake interstate travel for medical care or for compassionate reasons, and that others may be experiencing financial hardship or other exceptional circumstances.

This bill sets out two mechanisms for waiving and reducing the fees and seeking an alteration to the payment deadline. Firstly, section 25D provides that a person may apply for a certificate of exemption to seek an exemption to the fees, in full or in part, prior to their travel. Secondly, on receipt of an invoice, a person may apply for a waiver of all or part of the fees in an invoice or to alter the payment date specified in an invoice. Applications will be assessed on a case-by-case basis by the secretary or delegate.

The definition of 'hardship' has not been specifically defined in the bill but has been previously defined by the Government in the context of this pandemic in eligibility criteria for the Tasmanian Government's pandemic isolation assistance grants, and we use the same system here.

Section 25J provides for the delegation of certain decisions to the Deputy Commissioner or Assistant Commissioner under the Police Service Act 2003. This delegation is limited to the administrative decisions of the scheme pertaining to issuing invoices and granting waivers or extensions to people or families. This will enable a timely response to applicants. The authority to make orders under this legislation will be retained by the secretary.

This bill will commence on royal assent and apply to people quarantined from 31 July 2020. As we move from response to recovery it is crucial that we continue to prevent the importation of COVID-19 into Tasmania, particularly from high-risk areas. By introducing charging for hotel quarantine, the Tasmanian Government aims to discourage people from undertaking discretionary or non-time-sensitive travel from affected areas. This is vital to ensuring people travelling from restricted areas will either have a genuine need to travel, or be aware of their obligation to pay a fee towards their quarantine when they get here.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I commend the bill to the House.

[12.15 p.m.]

**Ms STANDEN** (Franklin) - Mr Deputy Speaker, I contribute on behalf of the Opposition on this bill, the quarantine debt recovery bill, which I note sits as an amendment to the COVID-19 disease emergency bill.

I begin with thanking the minister's office and the Department of Premier and Cabinet representatives, whom I see in the Advisers' box, for the briefing provided to me yesterday. There were a number of questions I raised within that briefing and I would like to go through some of them now.

Without criticising the people providing the briefing, who did the best job that they could, I thought it regrettable that the minister had not provided a representative from the Department of Communities Tasmania and/or the Department of Police, Fire and Emergency Management to contribute to the briefing. As I understand it, it is a rather complex arrangement in who is responsible for administering the act. I would like to go to some of that in terms of who is responsible for what. That probably explains why, whilst there were some answers to some of the questions that were raised, there are still a number of outstanding issues in my mind. I would like to proceed with those.

I understand that this bill arises from an agreement by National Cabinet on 10 July and that it aims to provide uniformity in terms of the model that is to be applied around charging for hotel quarantine. As outlined within the second reading speech, the minister has outlined the real intention of this bill and that is to provide a disincentive for people undertaking discretionary or non-time sensitive travel from affected areas.

From the outset I flag the problems that are inherent in dealing with retrospective legislation. In accordance with the National Cabinet, this agreement seeks to backdate the arrangements to 31 July. Already some time has elapsed. Had the Government seen fit to sit throughout the winter recess to deal with this and other matters that are arising throughout this pandemic then I note that that retrospectivity would not be necessary and could have avoided that mess, frankly, of the gap as we have identified in some other things like the rent relief scheme or some of the private rental protections that come to mind.

Could the minister clarify how the timing sits within the COVID-19 disease emergency bill? It is not entirely clear in my mind from the second reading speech, fact sheet or the bill itself. It talks about this bill being repealed on the first anniversary, so one year from it being enacted. Yet I understand that because it sits as an amendment to the COVID-19 bill it must have some relationship to the state of emergency that has been declared. So, for instance, if that state of emergency is lifted at some point within that 12-month period, would that mean that this bill is repealed? I am not entirely sure what the current date is of the state of emergency but is it not the end of September at the moment?

The second issue is around the broader issue of the Government's approach to supporting travellers and ensuring that we have the most robust and clear processes that we can. If the intention is to ensure on the one hand support, safety for travellers and to ensure that they are provided for within hotel quarantine arrangements, but on the other support for and protection safety of the broader community from the threat of imported COVID-19 then we need to have the most robust systems we can in order to avoid any possibility of perverse incentives or loopholes.

I am reminded of high-profile cases emerging from the Good to Go application, the G2G PASS app, like Guy Stayner, ABC reporter. In that story on 22 July, a young woman, Erin, returning to the state, claimed that there were 20 or so other people who had been confused about the exemption category within the G2G PASS app, indicating home isolation rather than hotel quarantine, and particularly highlighting the concerns for people for whom English is second language, or for people with low literacy generally.

There was at least one other report of a yacht crew that had come into the state, expecting to go straight to the boat they were going to be returning on and were surprised by the requirement to hotel quarantine for a period. What we ought to be looking for in processes like this is absolute certainty and no surprises for the protection of travellers, essential or not, for the protection of the general community. The last thing we want is for people to be looking for loopholes to get around processes. Absolute clarity, no surprises ought to be the rule of thumb.

With those sorts of overarching concerns, I come to the rate. The first thing I raised with the advisers yesterday was a query around why there is a flat-fee approach. I understand the point about national consistency, but in its application for regional Tasmania in particular, I was advised that Victoria and Queensland are adopting the same amount for a single person, \$2800, yet New South Wales slightly higher. That makes sense to me. As we are moving to a user-pay system, in the minds of the public there might be some expectation that there be a lower rate - for instance, if I was staying in Devonport compared if I was staying in Launceston or Hobart. There does not appear to be any sensitivity around the real cost for the establishments and the agreements with hotels and so on.

I was assured that this is a contribution to the cost to government as opposed to a cost recovery arrangement. The question is: what is the real cost to government? I was advised that in the period 30 March to 30 June at least the cost of hotel quarantine to the Crown had been \$10.8 million for 3072 guests in 16 hotels. But there was no information in the briefing about the modelling that had been done. I understand we are talking about human behaviour and to some extent it is difficult to predict. Nonetheless, there is at least the period from 31 July through to 20 August. You must have some figures on which you are basing the legal arrangements with establishments, and also the budgeting within departments and cost to government.

How many people are in quarantine right now, for example? How many do you expect to access these hotel quarantine charging arrangements through to 1 December say, or the end of the year, whatever milestone you are making these arrangements based on?

I understand that the secretary of DPFEM can vary the rates, moving forward, but I am not clear on what basis that would be. I understand there are fortnightly rates and daily rates to allow for that kind of flexibility. To some extent, that makes sense, but we are talking about a bill that, should it be enacted, would only have a 12-month time frame. What circumstances would arise where a person or a family would not be required to quarantine for the full 14 day period? For instance, if a person falls during that period and needs to be hospitalised, is that what you are talking about? Would there be potential for extenuating circumstances, medical, compassionate or otherwise that would mean a person's hotel quarantine period would be less than 14 days? I would be interested to know on what basis that flexibility is built into the bill.



On the question of fortnightly and daily accommodation rates, how does the minister aim to accommodate large families? I understand that in the modelling there is a cap of \$4800. Apparently the fortnightly rate for a family of two adults and three children would be \$4300. However, there are much larger families than that, and complex arrangements - even families travelling in groups. I understand there are processes to apply for a waiver and exemptions, but nonetheless we need to be prepared for much larger family groupings than that. Would there be, for instance, within the hotel agreements, arrangements for two or even three rooms to be side by side?

It is good to see the capping at \$4800, although that is a very high figure. I understand the intention is to limit non-essential travel. It is a very hefty price tag as disincentives go. What would be the process for non-payment? I understand there would be debt recovery provisions and invoices issued at the end of the stay. Typically they would be 30 days, although there might be exemptions or waivers. What penalties would apply? How can the Crown recover those costs if there is non-payment?

The next area I wanted to flag is flexibilities within the system, particularly for unusual circumstances. I raised with the advisers yesterday the story of a mother who has a young child who has had cancer and a prosthetic eye as a result of that. She needs to travel regularly to Victoria for medical procedures for re-sizing and so on. The issue is not so much that, but there is another dependent child who would be cared for on a short-term basis in Tasmania. Would there be flexibility for a dependent child or children to then join a family on their return if they were required to hotel quarantine?

I have known of parents concerned about adult children interstate going through a relationship breakdown. They have looked at bringing their adult child back who would have to hotel quarantine. Because of concerns around mental health, suicide risk and distress the parents would want to voluntarily opt in to quarantine with their child in order to have that company for that two-week period. Would there be that flexibility or are the public health and quarantine arrangements so rigid that they only apply to the people who have travelled?

Then to the agreement itself. I asked about the number of hotels, where those hotels are, how long the agreements would be in place. Are they the 16 hotels that have been used up until now or is there some variation? Is it a 12-month agreement or something less? Is there even a formal agreement between the Crown and these establishments? Does that cover costs in addition to what would be covered under these hotel quarantining charges or does that go further? I will elaborate on that in a second.

How many agreements are in place and what are the general details, cognisant that we are moving now to a user-pays process? It would be reasonable to expect that for the cost of up to \$4800, people will expect a different standard of accommodation. What is covered in the general details of those agreements, if they exist? Is it for room, food, wi-fi, transport, cleaning, infection control, security arrangements?

What about the operation of public areas like restaurants? There have been some high-profile issues regarding the interface between people in hotel quarantine with other areas in hotels that are open to the general public. Would some rooms within these quarantine hotels be used for non-quarantine guests? If not, is there any kind of compensation within the agreement for these establishments to cover loss of revenue from other sources? Are exercise

spaces mandated, for instance? If so, what type? Is there cordoning off to ensure that arrivees do not mix with the general public in public spaces?

Some of the intricacies of these arrangements have started to come into the public debate. If they are imbedded in terms of the expectations of establishments at least, how does that work?

How does that work for the government departments responsible for administering this bill? Is it the Department of Communities Tasmania from getting off at the port through to stepping into the room? Is it sub-contracted partly to the Department of Police, Fire and Emergency Management or to transport providers, to security providers? Who ultimately takes responsibility if there are issues, gaps and problems? What are the protections to keep staff and members of the public safe within these arrangements?

Finally, in relation to the agreements, what are the provisions for testing of COVID-19, optional or mandatory? At day 5 and 12 is the standard at the moment. Would those testing arrangements be optional or mandatory and would they be on-site or would travellers be required to go to a separate test location for that testing?

Going to waivers and exemptions, I understand that travellers can apply before, during or after their period in hotel quarantine for waivers or exemptions. I do not know the modelling that the departments or the minister is basing this on - I am thinking ahead to avoid the 'administrivia' that might overly burden the public service. I understand there are financial hardship provisions, for instance. Why not provide a discount arrangement, whether it is for people with a Healthcare card or a Seniors card? Members of the public might expect some kind of tiering instead of a flat fee arrangement. Has that been considered? Could that be brought into an application through the G2G PASS rather than putting the onus on the applicant to seek a waiver or exemption, which seems a rather cumbersome way of addressing something that could be prevalent?

I understand that there are exemptions or waivers on the basis of compassionate grounds, medical reasons and exceptional circumstances. That is good to see, but how can this process's design be streamlined from the beginning to avoid administrative burden on departments?

Finally, I want to flag resourcing areas. It has been more than six months. The focus of the state and various departments has been understandably shifted in terms of their focus. I know a number of public servants I have come across through my job and in my personal life and realise it has been an 'all hands on deck' kind of arrangement. We do not know how long this crisis is going to last. There has to be a point at which we do not continue to expect public servants to juggle these issues at the same time as their ongoing duties.

Are there dedicated staff to administer this program or initiative? If so, in what departments? Or are you expecting staff to juggle this task on top of regular activities? Is this their only role or are they carrying this alongside other things?

To what extent is their workforce planning going on to ensure that at some point we shift from this panicked, rather chaotic arrangement with people being moved from their substantive roles into special roles? Surely now, at nearly six months down the track, the Public Service, the people administering these programs, need to settle down into new arrangements for the medium term until we have some certainty.

Concerning payment arrangements, are they to the Government or to the venue? I think I was advised yesterday that the invoice would be issued by government and not paid to the venue. At what point does the establishment invoice the Government? How does that work in terms of the agreement the Crown has with hotel establishments?

I will wrap up at this point. Thank you once again for the briefing provided yesterday. I hope most of the issues I raised today and raised with officers yesterday have been brought to the minister's attention and the minister has the opportunity to address them in summing up.

I indicate that the Opposition will be supporting the bill. I should have said that at the outset. We understand the intent and the alignment around national cabinet agreement. We have no problem with the notion of hotel quarantine debt recovery and look forward to hearing the minister's response to the range of issues I have outlined today.

[12.38 p.m.]

**Ms O'CONNOR** (Clark - Leader of the Greens) - Mr Deputy Speaker, the Greens will be supporting the COVID-19 Disease Emergency (Miscellaneous Provisions) Amendment (Quarantine Debt Recovery) Bill 2020, just as we have supported every piece of COVID-19-related legislation that has come through this parliament.

It is entirely reasonable for government, on behalf of taxpayers, to recoup some of the costs of quarantine measures that are necessary to keep Tasmanians safe. I am certain that the cost recovery program will provide some pause for thought for people who might have wanted to come to Tasmania for anything other than an essential or necessary purpose, so there is a disincentive involved in this temporary legislation. I am very comforted by the fact that discretion will be given to the secretary of the Department of Police, Fire and Emergency Management or delegated to an Assistant Commissioner to provide for fee waiver or for staged payments. That is very reasonable.

This issue brings home to us that as an island we probably need to consider having a dedicated quarantine facility. This has been a feature in the past of managing disease outbreaks right across Australia -

**Ms Ogilvie** - Could use Pontville, if you haven't got rid of it.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - Pontville is one place where you could have quite a comfortable Tasmanian-based quarantine facility.

When I was a kid on Stradbroke Island, Peel Island, which is a little island in Moreton Bay just near Dunwich on Stradbroke Island, was the leper colony. It has a long and sorry history. It became a typhus quarantine facility as well. The Dunwich Cemetery has numerous sad stories and the gravestones of whole families, wiped out by typhus.

We need to be mindful of the very realistic possibility that this will not be the last we hear of a viral global pandemic. While there is positive news coming out about a potential vaccine for COVID-19, nothing has yet been confirmed. The temporary measures we have had in place have worked for hotel quarantine, but we should be able to quarantine people for a period of time, where necessary, in one place, where we can have a wraparound management of people, making sure that needs are met; that dedicated health professionals are working with people who are in quarantine. In the medium- to long-term, it would provide not only comfort

to the people of Tasmania, but it would provide savings to government to have a dedicated quarantine facility. I hope the Government thinks about it, because we cannot keep sticking people into hotels.

I wanted to reflect briefly on the debate in this place yesterday, on Labor's private member's time motion, and their attempts to make politics out of the way the debate went.

There is no question that Tasmanians are in a state of high alert about the possibility of the virus entering Tasmania, either by air or sea. I am always guided internally in the Greens, by our inhouse epidemiologist, Dr Rosalie Woodruff. Our point is, that you either back Public Health advice or you do not. There have been some really difficult decisions that have had to be made by government and endorsed by this parliament on the basis on Public Health advice, not politics. We need to be really careful in a time of pandemic, when people are understandably distressed and scared and grateful to be Tasmanians that we do not politic and play to that fear, and only heed Public Health advice when it suits us.

This is an area that the Greens will be watching closely. Dr Woodruff is going to write to the Health minister, urging that Public Health has another look at how to deal with people who come from the mainland, but particularly those people who are given exemptions under essential traveller and essential worker arrangements.

In the debate yesterday, the amendment moved by the Premier informed the House that from 31 August, all entries to Tasmania would undergo a comprehensive health check; that health-related questions would be asked that could help us understand whether there were symptoms of coronavirus and temperatures would be taken. At the moment, Public Health tells us that is adequate. We need to listen to the experts but it is an area that we should be able to be flexible with and change our approach, should the advice change.

It is important for members to understand that COVID-19 testing is not the panacea. In fact, Dr Norman Swan from the ABC's *Health Report* was really clear and concerned about the high rate of false negatives that are coming back from the tests. We do not want to give ourselves a false sense of security by thinking that testing will provide all the answers and keep us safe. Testing is but one part of the arsenal to keep Tasmanians safe and the most important thing anyone can do when they come to Tasmania - and this goes for Tasmanians as well but we know it well and we are doing a pretty good job of it - is to keep our distance.

We have Public Health advice on the distance between people at the moment and my 20-year-old daughter is lobbying me frantically to lobby the Premier to allow young people to dance, but the Public Health advice is that that is not safe. Young people want to mix and go out to nightclubs and dance but the advice is really clear.

I say that to place on the record how disappointed we are that Labor is playing politics with this and how disappointing it is to seem Labor wax and wane on Public Health advice. I have been a bit jaded towards Labor ever since the racing industry questions were asked by Mr O'Byrne to undermine a decision that was made on Public Health advice to shut down the Racing Industry for a period. That decision was made by the Premier on Public Health advice and shared with the Leader of the Opposition and me when we were still talking on Friday mornings and the Leader of the Opposition told the Premier she supported that decision. It was about a fortnight later that Mr O'Byrne was on his feet bleating on behalf of the racing industry and undermining the unity that was required to make that decision hold and have public support. It also undermined Public Health advice which was that the industry needed for a time

not to hold training and racing meets because of the risk to industry participants and people who come to watch.

I do not think anything I say here will make any difference to the way Labor deals with this issue, but you have to be very careful in this space. We must be guided by the experts because the people in Public Health are the experts. There is only one actual expert in epidemiology in this House and that is my colleague, Dr Woodruff. It can be hard when you are a politician to hold the line, but we have to be able to rise above politicking when it is a matter of life and death.

I do not have any specific questions related to this bill but I take the opportunity while the Minister for Housing is taking this bill through to seek an update on the protections that have been put in place by order to ensure there is no increase in rents during the emergency period.

**Mr Jaensch** - Social housing or Residential Tenancy Commissioner issues?

**Ms O'CONNOR** - I think you should be able to answer that question because it also applies to Housing Tasmania not being able to increase rents and not to evict people during this time of pandemic. The Greens worked very hard to secure that and we amended the principle COVID-19 Disease Emergency (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2020 to ensure that those protections were put in place. Those protections expire on 1 October. That coincides in a potentially cataclysmic way with the end of the JobSeeker and JobKeeper coronavirus supplements. I believe that the Government will have no choice but to extend those protections but some clarity on that would be helpful for residential tenants.

I am sure people in commercial tenancies are going to require extended protections as well. I have already heard of tenants who are being told by their landlords, 'Yes, it is nearly 1 October. We would like you to sign a new lease and we are going to jack up the rent'. We need to be sending a message that is very clear to landlords not to capitalise on the difficult social and economic conditions created by the pandemic.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** - Not entirely relevant to this debate, Ms O'Connor, but I am sure the minister will take the question in good faith.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker. It is entirely relevant to this debate because the protections that have been put in place came about as a result of an amendment to the principal act that we are amending today. I would argue that it is entirely relevant but thank you for your guidance. It is also something that is of significant public interest and concern. I have raised it in parliament this week already and have not had a response. I am just doing my job, Mr Street.

**Ms Standen** - Especially as this Government will not act on regulating short-stay accommodation.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - This is true and that is an ongoing battle that we have on behalf of young people who are shut out of the housing market, Ms Standen. I take this opportunity to commend you again on your work on the housing inquiry and having that established. I am quite disappointed that the Government has not treated the inquiry report with the seriousness

it deserves, particularly given all the people and organisations who came along gave evidence in good faith.

**Mr Jaensch** - We had already sought their advice and acted on it.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - Okay, well.

Mr Deputy Speaker, with those few words I am quite happy to sit down but it would be great to have an update on what is happening with the residential tenancy protections.

[12.52 p.m.]

**Ms OGILVIE** (Clark) - Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to support this bill and take a few moments to reflect on where we are at and make some comments on how I think we can do better from a process perspective.

I am a very practical person. As parliament has heard today, I have been dealing with families trying to transition through various ports since March and so I have a bit of experience in assisting people to navigate the system of dual quarantine. Max Quick was one of them. He was a young fellow stuck in Argentina. Although he had been in isolation in Buenos Aires for six weeks, in my recollection, he then flew into Sydney, had to quarantine there, and then had to quarantine in Tasmania as well.

I am particularly interested in those people for whom it is a necessity to return to Tasmania, who have been trapped overseas through no reason of their own and who have no real option but to return. How do we deal with that, particularly in relation to cost? It is the cost element that will cause concern to families. It is not as simple as saying, 'Just deal with it when you get here'. There are families and people who are stuck in places where there may only be 30 seats on a flight coming out. They are being asked to spend tens of thousands of dollars on business class seats to get on those flights, so the money side, the economic side of this and shifting money around the planet to get it into kids' pockets or family's pockets to deal with this side of things, is an incredibly stressful element of what is happening out there at the moment.

I have said publicly in relation to this bill when it was first mooted, let us remember we are a small island with limited resources. People who have the capacity to help meet costs certainly will want to play their part. I do not think there is resistance or reluctance of people wanting to be in it together, which we are, and we have never seen such a great rise in the energy and excitement around being Tasmanian as we have over the last year. In fact I commented this morning to a friend that perhaps we are going a little too far. Perhaps we have forgotten we actually are all Australians first and maybe we need to keep the balance in place around that and be protective of our federation.

**Mr Jaensch** - Are you looking for a fight there?

**Ms OGILVIE** - Well, State of Origin is always a fabulous thing. We would be high up the success ladder on State of Origin ranks in relation to managing pandemics at this moment. I cannot wait for a time when we can have a bit of State of Origin sports action back into place. Come on the netball! I also love rugby. In AFL, of course the Swans are the best team in the nation, as I mentioned this morning on my Facebook page.

**Ms O'Connor** - You're supposed to tell the truth in this place.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** - Please don't mislead the House, Ms Ogilvie.

**Ms OGILVIE** - I will just put that out there for debate. We would probably all divide into 25 separate camps.

All levity aside, it is nice to be in a place now on our beautiful island in our bubble where we can have a bit of levity, where we can breathe out a bit and take time to think through things like this and how we do this better. We are so lucky.

I am attracted to the idea of improving quarantine places. When I was first elected to this place I was active and vocal around ensuring we kept Pontville as a place we could bring refugees. That opportunity has now passed but I do not mind the idea of doing quarantine quite differently.

I am very concerned about the number of Australians and Tasmanians who are stuck overseas: tens of thousands; who knows what that actual number is? Some people are happy where they are. I have a brother who lives in Stockholm and they are not trying to come back to Tasmania. I have a sister in London in a similar situation. The Australian diaspora is huge. There are about 1 million offshore. The ones who need to come home I am very worried about, the ones who have gone off on the adventure of a lifetime or a gap year travelling through Europe, South America or South East Asia, who have then become trapped.

I put on the record that with any costs that are applied, I expect there to be exemptions and concessions for people who are suffering hardship or are travelling for medical reasons. I have been dealing with quite a few of those as well and have sought information on that process and see that has been addressed in the bill.

Tasmania is one of the last to bring in a fee for hotel quarantine and I understand the need to manage costs. I am not generally supportive of retrospective legislation in case it leads to unintended consequences, but in this case because it is an emergency, I am open-minded about the model and look forward to reading details of the legislation when it becomes available, which I have now been able to do.

I called early for Tasmania's borders to close because I had been travelling literally prior to the pandemic and had seen the measures that were starting to be implemented internationally. Some travel in and out of the state is absolutely necessary but we are in a privileged position of having no cases at the moment. Tasmanian businesses are already struggling and if we were to see a rise or some sort of outbreak in cases, some of those businesses with additional restrictions might not survive. That is not to say that things are running smoothly for everyone. There is a lot of distress.

I would like to talk about people's wellbeing and the wellbeing of people who are travelling and who are going through these quarantine processes.

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

**COVID-19 DISEASE EMERGENCY (MISCELLANEOUS PROVISIONS)  
AMENDMENT (QUARANTINE DEBT RECOVERY) BILL 2020 (No. 29)**

**Second Reading**

**Resumed from above.**

**Ms OGILVIE** (Clark) - Madam Speaker, I was mid-sentence before the break. I was talking about the need for us to focus a bit more on people's wellbeing during this transition into the new way we do things with quarantine and hotel isolation in particular.

We can say it is not a normal situation that we are all living in. We have had to work very rapidly and very quickly from a zero base to effectively invent a form of quarantine whilst a crisis was unfolding over the top of us with those waves of crises happening. We have no idea how long this issue might last. I remember in the early days we thought it might just wash through very quickly. We were hopeful for that, but as it transpires we are having to settle to a management program going forward that could have to run for years. In fact, why not let us set up processes, protocols and ways of managing things that is in place in case we ever need to do it again going forward?

Having said that, we talk a lot about the money; about my view that good Tasmanians will all want to participate; companies who are sending people around to do work that needs to be done by interstate people who no doubt would be happy to pay their way. Are we delivering the service at this end as best we can?

I, no doubt like others in this place, have had long and deep conversations with the many people who have passed through our quarantine and isolation processes. It can be very wearing for people. Just a day or two of complete isolation if you were by yourself is a really hard thing to do. I know we have digital technology but we are all Zoomed up; never want to Zoom ever again. We have had enough of that. Humans are built to interact with other people. Mental health, wellbeing - those things are really important. Being in a hotel room by yourself for any length of time is obviously not an optimal arrangement but we understand the necessity of managing these things.

I was talking this morning in question time about the need for a single point of contact. This is essential. It is almost parallel with other medical services that we provide that run across a trajectory. Managing somebody coming from overseas back home through all of those steps, is in itself a process that needs to be managed properly.

I remember as a much younger person when I went to live and work in Indonesia we were doing telecommunications work. I was with a major Australian company. There was quite a lot of work that went in to preparing people for that transition. Going over was more interesting and more fun because it was all fresh and exciting but coming back was when they found people had problems re-transitioning. As a small and caring government on a small island where we pretty much know one other and we care for each other very well we can do a bit more of that with wellbeing and mental health.

The purpose of this bill is to try to implement the Tasmanian end of what is now a National Cabinet objective of introducing a uniform model for charging for quarantine across the nation. A laudable goal, obviously. I understand, as others would, that there are limits to



what we can do. Money needs to be spent wisely. I was doing a bit more research during the lunch hour and I just read about terrible things that have happened interstate where people have already been in bad shape with mental health and the outcomes have not been good. I get worried about that.

I would like to see more connection with local organisations, such as the Red Cross, and from our social sector, for people who are going through this process. It is particularly difficult for those who are travelling or are by themselves, young people and older people, as well.

The bill allows Darren Hine as the State Controller to make a decision declaring a class of persons pay for quarantine on or after 31 July 2020. There will be some discussions around how that is implemented. I have an interest in the technical arrangements with the transfer of money between the Government and hotels and this cost recovery exercise that we are going to do and how that works - with as much transparency as possible, I think, is the name of the game. When it comes to things like somebody's inability or even reluctance to pay, it will be very interesting to see how we manage that. In the main, I suspect that most people will be well versed and will understand what they are taking on if they have to travel now.

I have dealt with a number of cases that are very difficult in relation to medical transfers, which are necessary. This is not a matter of people wanting to go to Melbourne for medical procedures, but the fact that they have to go. I have a family there at the moment, who have not had a great run, in a very difficult scenario. Hopefully, because of their circumstances, they will be in home isolation and may avoid having to go into a hotel. We need to be very careful about such circumstances.

Again, I believe we could be providing a little more overarching support and pastoral care, almost, for people who find themselves in these circumstances, particularly when it runs longer than they thought. I will again mention my desire to see that single point of contact. We have help lines for business and other groups. We are going to have to get on top of this one, particularly if we start paying because then we have customers, haven't we? When we have customers, we want to service them. They need to know who to call, and we need to pick up the phone and be available. That is a bit of my Telstra retail training right there. A bit of customer service would not go astray. I am sure that is what people want, so let us make it easy for that to occur.

Although I was not able to attend the briefing in person, as I was in the House, my team attended and have provided me with good notes, and some flow charts, which are helpful. I am very grateful for that. The more communication that can be out there around this, the better. The application, processes, and forms I have before me seem relatively straightforward.

What I have experienced, and it is heartening, is that when a Tasmanian person or family is stuck or trapped or travelling and they have to do that, there does seem to be a great coming together of the clans to try to see them through. I hope this process is well designed so that it flows and does not have unanticipated hitches, and that things can be done in parallel with the least amount of stress and drama for people.

I too agree that we may need to be looking at how we manage quarantine, not just Tasmania but in Australia, particularly if we think we may well be in this thing for the longer term. It might last 18 months; it might go five years. We might get a vaccine; we might get a vaccine that is foolproof or not. We just do not know at this stage how the future will roll out.

Having some 'plan Bs' ready as well is not a bad idea. We know here in Tasmania we are effectively at the mercy of Tullamarine and Sydney airports. Particularly in Victoria - which is a heart-breaking situation and we all have friends and relatives there - when we have a situation like that it really impacts us. The hope and idea that we will have 'travel bubbles' where a minimal level of quarantine or some sort of safe transit through Tullamarine would be possible, is probably not on the agenda at the moment but may be something that is possible going forward.

I have reflected, as I am sure everybody else in this House has done, on the last pandemic which was shortly after the war - what a terrible time - and this pandemic comes shortly after the bushfires. We have had a dreadful year. Reflecting on that, and what happened in those days 100 years ago, a similar event occurred and we can learn from that. We did not have the capacity to immediately convey information and stay connected to each other but life was different then, and we lived more locally and probably had less transit and less interstate movement in particular.

It is important to guard against any sense of hubris around what we are doing here in Tasmania. We have to be restrained and sensible and caring in how we talk about our place, which is safe at the moment. We are all Australians; we are all in it together, and different states and territories, and different towns and cities, are having better and worse times. The great thing about being Australian - and we have shown this time and again, particularly with bushfires - is when the pressure is on, we will come together as states and territories, as people, everybody as true Australians to help each other out. While I am prouder than I could ever be of my fabulous little state, absolutely State of Origin, first and foremost I am Australian. It is really important to remember that and be caring in our language and not over-the-top in how we go about those things.

I received an email this morning from a wonderful constituent who is an older person very concerned and worried about the Tasmanian border - because we are an island, of course - staying up until December. She spoke of people's loneliness. She spoke of their desire to see their families, and not just the big celebrations of weddings, baptisms, funerals, twenty-firsts and all those fun things that we do as good people, but the need and desire to just see her children and her family and to have some physical contact.

Coming back to the issue of wellbeing, I am quite concerned about that too. It is not just people who are in aged care. It is all our older crowd who are not so used to staying home and not being able to jet off, or go to Melbourne to see a show, but to be here for a long time, quite soulless. I was really taken with what she had to say. I promised her that I would convey to parliament those thoughts, which I believe are very sensible.

I have diverged from the bill, which as I have mentioned previously I do support. I will keep a careful watching brief on how it works in practice because I have no doubt I will get phone calls from people trying to navigate the system, or being concerned about what happens when they arrive in Sydney and Hobart.

We have an opportunity here. The minister is quite good at processes -

**Mr Jaensch** - Yes, I like processes.

**Ms OGILVIE** - He loves a process. I was trained as a process engineer so we are going to love whipping this into shape, if it is not already superb. We are going to give it a test drive. Is it pretty robust?

**Mr Jaensch** - I think it is already running.

**Ms OGILVIE** - Already running, so pretty good. There are always ways we can do things better. I have learnt something over the past few months in trying to help people who are in very emotional and difficult circumstances. Another one was a woman I did not know. She was coming from Queensland to look after her elderly mum who, for whatever reason, was unable to remain in the aged care facility she was in. She was beside herself. I remember getting the phone call, she was sobbing down the phone saying, 'Are you my local MP?' I have never had that sort of phone call before. I said, 'Yes, I am your local MP. What can I do to help?' She described what had happened, which was very distressing. In the middle of the pandemic, at the height of the lockdown, she had to come in and was isolated with her mum, who was dying in Glenorchy. She did not have any money for shopping or food, there did not seem to be any nursing help and she did not know what to do because she was not from here. She did not know who to call or where to go.

I jumped in the car and went out there and met with her at a social distance. From there we worked out what to do. The devastating part was she was quite right and her mum passed away within five days of her arriving. It was very sad. She was at the Royal and then she was trying to organise a funeral remotely. It was very difficult. She was not the only one. Many people have been through very difficult situations.

I love it when commonsense prevails. Paying for quarantine, if we can, is a net positive. There is an opportunity to see more transparency and an elevation of the process of more care and help around wellbeing as people move through that process and also our ability to welcome people. I have been slightly uncomfortable during the debate on who should be on a Good2Go Pass and who should not be, whether we are second guessing what the commissioner's decisions are. My understanding is that it is done at arm's length. Every MP's office would have put forward messages for help through that process. If they have not then I do not know what they have been doing as there has been no shortage of desire and need to help people. That makes me feel a little uncomfortable. The decisions that are made are made for good reason. When it is health related we need to take great care.

I will wrap it up and thank the minister for his work. I will keep a very close watching brief on how it rolls out in practice. If I have any suggestions for improvement or change I will bring them forward. I will be calling you regularly with requests for help. I will keep beating the drum on the wellbeing side as that is of deepest importance. I hope commonsense continues to prevail and no matter what happens from here we get better at managing how we do this. Probably, much like tuberculosis and some other pretty nasty diseases, this disease is likely to remain on the planet for some time.

Let us put some faith in our global community of research scientists that they can develop a vaccine. Let us hope that once that happens everybody agrees to be vaccinated. That will be a new frontier in itself.

I look forward to seeing this in operation and working smoothly.

[2.51 p.m.]

**Mrs PETRUSMA** (Franklin) - Madam Speaker, it is a delight to speak today on this bill. I commend Mr Jaensch, his staff and his team in the Department of Communities Tasmania as well as the Premier, Cabinet and all their respective staff and departments for their magnificent efforts, especially over the last six months. I also commend the senior leadership team, the State Control Centre, our dedicated health professionals, our first responders and all members of this parliament. Their ongoing support and commitment to Tasmania's health, safety and wellbeing is essential, especially at this time.

In parliament we can put our differences aside and agree that our number one priority with coronavirus has been the health, safety and wellbeing of Tasmanians. On the one hand we have had to deal with the pandemic and the risk of a health crisis, while on the other we face economic and social challenges unlike anything we have faced before.

That is why, in March 2020 the Premier introduced the COVID-19 Disease Emergency (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill 2020 which sets out measures to reduce the risk to our state and the risk of hardship suffered by our community as a result of the spread of COVID-19 in Tasmania. The Government also took advantage of the physical protections provided by our island state to protect us from the virus. It led the nation on cruise ship bans, border controls and other measures to protect Tasmanians. This has meant that difficult and challenging decisions have needed to be made and implemented.

The Government knows serious restrictions have been put upon Tasmanians and Tasmanian businesses. This has included introducing tough border restrictions and mandatory hotel quarantine to decrease the risk of importing COVID-19 into Tasmania. These measures have been crucial in containing the spread of the virus and in protecting the lives of Tasmanians.

In addition to these measures, on Tuesday the Premier announced that we will take further measures to protect the health of Tasmanians, our health system and our economy while providing Tasmanians and Tasmanian businesses with more clarity on our border strategy so they can plan with confidence. It was based on advice from Public Health, the Department of Health and the State Control Centre, to allow us sufficient time for the COVID-19 situation in Victoria and the threat posed from other states to be clearly controlled. Our borders will stay closed with restrictions remaining in place until 1 December 2020, pending further advice from the Director of Public Health.

These measures have been put in place to enable our community and our businesses to understand and prepare for border relaxations, and to ensure appropriate planning and mitigation processes are in place. It will also give us time to build the community's trust in our border measures, which are there to protect Tasmania from areas in the rest of the country that pose a high risk while allowing travel to and from areas that pose a very low risk.

With regard to travel that is still occurring, we must continue to ensure that safeguards are in place to limit the spread of COVID-19 into Tasmania. Therefore National Cabinet agreed in July that mandatory hotel quarantine remains one of the most effective measures to prevent the importation of COVID-19. This is why a model for charging for hotel quarantine is being progressively implemented by the other states and territories.

This includes in Tasmania, where I note that the Tasmanian Government, like other jurisdictions, will no longer pay for hotel expenses but instead, in line with national agreements, has started charging for hotel quarantine effective from 31 July 2020, except in certain circumstances.

I believe that a charge for hotel quarantining is necessary, as it is our hope that this will be a deterrent to try to limit unnecessary and discretionary travel and would thereby limit the spread of COVID-19 into Tasmania from other affected regions. Therefore, from 31 July, anyone coming into Tasmania and going into government quarantine will be required to pay for their quarantine. I note that currently the requirement to quarantine in government-designated accommodation applies to Tasmanians travelling from affected regions as well as other non-essential travellers.

I note too that this bill before us outlines the parameters for charging for hotel quarantine. For example, new Part 6A of the bill sets out the mechanism for charging a person or family and the process through which the issuing of invoices and granting of any exemptions will occur. I note also that the secretary of the Department of Police, Fire and Emergency Management will be responsible for the decision-making within the Tasmanian Hotel Quarantine Payment Scheme. This will enable the scheme to run in accordance with the emergency management response.

Furthermore, proposed section 25B sets out the requirement to pay for hotel quarantine by providing for the secretary to issue a quarantine debt order to declare that a person or class of persons will pay an amount of money for their quarantine. The secretary or delegate will be responsible for making decisions with respect to issuing invoices to people as well as granting waivers or extensions to payment in certain circumstances.

I also note that there will be a minimum of 30 days to pay the invoice and that the following fortnightly rates will apply - \$2800 for a single person, \$1000 for an additional person and \$500 for an additional child. However, there will be no charge for children under three years of age and accommodation charges for a family will be capped at \$4800. It is also important to note that the bill provides for a pro rata payment or daily rate which allows for circumstances where, for example, a person or family may not be required to quarantine for the full 14-day period. The daily rates are \$200 for a single person, \$71.40 for an additional adult and \$35.70 for an additional child. These charges do not reflect the entire cost of the hotel accommodation and associated services.

The Government also recognises that there needs to be some exemptions to these fees in certain circumstances. We understand that people may need to undertake interstate travel for their medical care or for compassionate reasons, and that others may be experiencing financial hardship or other exceptional circumstances. I note that the bill sets out two mechanisms for waiving or reducing the fees and for seeking an alteration to the payment deadline. This includes, for example, proposed section 25D, which provides for a person to apply for certificate of exemption to the fees, in full or in part, prior to travel. As well, a person may apply for a waiver for all or part of the fees in an invoice or to alter the payment date specified in an invoice, with applications to be assessed on a case-by-case basis by the secretary or delegate.

As we move from response to recovery it is crucial that we continue to prevent the importation of COVID-19 into Tasmania particularly from high-risk areas, hence the reason

for this bill. At the same time we understand that during this unprecedented time in our recent history the importance of providing as much certainty to businesses and Tasmanians in these times is very necessary, which is why on Tuesday the Premier announced that our border restrictions will now remain in place until 1 December 2020, therefore giving time for the COVID-19 situation in other states to be effectively brought under control, which also enables our businesses to prepare for border relaxations in time for our traditionally busiest summer period. It also provides the certainty that our tourism and hospitality industries in particular have been asking for.

At the same time, we also recognise that there is a need over the coming months to do more to help our tourism and hospitality industries which, without a doubt, have and will remain the hardest impacted. That is why on Tuesday the Premier announced a series of support and incentive measures the Government will implement to help drive intrastate visitation and support and encourage Tasmanians to get out and about and experience our beautiful home state, which I believe is one of the most special places in the world in which to live, work and raise a family.

Tasmanians have been very supportive of local businesses, with hotel accommodation occupancy rates being relatively strong during the recent school holidays and on the weekends especially. However, midweek occupancy remains weak and many of our tourism experiences and attractions have significant spare capacity in which they can share what they have to offer to Tasmanians.

Because we want Tasmanians to experience this wonderful state and to support these businesses, we are now making available from 1 September the Make Yourself at Home travel voucher. For the months of September, October and November, there will be a total of \$7.5 million, or \$2.5 million each month, made available to support Tasmanians who travel outside of their own municipality to stay midweek in accommodation to enjoy a tourism experience or to visit an attraction on any day of the week. This support will provide up to \$100 towards the cost of a room in commercial accommodation, or up to \$50 per booking to participate in a tourism experience, whether that be a cruise, a walk, or entry to an attraction such as the Port Arthur Historic Site or the Tahune Air Walk.

We also want our local businesses to conduct their meetings, or team building workshops, away from their base, in other parts of the state, so they too will be able to access this support as well as to hold mini-conferences and meetings. It is estimated that this initiative will support at a high level around 25 000 bed nights, or alternatively up to around 50 000 tourism experiences each month and help to boost the already successful Make Yourself at Home campaign.

On top of this, I also note that the Minister for Education and Training, Mr Rockliff, has announced that to make 2020 for our children and young people more memorable than for just COVID-19, the Government will provide an additional \$1.5 million of funding for schools in which to conduct educational enriching experiences to Tasmania's tourism, parks or heritage sites as part of a day excursion program.

It is important to note that these initiatives are on top of all the other significant support we have given, not only under the COVID-19 emergency legislation, but also to help Tasmanians during these times. This Government has provided the largest supporting stimulus package in the country proportionate to the size of our economy. The support so far has been

over \$1 billion, which is equivalent to more than 3 per cent of our GSP. I am proud that this Government under the Premier, Mr Gutwein, and this parliament, has stood by Tasmanians when they needed it most.

Some of the specific measures taken include freezing, waiving or capping government fees and charges for businesses, including water and electricity bills; payroll tax waivers for those in the hospitality and tourism sectors so they pay no payroll tax for 2019-20; business support grants totalling \$80 million; and targeted loans ranging from \$15 000 to \$250 000.

We have also led the other states and territories by introducing support for temporary visa holders, with up to \$3 million available in support, as well as an additional \$4.3 million for housing and homelessness, \$5 million for community organisations to support vulnerable Tasmanians, and \$2.7 million for child safety and wellbeing and family violence. On top of this, we have also provided an additional \$4 million for mental health support services and we have allocated \$150 million for our health preparedness and response.

We will also continue to implement our rebuilding Tasmania plan, with a focus on supporting and underpinning \$3.1 billion in construction activity to stimulate our economy, to help our small businesses, and to create 15 000 jobs over the next two years by building our way out of COVID-19.

Local government is also being supported. We have provided the sector with significant support of up to \$200 million in interest-free loans, helping them to assist their local communities to rebuild and recover as well.

As a result of these measures, Tasmania is in a better place than it could have been. It is important, however, that we continue to look at all these measures through a COVID-19 lens, as these are fluid times and we need to remain vigilant as things can change rapidly. Above all else, we must remain highly responsive. While it is easy to feel relatively safe in our island state, a global pandemic does continue with serious impacts being experienced by some of our closest neighbours across Bass Strait and also in New Zealand. New Zealand and Victoria have demonstrated that this is a highly infectious disease.

Victoria is still in the grip of the pandemic and the citizens there, including unfortunately many of our own friends and families, are in the fight of their lives. At the moment the risk posed to Tasmania by the situation in Victoria is considerable. There are many Tasmanian businesses that have had to close their doors, which are only now just returning to reasonable levels of trade. Many others are still doing it very tough.

As was pointed out by Treasury only last week, should we find ourselves in a situation that Victoria is in now with a second wave, the economic impact would be a loss of at least an additional \$0.5 billion in economic activity due to business closures and job losses. We must avoid a situation like Victoria or New South Wales, as we would have to impose serious restrictions once again. We would see shrinking business confidence and the jobs we gained would be lost once more.

This is why we need this bill today and why we will continue to have border restrictions in place for another three months, and why we will further strengthen the stringent criteria already in place for Essential Travellers.

With regard to Essential Travellers, I note that currently each application is assessed individually, based on the information provided, first by the Biosecurity Tasmania team and then by the State Control team, with the final decision made by the State Controller. The Department of State Growth will now also be involved in the assessment process, together with DPIPWE and the State Control team, providing another layer of review in the assessment process before the State Controller makes the final decision. On top of this, to ensure the public is kept informed, we will also make publicly available statistical and regional information regarding Essential Traveller exemptions granted to enter Tasmania, on a weekly basis, taking into account people's individual privacy.

Madam Speaker, 2020 is definitely the year we never dreamed we would have. It has tested our state and our nation in ways none of us had previously imagined. We have all had to behave differently. We have all had to stay apart from loved ones at a time we long to be close. We have all experienced anxiety and we have all had to demonstrate incredible resilience in a time of great uncertainty. However, we cannot run the risk of a second wave in our state, and this Government will not put Tasmanians at risk. That is why we must continue to make decisions that are safe, sensible and in the best interests of our state. It is why this bill, by introducing charging for hotel quarantine, like other Australian jurisdictions are doing, aims to discourage people from undertaking discretionary or non-time-sensitive travel from affected areas. This is vital to ensure people travelling from restricted areas will either have a genuine need to travel or be aware of their obligation to pay a fee towards their quarantine.

I commend the minister and his team, and the departments across government for all they are doing to ensure that Tasmania is able to manage the risk of importing COVID-19 through its strong border and quarantining policy. I commend the bill to the House.

[3.08 p.m.]

**Ms HADDAD** (Clark) - Madam Speaker, I intend to make a short contribution on the bill today just to ask a few questions and put a few other issues on the record. I reiterate, as my colleague, Alison Standen said, that Labor will be supporting this bill and recognises the vital need for people coming into Tasmania to follow the rules and to take seriously the risks that the virus brings with it. Of course, one of the most important measures is an opportunity for people to quarantine in an effort to contain the virus and hopefully to avoid a second spike like the one being seen in Victoria.

I also put on the record my thanks and admiration to the staff at Public Health and everybody working within the Tasmanian State Service. I know how hard people have been working to keep Tasmanians safe over this period of the pandemic. As we have said in here many times before, Labor has supported the hard decisions the Government has had to make while along the way also raising the issues of concern that are raised with us by members of our community.

It is very scary to see the images on the news of what has happened in Victoria. I know that everyone in Tasmania wants to do all we can, and to be as responsible as we can, to make sure the same thing does not happen here. This means accepting the fact that people need to quarantine and, by and large, people understand that fact. There has been enough media attention and government information around for people to really have a handle on the fact now that if they are returning to Tasmania, or coming into Tasmania voluntarily, then there will need to be a period of quarantine. People understand that, and they are taking it seriously.



However, we are hearing stories - and a lot of them have been covered - around the uncertainty that people are finding when they are using the G2G pass. There was a case covered because it was Guy Stayner from the ABC. He is a well-known media personality who spoke about his experience of applying about the time that the rules changed around quarantine and the time that the app was being launched. He began an application which was not processed because the app was being launched. He understood that. He then applied through the app and was of the understanding that he was approved to quarantine at home as a Tasmanian resident. He went through that process. He included the information of his Tasmanian driver licence. It was initially rejected for failing to provide proof of Tasmanian residency but on a third attempt, a new application through the app was approved within just a couple of hours. He packed up early, changed his plans and returned to Tasmania on the *Spirit of Tasmania* with what he believed was an approval on the Good to Go app that said 'application status approved to quarantine at home'. As everybody is aware, when he arrived in Devonport he was not able to quarantine at home and needed to quarantine in a hotel along with many other people who had had that same experience.

One of my colleagues happened to receive an email from constituents of his saying that they had arrived in Tasmania this morning after having applied to quarantine at home as residents through the G2G app. They said that when they arrived at Devonport, the officer said that they were not able to look at the approval on the app and said that the directive to government accommodation prevailed. They were at that point on a coach to Launceston where they were told a government officer would look into it for them but they said they seemed adamant about Government quarantine and wondered if the rules had changed. I do not think either of those people objected to the idea of quarantining in a hotel in these scenarios. As I said people are familiar with the seriousness of this virus and the serious risk that it could potentially bring to our state.

We raise these issues about the app simply because of the level of uncertainty. If people are expecting to come back to quarantine at home, they understand that they are going to need to be able to be self-sufficient, they need to order groceries, they need to look after pets and so on. It is disruptive to people to not know whether they are going to be quarantining at home or in fact quarantining in a hotel.

That is a few insights into some of the stories we have heard about the disconnect between people's understanding of where they are going to be quarantining when they arrive back into Tasmania.

We have previously raised issues about transiting from those ports, either from the seaport in Devonport or from airports elsewhere in the state. There is some concern from people who are transiting on the *Spirits* who are potentially able to be very isolated in their travel period, travelling by car and a single occupancy in the cabins on the boat. They then find themselves put onto a coach with lots of other people, potentially exposing themselves to risk if people are arriving from different places.

We have heard from people transiting on buses from the airport to quarantine hotels that there has been inconsistency in terms of people being offered PPE or being able to socially distance on those buses. I was heavily criticised for raising those issues yesterday but I do so again today because I take them seriously. I have had members of the public contact me directly about the potential risk of travelling in a heavily filled bus and also the potential risk

of people transiting from buses into hotels in fairly large numbers and potentially coming into contact with members of the public.

We are told that the risk of someone contracting coronavirus from somebody transiting from a bus to a hotel is low, but it is not nil. That is the point. There are simple inexpensive steps that could be put in place now that would mean that people could transit safely without risk of potential exposure to members of the public.

I will put this on the record again to respond to the criticism I had thrown at me yesterday during question time that I had irresponsibly voluntarily inserted myself into a dangerous situation by standing in the middle of a group of passengers coming off the bus. Nothing could be further from the truth. In fact, I was raising concerns about what we had been hearing about buses arriving in the vicinity of where I was standing. I was standing on a public footpath at around 4 p.m. with no notice of whether a bus would be arriving at that time. In fact, a bus had arrived a little while before. There were some quarantining passengers who were transiting up and down the footpath at that time. That was the point we were raising.

It was genuinely coincidence that there were quarantining passengers walking past at the time that footage was being filmed for ABC News but it was the point that we were raising. We were raising concerns about the 2000 workers working in that building. It was close to the end of the business day and close to 2000 people were finishing their working day and then walking out onto the street and possibly coming into contact with people who were entering quarantine hotels. That was the issue we were raising at that time.

The Government has been dismissive of us and has missed the point. We were saying that it is a short period of time, apparently only 20 or 30 minutes, that it takes to exit the buses and get into the hotels. It would be possible to limit the opportunities for members of the public to come into contact with those people for that short period of time.

In light of some of the things that we are seeing out of Victoria's second wave I wanted to ask whether the security staff who are working in the hotels where members of the public are being quarantined are working across multiple sites. That is one of the issues that was identified in Victoria; that staff were working across multiple quarantine hotels and that could potentially present a risk. Also, are those security staff and other staff responsible for managing those quarantining passengers limited to that employment at the moment? Or are they working in different jobs as well? Are drivers who are driving buses from airports and seaports to those hotels going on to do other jobs that could expose them to other risks or others to risks?

A question that has been raised with us is whether public facilities in those hotels are still open? If they have a restaurant or retail shops or other businesses that members of the public might access, are they still open during the time the hotel is being used as a quarantine hotel?

Another question that has come through to us is: if someone is quarantining in a city where there are multiple hotels being used, do they have any choice in which hotel they might prefer to spend their quarantine time? Many of them are hotels that generally charge a lot less than \$200 per night. Is there any choice for passengers?

Are the things that are covered across the state in the different quarantine hotels for those passengers uniform? That may have been covered. I was not here for all of the speeches earlier. Are people quarantining in one hotel going to be receiving the same level of support

concerning food, accommodation, access to facilities, laundry facilities, exercise facilities, entertainment and other things? Is that uniform across the hotels or does it vary from place to place?

In more recent weeks, there has been an effort made for families with children to be able to quarantine at home. I understand if there is a change in advice about that, but now families with children will be quarantining in hotels. I wondered if there is additional Public Health advice to support that or that might look at the implications of now quarantining with children. Are there any potential affects for those kids? Are there any added supports for families, particularly families quarantining with very young children?

Another query that came through from the public is what quarantining might mean for shared custody arrangements. That is probably something that has been addressed in terms of people not in a quarantine situation just needing to comply with shared parenting court arrangements generally, but has there been any thought given to what quarantine arrangements might mean for families with shared custody arrangements?

As far as the cost goes, I know the minister said in his second reading speech that there will be consideration made for hardship application for people who cannot afford the cost and they would be determined under the same rules as the pandemic isolation grant. Could you give some more information about that and whether people are finding the amount of money difficult to pay? I acknowledge that it is a large amount of money. Many people would not have that amount of cash or available credit to pay that in one hit. Would people be able to enter into payment plans to cover that cost?

**Mr Jaensch** - Yes.

**Ms HADDAD** - Thank you. The date of the state of emergency at the moment is set to be reassessed at the end of August, so I am wondering what happens as far as these arrangements are concerned on 31 August and whether there are any consequences for the provisions of this act if the state of emergency ends on 31 August, acknowledging of course that it might need to be extended. They were all the issues I wanted to raise and put on the record, just those few questions; otherwise I reiterate Labor's support for the bill.

[3.22 p.m.]

**Mr JAENSCH** (Braddon - Minister for Human Services) - Madam Speaker, I thank colleagues and members who have made contributions today, and for the indications of support for the bill, the job it is there to do, and for being able to progress the discussions in a timely way so we can get this into place and doing its job. We have compiled responses to questions that may have come up across a number of different contributions, so I will work through them – but maybe not in the order we received them. I will ask those who have asked questions to let me know at the end if I have missed any particular matters.

From the top, is the payment made to the Government or to the venue? The payment is made from the guest to the Government. The Government has a contract arrangement with the hotel which is separate, so the transaction that this bill enables is between the guest and the Government. The Government has a separate arrangement with the hotels. The question was asked, why not simply exempt healthcare card holders on the basis of their predetermined financial hardship circumstances? We recognise that in the population generally, and particularly during the pandemic, there may be a whole range of people who find themselves

financially compromised. Therefore there is provision built in to be able to consider the circumstances of an individual. There may be many ways you may be experiencing financial hardship or being able to demonstrate it, so we are keeping that as broad as possible to be able to take as many circumstances as possible into consideration.

It is also one of the reasons behind the provision for there to be delegations within this legislation to the Deputy Commissioner, not to make orders but to be able to consider those case examples and have the ability to waive or extend, or otherwise modify what a person is obliged to do. That means we have the resources there. We are not relying on the State Controller to make every one of those decisions. There will be one or two other people who are able to assist with that and keep the flow going.

The question was asked if any of the rooms in quarantine hotels are used for non-quarantined. The answer to that is no. Facilities that are contracted for this service are exclusively used for people in quarantine. They are inspected prior to engagement to ensure they meet appropriate levels of amenity and configuration, which is to the greatest extent possible equivalent across the network of hotels that are operating under this program. The service model is contactless, meaning guests are effectively confined to their rooms following check-in, with the exception of accessing dedicated exercise or smoking areas, and all hotel sites have a COVID-19 safety plan that sets out how they keep their staff as well as guests safe.

A question was raised about what arrangements are in place for testing of people in quarantine. I know you had another question, Ms Haddad, about whether another part of the complex be able to be used and I may have an answer to that in here. Yes, in some of the hotels, depending on the configuration of the facilities and their ability to have separate safety plans in place for different parts of those complexes they can maintain that separation, but there will be a dedicated quarantine building effectively.

With regard to testing of people in quarantine, people in government-designated accommodation are contacted directly by the Department of Health and offered testing at their quarantine accommodation on days 5 and 12 of their quarantine period. Guests who develop symptoms while in quarantine can be tested at any time. Where this does not fit in with the days 5 and 12 testing, non-emergency patient transport can be arranged for the guest to be transported to and from an offsite testing location. This is done with appropriate use of PPE and in line with advice from Public Health services. COVID-19 testing is carried out on days 5 and 12 of the quarantine period or if a guest becomes symptomatic. We note that it is voluntary but is very strongly encouraged.

I was asked how many hotel or facility agreements are in place. Currently there are 10 sites in use; five in southern Tasmania, three in the north, and two in the north-west. There were some requests for more detail about that but we are making it a practice not to issue public information about which sites they are.

Non-payment of invoices was raised. We note that debt recovery is very much a last resort. There is flexibility built into the scheme such that the secretary or secretary's delegate has a range of options which can be applied. The invoice provides for a minimum 30 days. The secretary or delegate can vary the period. Operationally, I am advised that people who are invoiced will be provided a reminder at 30 days. Anyone failing to pay is offered the opportunity to enter into an agreement - a payment plan, an extended period. All consideration will be given to capacity to pay before proceeding to debt recovery. There is the ability to

consider that financial hardship arrangement. These things generally though are going to be dealt with through the existing Department of Communities Tasmania accounts receivable process. It is familiar machinery and payments are able to be made through Service Tasmania and a range of other options. All that information is provided to people as they enter the scheme. They are tested and existing systems that are in use right now are being used, including debt recovery. There are many steps to exhaust before getting to that.

A question was raised about what additional costs the Crown has. I am assuming above and beyond the cost recovered from the guest. Those costs include deep cleaning of hotel facilities, and any damage caused by guests. I expect some of the other costs and services required that are not for services directly used by the guest but are involved in making the scheme work, including some of the security and transport arrangements.

A question was, can a child join a parent in quarantine? This is also related to Ms Haddad's question. Every situation is different and will be managed directly with the affected person or family. The State Controller, the secretary in this case, has the ability to approve alternative quarantine arrangements on a case basis. This possibly includes consideration of shared custody arrangements and other matters. If a child who is not a returning traveller needed to join a family member in quarantine that can be considered. The child would be required to remain for the entire quarantine period and all the restrictions of a quarantining guest would need to apply. The additional costs for the child would need to apply as well. Again, that is subject to those other capacities to make a judgment on an individual case.

Arrangements for larger families: there are rooms and suites in the contracted hotels that can accommodate larger family groups. There is a capped fee of \$4800 per family for the 14-day quarantine period. I am advised that the Department of Communities regularly manages family groups and larger family groups and the Good2Go process enables us to identify them and manage them appropriately and plan for them. Many of the hotels, for example, have interconnecting rooms so that you can accommodate them across a couple of suites. In the bill there is the provision for the secretary to have powers to change the definition of 'family' or of associated caps and classifications if there is found to be a need to do so.

The question about why would someone not stay for the full 14 days was asked. Some examples are if they had an unrelated medical condition that required their transfer to a hospital; if they decided to return to their port of origin prior to the 14 days being up; or if their Good2Go approval is not complete before arriving and they need to be in quarantine while it is being processed. That is why there is a maximum but there is also a daily rate, so there is a pro-rata charging available.

We had a question, 'What is the real cost of the hotel quarantine?' Up to 30 June the cost for quarantining our guests was \$10.8 million for 3072 guests. Those costs are the total costs: accommodation, meals, transport, security and related things. Some of those costs are the ones we aim to recover, in part, through the debt recovery process that this bill is about.

A question was asked, 'Why is a flat fee being charged?' There are a couple of aspects to this. We need to be able to tell people what it is going to cost. The actual cost might vary slightly from place to place depending on the agreements the Government has with the hotel providers, where they are located in the state and various other things. To the extent possible, the facilities and services provided are equivalent across the board. We need to be able to tell

people what they will be up for. We must be able to come up with a number that applies, that you can plan for. It is not the total cost to the Government, but it is a significant contribution. It has been based on an averaging of the costs that we have deemed to apply to the guests, averaged across the number of guests and the total cost so far. It is not based on modelling. It is based on the experience of the period up to the end of June.

It is 10.8 million divided by 3072 minus the things that we are not charging them for, and rounding it out to a figure, and then broken down.

**Ms Standen** - Through you, Madam Speaker, why do not you use the words 'up to' in communications to people then?

**Mr JAENSCH** - It has to be a known rate that we apply consistently.

**Ms Standen** - You said the cost might vary. How would that work?

**Mr JAENSCH** - The cost to the Government varies, but the charge to the guest would be the same. We have to provide consistency there.

**Ms Standen** - Even if the cost to Government is different in Devonport versus Hobart?

**Mr JAENSCH** - Yes. We need to be able to have a flat rate, which is going to be, I am guessing, less than the cost of us providing the service. The cost of being in quarantine will be the same for every guest. Ms Haddad asked if there was a cheaper hotel? There is not. They are all going to be the same cost to the guest.

**Ms Haddad** - Through you, Madam Speaker, I meant in terms of whether the facilities or things that guests would be provided in each hotel is uniform across them all.

**Mr JAENSCH** - To the greatest extent possible, yes. The range of services and the standard of food and accommodation is, with the quarantine hotels that we are using at this stage and for longer, as consistent as possible. Earlier days, when this was all new, we had a range of different types of properties offered to us. There was differing experience, but we were paying for everything anyway. Now we are going into this longer tale, we are talking about a more similar star rating across the board.

**Ms Haddad** - What about choice? Is there more than one option in that city? Could people choose one hotel or another?

**Mr JAENSCH** - I believe it is not the guest's choice. We have to be managing inventory where we have resources and capacity issues, so that we can ensure we are servicing those guests. That is not a matter of choice or negotiation.

Why is the bill applying a fee retrospectively? The Premier announced on 24 July that fees would be charged from 31 July. They apply only to people who are going into quarantine from then. Anyone who is liable for this will have known that it is part of the deal before they entered quarantine.

We are doing this retrospectively because we needed to put this legislation in place in order to be able to commence recovering the payments from those guests. Everybody who is

liable to pay a fee has been informed and provided documentation and has chosen to enter quarantine under those arrangements.

How does the bill fit with the COVID-19 act framework? This covers a couple of questions about what happens when the emergency changes its status. OPC tells us that section 8 of the COVID-19 act only applies to notices. Our amending bill creates orders and instruments in writing which are not, therefore, notices for the purpose of the act. The COVID-19 act remains in force, so the ability to issue these orders and notices remains in force even after the emergency cessation day. However, you can only issue for a period of quarantine and the ability to put people in quarantine will cease when the emergency management directions expire. This is only for people who are required to go into government quarantine facilities for a certain period. The moment there are none of those people, this is not activated, but it survives for long enough that if at some point in the future, within the life of the bill - which was 12 months - if we have another wave, then it can be reactivated.

**Ms Standen** - Does that mean that the agreements with the hotels, et cetera, are for 12 months as well?

**Mr JAENSCH** - Separate matters to this. This is about the powers under the act to charge people to stay in those hotels. The Government will have separate contracts with clauses for renewal of agreements with them for having the hotels in our network. Already we have scaled it back from some of the peak to a smaller holding group. That may happen again.

**Ms Standen** - I did have a question about how many people are currently in quarantine. The second question was about the types of agreements that are in place. Is it for a contract over a period of time, or is it a shorter duration?

**Mr JAENSCH** - There are 325 people in quarantine hotels as of last night. I do not have details here on the duration of the agreements with each of the hotels. They would be for a minimum period to be able to secure them. We are in a strange situation where we are not necessarily displacing normal business activity.

**Ms Standen** - You said that these facilities will be exclusively quarantine, so I imagine they would want to have some sort of security of funding arrangements because they would potentially be foregoing revenue through other commercial activity.

**Mr JAENSCH** - It is quite possible at the expiry of any current arrangements we have with hotels, that they have the opportunity of not participating any more. That comes down to the terms of those. That is outside the scope of the bill directly and I imagine that there are different arrangements and time frames for different hotels.

**Ms O'Connor** - Minister, by interjection, I have to leave the Chamber briefly, but I will be watching in my office for your responses to the issues I raised about tenancy protections.

**Mr JAENSCH** - We were asked, what were the operational arrangements in managing the quarantine hotels and who is responsible. A quick summary there. At the border, Biosecurity Tasmania is responsible. Transport involves Tasmania Police as well as contracted transport companies. Those contracts are managed by the Department of Communities Tasmania. Arrival at the hotel is overseen by Tasmania Police. During the hotel stay, there is a Department of Communities government liaison officer, but the hotel manages the normal

day-to-day operation of the hotel with no contact with the people who are in quarantine. Health and wellbeing services are provided by the Department of Health, GP Assist and Red Cross.

The question was asked, 'is this a disincentive to travel?' That certainly is an important part of the intent of this, to make people think twice about non-essential travel. It reinforces the message that you should only be travelling at this time if you have a very real need to do so. It also ensures that the Tasmanian taxpayer is not providing free hotel accommodation for people who do not need to be here, and that is entirely fair. If it is a disincentive to travel and makes people follow the broader Public Health direction, then all well and good.

Ms Ogilvie raised a range of questions and commentary. I believe I have covered a number of them about payment arrangements in individual circumstances, et cetera, in answering the other questions. She went to the issue of wellbeing support for people. It is worth putting on the record the Government's acceptance of a duty of care towards people who are required to enter quarantine in state-managed facilities. As a result there is a range of services put in place to support the wellbeing of guests during that period, including government liaison officers in each facility assisting guests with their general inquiries and requests. GP Assist provides health screening for hotel guests within 24 hours of arrival and is the first port of call for non-emergency medical matters. Social worker services, including drug and alcohol support, are provided by the Tasmanian Health Service. Emergency and non-emergency ambulance care and transport is provided by Ambulance Tasmania and the Tasmanian Health Service provides access to onsite testing, as we discussed earlier on.

Guests also have access to supports provided by NGOs and funded through our social and economic support packages, including Red Cross being engaged to provide regular welfare checks on guests in hotel quarantine, which goes to the issue of people being alone and isolated. There is a check-up so that we are keeping an eye on them. These services are administered through Community Sport and Recreation under Communities Tas.

Ms Ogilvie also talked about the need for information and guidance for people. I note the forms that are available and are published also on the [coronavirus.tas](https://coronavirus.tas.gov.au) website which provides lots of information about what to expect, what is going to happen next, and who to contact. Hopefully that will assist people. The government liaison officer will help people with those sorts of questions.

Amongst a range of issues put on the record that are outside the scope of the bill directly but valid in the broader debate, Ms Haddad raised the importance of clarity of communications and giving people the ability to plan for their circumstances and their families so that they can make arrangements during this disruption.

As to the contracting of security guards and their working arrangements that was raised, I do not have an answer for you here. It is outside of what this bill is directly about but I am happy to follow that one up for you separately and move on.

Guests do not get to choose where they stay. We have covered families with children and shared custody arrangements. If the emergency ends, what happens to them? We have covered that as well. We have also talked about what happens to people who are unable to pay and the process they can go through to renegotiate time frames, payment plans and waivers as well. Again, that is something that the bill provides the flexibility for the secretary or delegate to do.



Ms O'Connor raised a range of issues, including the need to be considering what happens to some of those other tenancy and eviction protections. I can assure her that as with all of the policy initiatives undertaken that are time limited in the context of COVID-19 are under frequent review. The matters she raised are the sorts of issues that would be taken into consideration in the normal process of reviewing the operation.

**Ms Archer** - I can confirm it is being looked at closely, as the minister responsible.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Well done and thank you very much, Minister for Building and Construction.

The issue was also raised about whether we should consider having permanent quarantine facilities here in Tasmania. I do not have an answer to that but I am happy to feed that into what will be a long and complex review of our preparedness for future pandemic events. I have listened to some examples thrown around about the sorts of facilities we have had in the past. The Pontville detention centre was one of them, as were army barracks of various kinds. Given what we have talked about with the amenities and services and comfort and what people would expect, would any of those facilities have been the sorts of places that we would be putting people in this circumstance? If we were building something more comfortable and more suited to what we have now, would it be okay to have that standing empty waiting for the next pandemic? I believe there would be considerable pressure for us to be using it for, say, crisis housing in the downtime.

We have the opportunity right now where there are vacant hotels of suitable standard and willing proprietors who are able to work with us to provide the service we need. We are very fortunate that that has been working very well and I am very grateful to the people in the hospitality industry who have stepped up and changed their business model and kept their people on and worked with us. This is not without risk to them and we are very grateful for their cooperation in making this possible.

I believe I have covered most of the list, but are there any outstanding matters?

**Ms Standen** - I did have three quick things. I have tried to tick off as you have gone through but with your indulgence, Madam Speaker, I think you have ruled out mingling of guests?

**Mr JAENSCH** - Yes. They are dedicated quarantine facilities.

**Ms Standen** - Okay. The other thing was modelling. You have talked about how many people in quarantine right now but do you have a feel on what basis you are anticipating occupancy over the next wee while?

**Mr JAENSCH** - There is a tracking of the changes in arrivals and the trends. At the moment it is trending down to around 25 per day arriving, with 325 in quarantine right now. Of course things like introduction of these charges changes the traffic. The status of Victoria and New South Wales changes the traffic. The longer we go into it and people are not able to put things off or other settings around Public Health mean that this is a very fluid thing and we have to be able to manage it flexibly. That flexibility should be built into our contracts and we need to be able to ensure that we have capacity. That is where you were going to in the modelling, I think, and that is the sort of thing which is being reviewed by our State Controller and Communities Tasmania as manager of the contracts on a daily basis.

**Ms Standen** - Yes, I guess I was expecting there might have been a ticking up since 24 July when the announcement was made about the incoming fees. I certainly know of some people who took advantage of that.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Who tried to sneak in.

**Ms Standen** - Yes. Then I was expecting probably a fairly significant drop-off from then.

**Mr JAENSCH** - There has been a significant trend down.

**Ms Standen** - The last question, minister, is around resourcing and whether in the public service there were dedicated roles for administration of this initiative?

**Mr JAENSCH** - Starting with the State Controller, there will be a range of people who have different roles in the management of the emergency arrangements and enacting the arrangements as they are taken from their substantive roles and moved around.

In relation to the Department of Communities staff, the department has drawn from the inter-operability list for its government liaison officers. Approximately 25 staff have been drawn from that list. Communities Tasmania's emergency operations centre has eight FTE working to manage the hotel quarantine program.

I thank Mrs Petrusma, Ms Ogilvie, Ms O'Connor, Ms Standen and Ms Haddad for their contributions. I very much thank Jess Jackson and Craig Limkin from DPAC, Cathy Baker from the Department of Communities Tasmania, and Justin Helmick and Anthony Reid from my office for helping us get this bill together so quickly.

Madam Speaker, I thank everybody who has asked questions and provided answers for them today so that we can bring this into effect and look after our guests, but have them share the costs with us of doing so for what is yet an unknown period ahead of us.

**Bill read the second time.**

**Bill read the third time.**

## **MOTION**

### **Draft Code of Practice - Fuel Price Reporting - Endorsement**

**Resumed from 19 August 2020**

[3.57 p.m.]

**Mr TUCKER** (Lyons) - Madam Speaker, the Government has already received early registrations from many service station operators making the necessary business changes in order to be compliant with the requirements from commencement, which is very good to hear. This approach seeks the balance between the needs of consumers for transparent fuel pricing and requirements on businesses complying with the new code. The code will commence on gazettal.

In summary, I am pleased to be supporting the Attorney-General and the Minister for Building and Construction on this Code of Practice. This will be a very useful and effective tool for many Tasmanians. I congratulate the minister on this achievement.

[3.58 p.m.]

**Ms ARCHER** (Clark - Attorney-General) - Mr Deputy Speaker, I intend to have a short summing up because I only had a few questions to address.

I thank all members for their contributions. Their acknowledgement of the need for this initiative is first and foremost to drive the costs of the prices down and thereby reduce the cost of living for Tasmanians.

Fuel is one of those commodities that is used by many people. With the advent of electric cars and other initiatives, we would like to reduce that reliance eventually. In the meantime, this type of initiative is necessary. We can all acknowledge that most Tasmanians have a car and a heavy reliance on their vehicle so this is something that is of great public interest.

The Labor spokesperson, Ms Butler, spoke about how Labor originally called for this scheme. I want to acknowledge many people on this side of the House who have been actively engaged in this, not least of all myself for some time. Then, as I said yesterday in taking up the position as minister responsible, I asked my department for options for introducing a scheme. That was last year. The department was investigating options and speaking to counterparts in other states in relation to similar schemes that we wanted to introduce here.

When the global COVID-19 pandemic hit earlier this year and then throughout that situation it has been of great interest to assist Tasmanians with their cost of living pressures. So in April 2019 - earlier of course I had written to the Chair of the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission, the ACCC, to investigate and intervene on the issue of fuel pricing in Tasmania. Subsequent to that when the ACCC responded but intervention was not likely in May this year, I announced the introduction of this scheme, having completed our investigations and discussions with other jurisdictions.

Ms Butler asked whether I could advise what the penalties for non-compliance are and how would the Government monitor compliance. The experience in New South Wales suggests that compliance for retailers here will be high with the limited need for enforcement, if we are to go on the New South Wales experience. Most larger retailers are used for such schemes in other jurisdictions.

The Director for Consumer Affairs here can apply to the Magistrates Court for enforcement, should it be necessary. A magistrate may apply a penalty they determine appropriate to a non-compliant retailer under the Australian consumer law but, as I said, we hope that there will be a high level of compliance. This is how compliance for codes of practice operate.

I am advised that compliance with other Tasmanian codes of practice such as fuel price boards has also been high. The Government will monitor the code itself and consider amendments to the act should it be necessary. At the time of my announcement with the Premier on this particular scheme, we said that if it did not have the desired effect we would take further action, should it be necessary. I am hoping it is not. I am hoping that retailers will

respond to this; that consumers use the app. I think they will; I think most people will take a very keen interest in this because of it being in real time.

With regard to monitoring, consumers will be able to report a price mismatch through the app. It is to be interactive and these reports will be investigated by the Consumer, Building and Occupational Services - CBOS. Ms Butler observed that this will not protect smaller retailers as they will have to compete publicly with larger retailers.

**Ms Butler** - It is something I had not really thought about until we started calling.

**Ms ARCHER** - Yes. This is not a silver bullet. It is certainly not a perfect solution for everybody's needs. I acknowledge that some of our smaller retailers in regional areas will have a concern. But CBOS has and will continue to support small businesses during the rollout of the app and the website itself. The provision of data on the app and the website will allow Tasmanian motorists to choose where they buy fuel with up-to-date information. Sometimes there is not a lot of choice if they are passing through a particular area, but it will - certainly as they embark on their journey - allow them to plan.

Small retailers will not be disadvantaged by the Code of Practice. Tasmanians using the app will be able to search by fuel type, suburb, postcode, and by map. The scheme not only enhances a competitive environment for consumers, it allows the smaller retailers to view the prices of other retailers in their area, and adjust their prices accordingly. Hopefully within those areas themselves, there will be competition. There will be variants across the state, but within those pockets, there will be some competition driven. That creates a fairer environment for businesses in close proximity.

I know Ms Butler asked if it would be possible for small retailers to display their own logo on the app and website, and I am advised they will be able to have their own logo in the app. All that will be required for this to occur is for retailers to provide their logo to CBOS and this will be uploaded to the app and the website. They will be well-prepared for that occurring. I welcome any member of parliament referring people through to CBOS in that regard.

There was also the question: how will people who do not have the internet or data be able to access the information? I acknowledge that some people are not fully technologically savvy. I think we are moving to that. For something like this though, for a real-time service provision, it has to be done this way. It will be available on iOS and Android, in addition to being displayed on a publicly-accessible website. As fuel retailers will be updating their prices through each day, any hard copy document, of course, would be quickly out-of-date, so that really would not serve a purpose. There are Online Access Centres throughout the state, which Tasmanians could use to access the website in the event they do not have access to the internet at home, or a phone that does not support the app. That is probably the best solution I could offer in that regard. It is simply a service that has to be delivered that way, because of it being in real-time.

**Ms Butler** - It's practical.

**Ms ARCHER** - Yes, it is practical. Ms Butler observed that the scheme does not address the issue of price-gouging. I think that was in relation to the -

**A member** - Wholesale prices?

**Ms ARCHER** - I will be getting to that next. Let's not jump ahead of ourselves. We do not pretend this is a silver bullet solution, but we do hope this significantly reduces fuel prices. It has certainly been the experience elsewhere. There has been a great response in New South Wales, and that is the licencing model that we have adopted.

The Fuel Price Reporting Scheme works by empowering consumers to choose the best-priced fuel available in their area. We know that is the way the market operates and should respond to that consumer-driven choice. We are confident the new scheme will help increase competitive behaviour, and increase price transparency, thus helping to put downward-pressure on fuel prices. The scheme will make it much harder for retailers to get away with unfair practices, and higher-than-reasonable margins. We have made it clear that should retailers continue to charge excessively high prices, we do, as a Government, reserve the right to take further direct action, including the introduction of legislation, because obviously this is by regulation.

I think you also, Ms Butler, made something about this dealing with retail price and wholesale price. Because this is a consumer-driven app, that is exactly why we are targeting retail pricing.

I am pretty sure that covers all of the questions. I note Ms O'Connor made a contribution but didn't have any questions. I again thank members for their interest. I thank CBOS, specifically Peter Graham and his team who have put a significant amount of work into this, particularly all of our COVID-19 measures. Peter has worked around the clock with his team on a number of occasions. This has been no different, including design requests in relation to the logo that goes on the app.

I am not supposed to use a prop but I am sure I will be excused on this occasion. This is the test app we have going. I wanted to prove there is a test app. Tests are being carried out so when it goes live from day one, hopefully it has no glitches. The glitches are being ironed out now while we are debating this in this House and hopefully the Legislative Council next week, rather than after we go live. At the moment it has our location, it lists what is around us and what the price is.

CBOS is working closely with the retailers. As you can imagine, they are at different levels in relation to the technology they might use within their business. They are getting familiar with having to use something like this. CBOS has taken a very interactive and educational approach. There is a transition phase, but there is an expectation that retailers participate and come on line because it will be mandatory. That is being offered to them to ensure they are of that level. Larger fuel retailers are used to this interstate so can adapt fairly quickly compared to some of our smaller retailers.

**Ms Butler** - Through you, Madam Deputy Speaker, if it is successfully passed, what is the expected kick-off date?

**Ms ARCHER** - Our expectation is in the week starting 31 August - it has to go through the Legislative Council - as long as the tests iron out any glitches. There were a few things apparent on the weekend testing, which are currently being worked on. I would like it earlier than that but the department is working as quickly as possible to get that up and running. It has

been a significant amount of work consulting with each retailer. Having a smaller jurisdiction makes it a little bit easier to get people on board and offer that assistance.

I encourage any smaller retailer with concerns to contact CBOS with Peter Graham and his team. They are willing to answer queries, questions and facilitate their involvement in this. We want it to be a success from day one.

I commend the motion to the House.

**Motion agreed to.**

## **CAT MANAGEMENT AMENDMENT BILL 2019 (No. 55)**

### **Second Reading**

[4.14 p.m.]

**Mr BARNETT** (Lyons - Minister for Primary Industries and Water) - Madam Deputy Speaker, I move -

That the bill be now read the second time.

In 2009 parliament passed the Cat Management Act 2009 and it was proclaimed and commenced in 2012. However, when the Hodgman Liberal Government was formed it was quickly realised that the act was deficient in a number of areas, limiting the capacity of state and local governments to enforce the act and creating confusion in the community.

One of the first initiatives introduced by the Government to improve cat management was the development of the Tasmanian Cat Management Plan. The plan was developed by Biosecurity Tasmania with input from the Tasmanian Cat Management Reference Group, consisting of key stakeholder organisations with a direct interest in cat management.

It specified a range of outcomes and actions covering responsible pet ownership, community awareness, best-practice management, protection of Tasmania's environment, roles and responsibilities and recommendations for legislative change. Prior to the plan, there was no clear strategy in place to address the complex issue of managing cats.

The plan was released for public consultation over two months in mid-2016. A large number of submissions - 102 - were received from the community, various organisations and local government, the majority of which expressed support for the plan.

The plan recognises that cats are an important and valued part of our lives, providing companionship to owners and families across the state. The plan also recognises that cats, if not cared for in a responsible manner, can become a nuisance, and in worst cases, destructive to our native wildlife and vectors for diseases such as toxoplasmosis.

It is important to recognise that the management of cats is a shared responsibility across the different levels of government and the broader Tasmanian community. Owners of cats should recognise their obligations as responsible cat owners. The state Government alone

cannot effectively manage cats and involvement of local government is key to being able to manage cats at the local level.

Whilst the amendments to the Cat Management Act that I am introducing today were first recommended in the plan, it is important to note that the plan promotes a much broader set of priorities than just legislation. A key objective of the plan is to improve levels of responsible cat ownership across Tasmania. The plan also recognises there are gaps in our knowledge about the behaviour of cats in relation to predation of native wildlife. For example, monitoring feral cat behaviour on Bruny Island over the past three years has helped refine our knowledge of both the methods for trapping, as well as the best time to trap.

To support the delivery of the plan, the Government has provided \$1.44 million over four years to employ three cat management coordinators. The coordinators are working closely with local government and the community in their regions. The work of the regional coordinators provides a resource to councils that has previously not existed. Each coordinator has established a regional working group and those groups have been strongly supported by local government and other key stakeholders. The TassieCat website has been developed and contains a broad range of information that is useful to both councils and the community.

It is important to recognise that managing cats is complex. As mentioned, there are strong social ties to cats but equally there are many problems caused by irresponsible cat owners. For example, there are owners who allow their cats to breed promiscuously and then end up with unwanted litters of kittens which may be abandoned or given away. This can lead to domestic cats contributing to the urban stray cat population, becoming a nuisance, taking wildlife and spreading disease. Changing people's attitudes and behaviours in relation to cats is key to reducing the problems cats may cause.

I will now briefly summarise the key amendments to the Cat Management Act, including:

- compulsory microchipping and desexing of cats;
- removal of care agreements;
- limits on the number of cats that can be kept without a permit;
- changes to protection of private property from cats;
- reclaiming cats from cat management facilities; and
- registration of cat breeders.

Not all of these amendments will be enacted immediately but I will briefly discuss arrangements for phasing in certain amendments. I also inform members that I will be making an additional point in this speech about the confinement of cats. This point was not in the previous version of the speech made available on the parliament website but has since been circulated to members.

Under the current act, owners of cats are not required to desex or microchip their cat unless they are selling or giving it away. These amendments recognise that desexing and microchipping cats are two of the most important aspects of responsible cat ownership. The

amendments will make it compulsory for all cats to be desexed and microchipped from four months of age. Some exemptions will occur. For example if a vet determines that such actions would be detrimental to the health of a cat. Registered breeders will also be exempt from desexing cats that are kept for the purpose of breeding.

Compulsory desexing of owned cats also means that the existing care agreement provisions, which allows the seller of a cat to pass on the responsibility of microchipping and desexing the cat to the purchaser, are no longer required and will be removed.

Another important amendment is the limit to the number of cats allowed to be kept at an owner's property. Allowing people to keep unlimited numbers of cats at a property can result in animal welfare concerns for the cats, health issues for the owners, nuisance issues for neighbours and potentially increases the number of cats roaming or contributing to the stray and/or feral cat population.

Many of the complaints that both state and local government receive relate to people who have multiple cats at a property and do not look after them properly. The cat management facilities - Ten Lives, Just Cats and RSPCA - are regularly called upon to deal with hoarding problems where people have 20-plus cats living on the property with them, often in very poor conditions. This amendment will limit the number of cats allowed to be kept at the owner's property to four. A permit will be required to keep more than four cats, and registered breeders will be exempted.

The current act has in it provisions to protect property from straying and feral cats. However, they are very limited in where they apply. For example, only graziers are allowed to trap, seize or euthanise cats found on their property. All other landowners, including those engaging in different types of agricultural activity, are currently not permitted to trap, seize or euthanise a cat unless their land is more than one kilometre from the nearest residence.

The amendments will allow all landowners involved in primary production to trap, seize or euthanise a cat found on their property. Where the cat is clearly owned by someone, then the person should endeavour to return the cat to the owner, or take it to a cat management facility. Persons undertaking lethal cat management action would need to comply with other relevant legislation, such as the Animal Welfare Act 1993 and the Firearms Act 1996.

In addition, the amendments will enable landowners not involved in primary production, and those living in an urban or peri-urban area, to trap or seize a roaming cat that is found on their property. They will not be allowed to destroy the cat and will be required to return it to its owner or take it to a cat management facility.

The existing act fails to provide cat management facilities with clear direction in relation to whether they are obligated to microchip and desex a cat before returning it the owner. Section 24 of the current act requires the operator of a cat management facility to ensure that a cat is microchipped and desexed before being reclaimed from the facility. However, this section was not enabled when the act was proclaimed in 2012.

The proposed amendments will commence this section, requiring the operator of a cat management facility to microchip and/or desex a cat that is in its custody before being reclaimed, if the cat is not already microchipped and/or desexed. Cat management facilities will be able to claim reasonable costs from the owner of the cat. The facility will be required



to notify the owner that the cat is to be microchipped and/or desexed before it will be released. Exemptions would apply in specific circumstances, as previously mentioned.

The Cat Management Act created a situation where a person can register with the state Government as a cat breeder. This capacity also exists for gazetted cat organisations. The duplication is cause for confusion for breeders.

The amended act will continue to recognise a person who is a member of a cat organisation as a registered cat breeder, but will cease state government registration of breeders. Instead, it will allow for the state Government to provide a conditional permit to people for one-off breeding purposes, or in cases where their cat has an unplanned pregnancy. This supports an important objective of the act: to reduce the numbers of kittens being born and at the same time encourage cat owners to desex their cats.

Compulsory provisions of desexing and microchipping of owned cats, limiting the number of cats at a property and changes to the state government registration of breeders will be phased in over a 12-month period. To help facilitate a smooth transition, the Government will have in place a range of public awareness and communication initiatives to inform cat owners of their responsibilities under the act. The regional cat management coordinators will also work with their communities and local councils to raise awareness about the amendments. This will allow for the public, and in particular affected cat owners, to become familiar with the changes and their responsibilities. It will also allow for veterinary practices to adjust to the new requirements and avoid a sudden demand on their services for microchipping and desexing.

The amendments relating to microchipping, desexing, limiting the number of cats at a property and changes to breeder registrations will therefore commence on a day or days to be proclaimed, which is the standard means of allowing for a staggered commencement.

The problem of feral cats is often raised with me. The amendments seek to clarify the differences between domestic, stray and feral cats. This is important for a number of reasons. Firstly, the Cat Management Act focuses on owned domestic cats, as well as stray cats which exist in human environments, even though they are not owned by anyone. Feral cats, on the other hand, live in the wild and have little or no reliance on the presence of humans. Feral cats, unfortunately, are established and widespread across Tasmania. Consequently, we need to be wise and strategic in how we tackle them.

Biosecurity Tasmania is involved in a number of projects focusing on the impacts of feral cats with other partners, including the Australian Government, local government and regional Natural Resource Management organisations. These projects are focused on the different aspects of cat management, including responsible cat ownership, protection of native wildlife and, importantly, developing a better understanding of the behaviour of feral cats.

Tasmania's landmark Biosecurity Act has provisions for establishing biosecurity programs that either state or local government or community groups can use to manage feral cats. Those programs provide a statutory basis for undertaking control and management actions. The biosecurity programs are also a means of promoting the important notion of shared responsibility.

These amendments take a balanced approach in relation to cat management. If we are to manage cats effectively at both state and local levels, there needs to be strong partnerships developed between state and local governments.

As mentioned earlier, the Government has put initiatives in place to help achieve this, including significant funding commitments to employ the regional cat management coordinators. Local government has been actively involved in the regional workshops established by the coordinators and the Local Government Association of Tasmania is a member of the project steering committee.

It is important to note that individual councils, not state government, determine their priorities under the Cat Management Act. Councils can choose to enforce all, some, or none of the act, and at the end of the day are responsive to their local communities and industry stakeholders. Councils under the current legislation have the powers to put in place by-laws covering issues such as registration and ensuring cats do not roam from the owner's property. These powers of councils will be retained under the proposed amendments.

Staff from the Department of Primary Industries, Parks, Water and Environment provide support to local government upon request and recognise the valuable role that local government plays. Biosecurity Tasmania has run initial training on the Cat Management Act and once the amendments are proclaimed will extend that training to local government.

I will now make some additional comments on the matter of confinement which is not included in the bill. A number of stakeholders have raised the subject of compulsory confinement of cats to the owner's property. We recognise that cat management is a shared responsibility and the Government strongly believes that compulsory confinement requires the combined support of the broader community, and that included pet owners and local government. Our belief is that a focused educational campaign on responsible cat ownership is needed to increase community awareness and understanding of responsible cat management principles and highlight key actions that owners can take.

Significant effort by the TassieCat project is being directed towards increasing awareness amongst Tasmanian pet owners on the different aspects of responsible cat ownership. A good example was the light-hearted TassieCat video series on the adventures of Scruffy the cat. These videos highlighted the importance of microchipping, desexing, cats being happy indoors and working to reduce the numbers of stray cats, with a focus on changing community attitudes and encouraging responsible cat ownership. There would be significant costs associated with compulsory confinement and complex challenges relating to statewide enforcement. This would be difficult to implement and fewer local councils would be willing to enforce compliance.

The Government believes councils are best placed to deal with local animal management issues and the act provides the ability for councils to establish by-laws which can address options for confining cats to the owner's property. It is worth noting that a 2019 review undertaken by Biosecurity Tasmania found that other state jurisdictions across Australia do not have statewide confinement legislation, and where regulation exists, it is through mechanisms of by-laws and involvement of local government that deal with issues such as confinement and the control of roaming cats.

It is the Government's considered view that the broader Tasmanian community, which includes local government, is not yet ready and willing to accept legislative requirements covering compulsory confinement of cats. It should also be noted that the proposed amendments will be carefully monitored. I have committed on behalf of the Government to monitor the implementation of the proposed amendments and review how they are being received and delivered. This will be an ongoing process as we continue to improve and strengthen Tasmania's cat management arrangements.

In concluding, these amendments to the Cat Management Act are very important to improving the effectiveness of the act. Whilst there may be arguments that the amendments do not go far enough, it is important to note that over the past four years the Government has consulted widely on cat management and believes these amendments reflect the balance of community views. The amendments support the principle of shared responsibility and at the same time allow statutory authorities such as local government to allocate effort and resources to areas that reflect the individual councils and their communities' priorities.

While the Cat Management Act is an important part of managing domestic and stray cats in Tasmania, the legislation should not be seen in isolation. The Government has in place a broad range of initiatives which have been established through the Tasmanian Cat Management Plan. The Government has developed partnerships with both government and non-government organisations across a range of project. Tasmania's new Biosecurity Act extends the regulatory framework to include feral cats and government investment, such as the regional cat coordinators project, has created opportunity for the community, local government and industry to work together.

These initiatives, covering all areas of cat management, seek to deliver positive outcomes that will significantly improve how we manage cats. The Government fully supports the introduction of this amendment bill.

I commend this bill to the House.

[4.33 p.m.]

**Dr BROAD** (Braddon) - Madam Deputy Speaker, I rise to give Labor's position on the bill. Labor will be supporting this bill.

The bill does some really good things and these amendments are definitely worthwhile. As the minister has highlighted, there are people in the community who think that it has not gone far enough, especially in the areas of confinement, which the minister has addressed in his second reading speech.

To start with, I will talk about the good things this bill does. If we can reduce the number of cats, and especially the number of unwanted cats that end up being dumped, then that will be a good thing.

The series of amendments deliver the following -

- compulsory microchipping of cats from the age of four months;
- compulsory desexing of cats by the age of four months;

- limiting to four the maximum number of cats that can be kept on a property without a permit;
- increased measures to protect private land from cats;
- improved arrangements for registering cat breeders; and
- requiring that cats are microchipped and desexed before they can be reclaimed from a cat management facility.

These are very good steps for the community, the environment and for responsible pet ownership. The uncontrolled breeding of cats and cats straying is a big issue and can be an environmental issue. I have been lobbied by a number of groups who encouraged Labor to amend this bill to include confinement, that is keeping cats to the owner's property and not further. I am not sure what the Greens position is; I am sure they will outline it soon. In the media it appears they may be trying to ensure that confinement is put in place.

The additional words included in the minister's second reading speech that were not in the first draft of his second reading speech go a long way to discussing issues with confinement. Issues such as who would pay for confinement, who would pay for the monitoring of cats and who would pay for the seizure of cats is not dealt with. When I was a councillor at Central Coast Council, with dogs, for example, the income from registration barely covered half of the cost of the compliance. That is picking up stray dogs, taking them to the pound and keeping them there until they were reclaimed, or if they were not reclaimed then euthanising them.

If we are to go down the road of confinement that would need to be ironed out. It would need significant agreement and discussions with local government. In the end, it would be local government that bore the brunt of the cost and the responsibility. There are a number of well-motivated community groups who believe that confinement is the best option. However, in the wider community if confinement was part of this bill it would come as a big shock to them. I doubt it would be supported in the wider community. This is a good step. As the minister has outlined, the proposal is to monitor the implementation of this amendment bill and see how it works with a view to potentially progressing to confinement.

That is a good goal. Politics is about the art of the possible. This is a good step. In the long term it would be good to move towards confinement and keeping cats on properties. At the moment that is a step too far. If this amendment bill passes today it will make a significant contribution to reducing the number of cats and unwanted cats that end up being dumped or end up becoming strays, or end up being feral in a couple of generations.

I will use the minister's second reading speech as a guideline for what I am going to talk about. I grew up on a farm and we had cats. The minister talked about cats being companion animals. In my household the cats were companion animals but they also had an important role in controlling vermin. We always had cats. They caught mice, rats and rabbits. I saw their effectiveness as a predator. They are amazing predators when it comes to catching smaller wildlife, especially birds. The way they can stalk a starling and catch it is amazing to watch. They are very effective killers, of that there is no doubt. I have heard many people say, 'My little cat only stays at home and would not hurt a fly'. Cats can be vicious predators even those big fluffy flat-faced cats.

When I was growing up we had two female cats - Bob Hawke and Fraser. You would be quite surprised to know that they did not get on. Bobby cat lived to a ripe old age. She must have been 20 when she died of old age. I remember Bobby cat being hardly able to move as a scrawny old cat, yet this scrawny cat that could barely walk still came home with rabbits. I suppose they stand above the burrow, the rabbit comes out and the cat jumps. That really highlighted to me just how effective cats are as predators and also, on reflection, the damage they could potentially do to the environment and vulnerable species.

When I was growing up, our farm was the first farm on the right past the Gawler shop. Gawler is out of Ulverstone and there were a few houses between Ulverstone and Gawler, but after Gawler ours was the first farm. We had a big shed that used to be a pea viner and many farmers in the district used to put their hay there.

Many cats were dumped at that shed. When growing up, I remember constantly seeing the effects of that dumping. Starving little kittens would rock up at our house, which was about a kilometre away from the shed, because somebody had dumped them there. The kittens had gotten big and people had just dumped them at this big hay shed, thinking they would be eating mice. Instead these starving kittens would rock up at our house looking for food, and my father would have to end up euthanising them. That happened all the time. When cat breeding season came, cats would be dumped, and kittens would start rocking up to our house looking for food. It was distressing that people would do this, but there was promiscuous breeding, as the minister highlighted, and these unwanted cats would be dumped and end up at our place.

Over time, houses were built along the road to our farm; in effect the town came to us and the dumping stopped. Also, the hay shed was turned into an onion factory, and the dumping stopped. I am convinced the dumping stopped not because the kittens were not being bred, not because there were fewer kittens, but because people were dumping those same kittens further out, up towards North Motton or maybe up in the bush, wherever it was.

This was a significant problem, and I strongly believe it is still going on. That is why compulsory microchipping and desexing of cats is so important. It is to stop kittens being dumped, and it is a key step in responsible pet ownership. People need to understand this - and I think government has an educational role in explaining to people what cats do will lead the move to confinement of cats. Already I see people I know creating cat runs and going down that road.

This bill clarifies roles. When domestic cats are captured, they are taken to a cat management facility and are not allowed out unless they are desexed and microchipped. The bill also controls breeding of cats, because you have to be a registered breeder.

There is also the issue of people who have 20, 30, 40 or 50 cats, which is no good for anybody. In his second reading speech, the minister highlighted that a number of people are like that, and quite often their cats are in very poor condition. I would hate to go into one of those houses where 30 or 40 cats are breeding promiscuously, and the situation is just becoming worse and worse. It has an impact on the whole community. These sorts of things need to be controlled.

There is no doubt more needs to be done about feral cats. Feral cats are not only dangerous to wildlife, but they are also dangerous to stock. They spread toxoplasmosis, which can cause abortion in farm animals, as Mr Deputy Speaker probably knows.

I remember seeing a wallaby acting almost like it was drunk. It was dazed and staggering around. It was in our stockyard and I came back to check on it, thinking, 'What the hell is wrong with that thing?'. I do not know how it got in there, but I opened the gate to let it out, came back and it was dead.

I went out to see the Upper Meander Catchment Group and especially Kevin Knowles, and he talked to me about toxoplasmosis. I realised then that the wallaby was suffering from toxoplasmosis. Its symptoms were identical to what you would see, and indeed that is what killed that wallaby, so the native animals are also impacted.

Toxoplasmosis is something that is also very dangerous for pregnant women. One of the things they say during pregnancy is not to go near cats, and the reason is because of toxoplasmosis. If you have many cats straying and many cats unwanted and so on, the spread of toxoplasmosis is elevated, which is something we do not want to see.

While this bill is not perfect, it does some really good things and we support it and commend it.

In respect of confinement, something the minister probably did not pick up was that if we go down the road of this bill containing a confinement provision, a number of things would need to be dealt with which are probably not obvious right now. For example, what would you do with a rental property? If you are a cat owner and you live in a rental property, who would be responsible for a cat run? Who would maintain it and so on? Various things would need to be worked out before that provision could be enacted. As the minister said, who would enforce it? It would have to be local government, but how would it be funded? We know a registration system would not be able to cover the cost. That is why this staged approach is far more sensible than going for confinement in this bill.

I know the community groups that have lobbied me will be disappointed that confinement is not part of this bill but, as I said before, we have to take a staged approach and that is sensible in this instance. The minister's point about local government is the key to being able to manage cats at the local level, but it has to be more than just goodwill. There has to be some funding involved.

The minister highlighted that managing cats is complex. It definitely is. People feel passionate about their companion animals - there is no doubt about that - but unwanted litters that may be abandoned or given away creates animals that are not wanted. If we have promiscuous breeding and unwanted litters, people end up with a cat or a kitten that they do not necessarily want. You have a cat, then the cat gets pregnant and you have a dozen kittens to get rid of. The tradition was to hand them over to your family - you might end up with a cat you do not want, but you would feel badly because you did not want the cat put down and so on. Compulsory desexing and microchipping means that sort of behaviour will not occur because people will have to go to registered breeders to get a cat, so kittens being foisted onto people will not happen.

Unfortunately people get cats at Christmas time or have kittens given to them. If desexing and microchipping is enforced, it will reduce the number of cats and the ability of people to get cats. They will have to go to some effort rather than the cats being offered to them, which often happened in the past.

As to the issue of reclaiming cats from cat management facilities, I understand there are three such facilities in the state. Something that is not quite clear is what happens with cats that go through a cycle of being captured, handed back, captured, handed back and so on. There is some cost recovery in terms of microchipping, so if a cat is captured and it is not desexed, the cat management facility can recoup costs for doing that microchipping and desexing. If someone comes along and reclaims that cat, they have to pay for that, which makes sense. However, there is nothing in the bill about what happens when a cat gets captured a month or two months later, is sent to the cat management facility and is later claimed. Is there a provision for the cat management facility to reclaim the cost of the keeping of that cat until it is reclaimed? If the minister could clarify that, it would be handy.

It will be up to local government to police this compulsory microchipping and desexing. It is easy to detect a microchip and no doubt with desexing you can see the tattoo in the ear, but I am not sure that local government will be going around checking on every cat. There is a huge role for responsible pet ownership to make sure that their kittens are desexed and microchipped at four months of age. Even with the best intent of this bill, it will only be effective if the community does their bit and ensures that their cats are indeed microchipped and desexed. I do not have a cat at the moment but if I did, I would not want it to be breeding. I would want it to be desexed and microchipped. I would not want there to be kittens. That is what cats do; cats are very good breeders as well as being very effective predators.

The question of policing: it will be up to the local governments. I hope that the Government continues to work with local government to assist them in funding this as it rolls out.

Limiting the number of cats that can be kept without a permit: I am not exactly sure how the number of four was arrived at but I imagine that most people have one or two cats. Four is maybe giving people a little bit of a leeway. I am not complaining about that number; I do not think it is unreasonable. What is unreasonable is 20, 30, or 40 cats.

The only issue here is that we know that there are already people with a large number of cats so when this bill is enacted - should it pass, and I believe it will - what happens? What are the transition provisions to make sure that somebody down the road with 20 or 30 cats and the numbers have to come down to four? How is that process to be managed? Can the minister clarify that for the record? I understand that the department has had thoughts around this. I remember from my first briefing, which was some time ago, that the department has thought it through. But I thought it would be really good for the minister to put on public record how that process will happen. If you have in excess of four cats, what process is to be put in place over time to reduce the numbers to that four-cat threshold?

The cat management facilities - Ten Lives, Just Cats and RSPCA - do a great job. They are regularly called upon to deal with hoarding problems. Let us hope that over a relatively short space of time that is something they no longer have to deal with. I am sure that Just Cats, the RSPCA and Ten Lives will still have a significant role to play in educating people and handing over cats that have been desexed and microchipped.

The changes to protection for private properties are also welcome. Landowners involved in primary production can trap, seize or euthanise a cat found on their property. I believe that they can actually shoot a cat without trapping it. I am pretty sure that is accurate, minister.

If you have lambs and so on you do not want a lot of cats around because of toxoplasmosis, as we have said. Also, there are breeders of birds and pigeons who probably do not want cats around. This gets back to responsible cat ownership. If a pet cat gets destroyed that is very unfortunate, although if a landowner is not involved in primary production then they should not, according to this, destroy a cat that is obviously domestic and cared for. That would be pretty hard to do if it was from a distance and you were trying to shoot it. It would be very easy if you were trapping it.

I am not sure when the reclaiming of cats from cat management facilities happens, as I have talked about. There does not appear to be any fine or anything like that for repeat offences. Having to reclaim your cat from a cat management facility will become a burden and hopefully encourage cat owners to keep the cat on their property. But if there was some sort of other element - I am not sure if the minister considered that for repeat offenders whose cats were constantly trapped and getting their cat collected and returned. I suppose that was the question that I asked earlier about claiming compensation. I am sure that it is going to cost the cat management facility to look after that cat until it gets collected.

This is probably more a management type process, but what happens if somebody comes to reclaim their cat and finds there is going to be a cost for microchipping and desexing? What happens if they simply say 'no' and refuse? They have identified the cat is theirs. If they refuse to collect the cat because they do not want to pay for its desexing and microchipping, I am not sure what happens then. Could that be clarified? Does the reclaiming of ownership happen before the desexing and microchipping? It is probably more a management issue for the cat facility to make sure they are going to get their money back. If someone comes to claim their cat, they say, 'Collect it in a couple of days after we have microchipped and desexed it.'

Registration of cat breeders is good. Controlling and especially reducing the number of unwanted cats is very good. It will be great for the state. It highlights the important objective of the act. It is stated here in black and white, 'to reduce the number of kittens being born'.

From what I understand, it is much easier to be a registered cat breeder if you are a member of a cat organisation. From what I remember from the briefing, if you are not a member of a cat organisation it will be dealt with on a case-by-case basis, being allowed to be registered as a breeder. Could there be some clarification around that issue? Who would be allowed to register as a cat breeder? What are the circumstances in which somebody could be registered as a cat breeder? Being a member of the cat organisation is one pathway. Are there others? If I wanted to start breeding cats and I am not a member of the cat organisation, is that possible? What sort of hoops would I have to jump through?

This is being phased in over a period of 12 months. Getting back to my earlier question, about reducing numbers from whatever it is down to four, is it proposed that reduction in numbers will happen over that 12 months?

We know feral cats are a massive problem. While this bill focuses on domestic cats and stray cats that are, to some extent, reliant on humans for either companionship or food, feral cats are another issue. I appreciated the briefing from the department and talking about some of the technologies and techniques they are developing throughout the state and their research project on Robbins Island.

**Mr Barnett** - Three Hummock Island.



**Dr BROAD** - Three Hummock Island, sorry. The research is looking at understanding more about breeding cycles and when to bait and when to trap. It seems like even on the peripheries of towns, there is a never-ending supply of feral cats. A friend's parents owned a caravan park in Ulverstone and the boobiallas at the beach were chock-a-block full of feral cats. They were trapping all the time and having no end of trouble. The more they trapped, it seemed the more there were; a never-ending supply.

It would be amazing for the state and the environment if we could be like the subantarctic islands and eliminate cats from our environment. That goal appears to be impossible due to the widespread nature of feral cats. Maybe down the track technology will help solve those problems with different baits, different techniques and other tools that we cannot even imagine. It would be amazing for Tasmania's environment if we could eliminate feral cats because they have such a huge impact on animals, birds and especially small mammals.

I was very interested from a personal and scientific interest in the work the department is doing in better understanding the behaviour of feral cats. I commend that and hope that the minister appropriately funds those sorts of programs into the future. They could make a significant difference to the environment of Tasmania and also reduce issues like toxoplasmosis.

The minister talked about local government but the funding of registrations, even for dogs, does not cover it. The Government needs to work hand in hand with local government, more than just employing the cat coordinators but going down to local government level and working with them to make sure the lofty goals of this amendment bill are enacted and that people do microchip and desex their cats.

I note that councils can enforce all or none of the act. Hopefully they all choose to enforce and the Government assists them with that. It is also interesting that councils can enact by-laws covering issues such as registration to help pay for the cat management costs, but they can also insist on confinement at the local level. If there are local government areas in this state that think this bill does not go far enough they have that tool in hand that they can enforce confinement and they can go through that process with their local community. If we have councils going down that road - Kingborough Council may be one of the first to consider it seeing as they are doing a lot of work in this space. If we have some municipalities taking the steps, educating and assisting their community to implement confinement, this can be done at the local level with a by-law and that may be the way to give us a better indication of what further amendments to this legislation need to occur. That power to enforce confinement apparently has always been the case.

In conclusion, this bill has some lofty goals. It will take goodwill from not only pet owners being responsible in the way they manage their pets, it will take a lot of goodwill also from local government and the state government to make sure local governments are assisted because local government will be the coalface. Labor supports this bill. It is not perfect. Maybe there will be some people out there who are not happy but it is well worth implementing.

[5.02 p.m.]

**Dr WOODRUFF** (Franklin) - Mr Deputy Speaker, this bill has been looked at by many people across Tasmania for many years now with a great deal of hope and a great deal of mitigation. There is an enthusiastic desire across many sectors of the community, a broad church, if you like, of different groups to mitigate the damage of feral cats on the environment

and also domestic cats. This is an impact not just on native wildlife but also on agricultural production and has threats to human health.

One less human-introduced pressure into the landscape and agricultural production would be very welcome. Indeed, all the surveys that have been undertaken show that not only the majority of Tasmanians who were asked about this matter but the majority of cat owners support strong legislation to manage the impacts of cats in Tasmania.

This is within the context of a wildlife extinction crisis which is happening across the world. In May last year in Paris a broad group of international scientists, 455 different experts from 50 countries, delivered a very substantial report from the Intergovernmental Panel on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services. They laid out a deeply concerning picture of the status of wildlife extinction across the globe and the likely threat in the near term. Their report shows that 38 per cent of all known species on a global scale are on the verge of extinction. That is a truly staggering concept to come to terms with and I think most people struggle to come to terms with that in any measurable way.

When we look at the small scale of the role of native bees or other insects in pollinating crops and in keeping the biodiversity in our trees and forests we start to appreciate the value of insects. We need to understand that 40 per cent of all amphibians are on the verge of extinction or that a third of coral reefs and all mammals across the planet are threatened, as are 12 per cent of all birds. These are things which are not in the far-off distant future anymore but right here, right now. Over the next couple of decades we are facing more than a million animals on the verge of extinction.

In Tasmania what we can do is take some pressure off the native wildlife that we know that cats are involved in contributing to in very large manner. The Australian Government did an assessment of the impact of predation by feral cats in 2015. They found that feral cats are a serious vertebrate pest in Australia that have severe and catastrophic effects on native fauna. The predation of native species by feral cats is the cause of not just the loss of wildlife but also disease transmission.

Cats prey on mammals, birds, reptiles, amphibians and invertebrates and depend on live prey as the sole source of food. They also predate on grasshoppers, centipedes, fish and frogs. While some cats can become specialists in particular types of prey, others remain generalists.

The impacts as a result of disease-causing agents are from the viruses that feral cats breed. In Australia there are three known species of bacteria - fungi, protozoa helminths and arthropods. All of these can be transmitted to native species, particularly mammals, but also to humans. Toxoplasmosis is one significant protozoan species that uses the cat as the host and is a particular problem not only for people who are immuno-compromised and pregnant women but also for native Australian animals.

The Australian Government report was very clear in the finding that best-practice management of feral cats must involve reduction of the threat at the source. The source of course is the domestic cat population. If we can control the source we still have a problem to deal with the existing feral cat population but if it is not being increased from the domestic population, it is a contained population which is then possible for us to do our best to manage. We know that is not just feral cats killing native animals. On average a feral cat kills 740

animals a year and this was from Australian research released last year on the impact of feral and pet cats killing animals in Australia each year.

They also found that domestic cats on average kill 75 animals a year. This is enormous and as another member, maybe Dr Broad, mentioned, people like to be deluded in thinking their sweet, loving pet could not possibly go off and kill birds and insects but the evidence is against them and that is exactly what happens.

The dangers of toxoplasmosis have been well documented. I will not go into detail about that except to say that this also affects native animals. We are very aware of the impact on miscarriage of sheep and the impact on agricultural production costs. I notice that the Tasmanian Farmers and Graziers Association in the draft consultation for this amendment bill included their comments of concern about the enormous and understated problem of cats that prey on native wildlife, have an enormous environmental impact on agriculture and threaten human health. Mr Skillen said at the time that feral cats are the major host of toxoplasmosis and that the TFGA believed the disease had caused tens of thousands of dollars of losses of sheep in Tasmania as well as killing wallabies and other native animals. The TFGA is one major stakeholder and has been a strong proponent of cat confinement. I will speak more about that as I go on.

The other impact on Tasmanian wildlife is of bandicoots. We often see some of these Tasmanian mammals stumbling around blindly during the day. It may be that the Bennett's wallabies or pademelons that we see in this state have been infected by toxoplasmosis and are not only vulnerable to death but also to predation from raptors or other animals and to being hit by cars. This unfortunately often happens.

The evidence is that some 84 per cent of feral and stray cats that have been tested in Tasmania are infected with toxoplasmosis. We have strong evidence about the impacts on human health and miscarriage and stillbirth. My experience in my previous work with people living and dying with HIV AIDS showed they were extremely careful about not associating with domestic cats. They were even concerned with trying to make sure cats stayed out of their backyard so there was no possibility of contamination with cat faeces or cats urinating in their vegetable patch. It was a live issue for those people I spoke to at the time. I can only imagine that anyone else who is immune compromised, who is going through cancer treatment, for example, should also be aware of the need to take precautions against toxoplasmosis in that condition.

The other issue, which sounds small compared to the gravity of the things I have mentioned, is the nuisance factor. Anyone who works in a local council and has responsibility for picking up the phone will know that as well as people making complaints about barking dogs, people will complain about cats coming into their backyard, threatening bird life, meowing and having cat fights. People can do nothing about that. It is hard to catch a cat. It is hard to keep a cat out when a cat wants to come in any time of the day or night.

People were warm in their support for the Liberals' announcement. In the minister, Mr Rockliff's media release in 2016 he said that the draft cat management plan was up for consultation and that he had established a cat management reference group as key stakeholders. The management plan included proposed amendments to this bill to improve it, to include the compulsory desexing and microchipping of cats, to allow an earlier age of desexing, limiting the number of cats allowed at a property without a permit, improving arrangements to make it

easier for farmers to control cats on their properties, and confining cats to premises to prevent nuisance and roaming cats.

That was an important commitment and it was enthusiastically supported by the members of the cat management reference group, which included the TFGA, cat shelters, vets, the Tasmanian Conservation Trust and a whole range of other people who have been involved in that process for many years. They were most enthusiastic in their support for the Government's plan on confinement. Unfortunately, what has happened is the Government has quietly left out the most important part of this bill.

There were 136 submissions. I have read as many as I have been able to. From the word of the staff, there is strong agreement within those submissions, about 80 per cent, in support of containing cats. People describe this in various ways. Basically, it means taking responsibility for your cat, keeping it on your property, and making sure it does not go into anyone else's. It is that simple.

There was strong support for proposed section 12, microchipping. The Greens support this. There was also strong support for proposed section 14, which has reduced the age at which kittens must be desexed from six months to four months, and proposed section 16, removing the care agreement section. I could see no comments in the submissions that I read against those things. There was very strong agreement. It is not often the case when members of parliament are looking at bills as large and as important as this one where there is such unanimity from people.

However, while almost everyone was in close agreement, if not unanimity, the bill fails to introduce confinement, the one thing that is actually required to effectively control cat damage, the one thing that is required to put the onus of responsibility on the owner of the cat, which is what happens under the Dog Control Act.

People want cats to be treated like dogs in this manner. They want people to take responsibility for their pet. It is simple. It beggars belief that the Government has gone soft at the knees on this one. It is disappointing. Some people feel more than disappointed because of the grave impacts it has. Cat shelters work incredibly hard. To have cats constantly coming through their doors without this important amendment to the bill is for them very disappointing.

Minister, you said in your speech that a number of stakeholders had raised the subject of compulsory confinement of cats to the cat's property. Well, it was more than 'a number'. The majority of stakeholders have done that.

You said that 'we recognised cat management is a shared responsibility, and the Government strongly believes that compulsory confinement requires the combined support of the broader community, and that includes pet owners and local government'. I do not understand why the state Government believes it has no responsibility in this space, to create laws, as it does with the management of dogs, so that pet owners understand their obligations very clearly under law, so that there are penalties for not taking responsibility. There is no support here. The Government is just passing the buck to local government. Local government is at the coal face in this situation.

Minister, you said that the Government has consulted widely on cat management and believes these amendments reflect the balance of communities' views.

Well, no, they do not, minister. I am sorry. I would like you to come to this in your second reading wind up, if you would not mind. There is no balance of community reviews that this reflects because the overwhelming majority of the community want cat confinement, so that is not reflecting the balance. That is reflecting a tiny minority. I am not sure who they are because they are not coming out and making themselves known but they are certainly not the majority of Tasmanians.

By the evidence of the submissions, 80 per cent of them are pro-confinement. The staff told me about a survey that was undertaken. They have the three cat coordinators, one from each region in Tasmania. A survey was undertaken of people about their views on the matter of confinement. People who do not own cats want cat owners to keep their cat on their property. That is understandable. You have an interest. I asked the staff what the survey responses were from cat owners. Cat owners who have the cats obviously may have an interest in this. They are most at interest. Of the 344 people who were surveyed, 160 were cat owners. Of these, 78 per cent of cat owners were pro-confinement. Not only that, 68 per cent of people who allowed their cats to wander, as in they recognised that their cats wandered or left the house, were pro-confinement.

I do not understand how the figures that the minister is talking about reflect the balance of community views. I do not believe that they exist because that is not what I have seen. The minister said that the amendments support the principle of shared responsibility and at the same time allow statutory authorities such as local government to allocate effort and resources to areas that reflect the individual councils and their community's profiles. That is just buck-passing, if I have ever heard it.

Essentially, the state Government is walking away from the leadership it promised that the community enthusiastically looked forward to in 2015-16. It has just said that is too hard: it might cost them money. Maybe it will cost them money but what are the costs of not acting? Where is the work that has been done on the cost of not acting? What about the costs to agriculture and to livestock, which the Tasmanian Farmers and Graziers Association was talking about? What about the costs to the loss of native wildlife every year? These are not costs that this Government puts a monetary value on. It ought to because they are an essential part of a functioning Tasmanian economy and natural environment.

It has been an issue that the Government has walked away from, trying to deal with it in the bill in another way. Instead of the person who owns the cat being made to take responsibility for keeping it on their own property, the Government has created a workaround which, in our view, does not work. It has some unpleasant, unintended consequences.

The proposed new section 17 in the bill - Protection of property from cats - does not put the responsibility for managing the cat's damage on the owner. Instead, it shifts responsibility to the aggrieved person to take some defensive action against cat damage on their property. It allows any person who owns or resides on a property to trap a cat for 24 hours. It also allows for the destruction of cats by a wider category of primary producers and also by a new category of food producers. Such groups include people who might prepare or store food for commercial purposes. As I understand it, that would be the preparation or storage of food on any scale and in any area. It is not in a prescribed commercial area; it could be in a residential area.

We have concerns that this new group of people who are allowed to trap and destroy cats, people who produce food or store food; those people who may make or store food for sale in

the suburbs, such as a shop or a café, would be allowed to trap and kill cats that might have wandered across over the back fence, without any obligation to inform or find the owner. That is hardly an ideal and possibly not an intended consequence for this workaround the Government is attempting.

The failure to make confinement laws a part of this amendment and to only provide for 24-hour cat trapping anywhere opens up a Pandora's box of neighbourhood disputes. It continues the aggravation for people who do not want cats defecating or killing birds on their property. It legalises the potential for petty vindictiveness between neighbours, with people being allowed to catch their next-door neighbour's cat and hand it to a cat management facility without having to inform the owner. This is hardly a desirable situation and I suspect not one the Government has anticipated or thought through properly.

The Circular Head Council has made a submission in this respect and they made this point very clearly. They said -

While all the amendments are considered useful, the apparent Cabinet rejection of the concepts of:

- (i) compulsory enclosure of all cats
- (ii) compulsory registration of all cats

are considered to undermine their opportunity to provide an appropriate solution to the continually growing cat nuisance problem.

Failure to legislate to require cats to be confined and/or always be controlled when not within their owner's property, coupled with the expectation that people with nuisance cats roaming on to their property should be responsible for catching cats and returning them to their owners is unfair, and naïve. It appears to render the 'increased measures to protect private land owners from roaming, stray and feral cats' unworkable.

How (and why) are affected property owners expected to identify the owners of roaming nuisance cats in regional Tasmania, handle, house and transport said cats some distance to humanely deal with the nuisance that is not caused by them? It is accepted that micro chipped cats will be able to be identified, however will the resources (time and financial) expended by the aggrieved be able to be recouped from the cat owner?

Probably unlikely.

The Tasmanian Land Conservancy is also strongly of the view that cat containment is required to make sure that -

... domestic cats are under effective control ... [because] they roam day and night onto neighbouring properties, bush reserves and other conservation areas and continue to wreak havoc on wildlife irrespective of being desexed, microchipped and bell collars.

The RSPCA was also strongly of the view that the 78 per cent of people recently surveyed were in favour of cat containment and a larger percentage, 100 per cent of people who work with stray and feral cats would agree with confinement.

I will leave some other comments until later in the bill. We will be going into Committee and foreshadow that we will propose an amendment that will deal with the situation that the Government has found itself in. We would like to help reduce the prospect of neighbourhood disputes and also find a solution to the issue of roaming cats.

The minister talks in the speech about putting money into education, but there is not a cent of money in the forward Estimates has been committed towards anything to do with the management of stray, roaming and feral cats in Tasmania. The \$1.4 million the minister talked about finishes this year - there is no forward Estimates commitment and the money has gone only to three regional officers. Nothing has been given to the cat shelters - Ten Lives, Just Cats, the Southern Cat Rescue and the RSPCA - that do the hard work.

I want to give a shout-out because this puts it in perspective. Ten Lives is having a fundraiser to raise money to build a project, and is starting it on Saturday, 29 August. They are trying to raise money for a revamp of their cat shelter, which is very inadequate given the amount of work they have. The CEO, David Reeves, will be riding a quarter-length Tour de France, cycling around for three weeks with 21 stages. People can get involved starting on 29 August or just contribute money, which would be great.

The point is that this is something which needs state government support. It is a leadership issue for the state to confine cats; while the Greens support this bill and the changes it will bring in, we have a number of concerns about unintended consequences and particularly about the failure to include confinement. I think we all want a solution to this, and it is available - people can take responsibility for the pets they choose to have in their lives. Pets bring love, but I think everyone in Tasmania agrees that feral cats can cause destruction. We want to do everything we can to mitigate what is happening in that space.

[5.32 p.m.]

**Ms OGILVIE** (Clark) - Madam Deputy Speaker, I will be very brief because I know others want to speak and I think there is some hope of getting a vote through in the not-too-distant future.

I will be supporting the bill. I think a power of good work has been done. I want to thank the minister's office and the Department of Primary Industries, Parks, Water and Environment - DPIPW - for their briefings. I know you met my wonderful staff, but we also had a series of meetings with interest groups. The previous speaker spoke about some of those issues so I will not also go through them as well.

I am very happy to support the bill. It takes many good steps forward. I know there are those who feel that whilst it addresses a substantial number of the issues at play in relation to cats, the issue of containment is still live. We have met with and had communications from a range of groups such as Landcare Tasmania, the Tasmanian Farmers and Graziers Association, DPIPW, the Tasmanian Conservation Trust - TCT - and others. Landcare Tasmania in particular put forward some robust views and funding requests totalling \$7 million over a term of up to three years to assist local government to deliver containment-type issues, including facilitators, programs, supporting materials and communications et cetera.

There is still a need for funding and leadership on the containment issue, but I want to say that I am very pleased to support the legislation. I promised to keep my contribution short

so we can whip through this bill quickly. I am not sure, but I suspect we may go into Committee where I will have a little bit more to say on the containment issue.

[5.34 p.m.]

**Mr TUCKER** (Lyons) - Madam Deputy Speaker, it is interesting to listen to the arguments being put forward today and what Dr Woodruff said about the survey. I think it would be closer to 95 per cent of cat owners who would be sensible about the management of cats, probably closer to 99 per cent. I find most people who have animals and stock to care for are very much in favour of that sort of thing, just like dog owners are. I think the biggest thing with this issue with cats is the ferals and the pet cats. There is a big difference, which has not been spoken about today.

When you catch or you shoot feral cats, and I have shot and caught many over my lifetime and I am still doing it - well, you might as well be honest about it - they are extremely strong and big and vicious. When you catch them in those traps, you can feel them nearly pulling the wire apart, whereas when you catch a domestic cat, it is nothing like that. There is a big difference which I think needs to be noted in this debate.

As to the containment or confinement of cats, I have lived on a farm all my life and you are always going to have animals that will break out. We had a bull my father bred, one of the best bulls he bred. He used to walk up to the old wooden gates and would just put his head against the wooden gate and then start to push and would just keep pushing. Then we would hear a crack and the bull would walk through that gate. Then he would go up to the next one as he made his way back to the cows. There was no way of stopping him and some animals are like that.

**Mr Shelton** - Electric fences.

**Mr TUCKER** - If you want to talk about electric fences, I can tell you a few stories about pigs but I am trying to keep my contribution fairly short today.

I also want to talk a little about cat management within councils. When I was on the Break O'Day Council, we looked at cat management, especially around the tips because many feral cats tend to congregate in those places. We were mainly catching feral cats, not domestic cats. I believe domestic cat owners need to be given the benefit of the doubt; I think they do the right thing, so I do not think we need to be dictatorial and say, 'We're going to put this over the top of you and you're going to comply and if you don't, we're going to fine you'.

**Dr Woodruff** - Isn't that the case with most dog owners? They have lovely little dogs that don't maul people but we still have to have the owners being responsible.

**Mr TUCKER** - You are always going to have that percentage.

**Dr Woodruff** - We still have a Dog Control Act that says you have to have your dog under control.

**Mr TUCKER** - Yes, dogs are allowed out on a leash, but there are also areas where dogs are allowed to run in council areas off leash.

**Dr Woodruff** - In confined spaces.



**Mr TUCKER** - I am fully aware of the damage cats do, having seen it firsthand. I commend the bill because I think desexing, registering and microchipping of cats will do much towards trying to fix this problem. It is people who are just dumping cats, as Dr Broad has said, who have caused this problem. Obviously we must have inherited your cats because they have moved over to us from the north-west.

[5.38 p.m.]

**Mr STREET** (Franklin) - Madam Deputy Speaker I might be even briefer than Mr Tucker but I put on the record my support for this bill. When I came to Kingborough Council in 2011, this issue was quite prominent within the council and Kingborough has been a leader in Tasmania in terms of this policy. When I hear the arguments for containment or mandatory desexing and microchipping, all those things were discussed at Kingborough Council back in 2011.

We also talked about a complete cat ban perhaps for Bruny Island or other parts of Kingborough, but the general consensus around the table across a wide range of views was that such a heavy-handed approach probably was not going to get the results we were looking for anyway. What we needed was support from cat owners and all people across the municipality in terms of promoting responsible cat ownership.

This bill strikes the right balance. The Liberal Government recognises that cats are an important part of people's lives as companion animals and very much part of families in the Tasmanian community. They make fantastic pets. Not for me, I might add, but for other people. Cat ownership is associated with a range of health benefits.

This bill sensibly gets the balance right. We recognise that for many of us they are loved companions, but we also recognise that cats, if they are not cared for in a responsible manner, can have a serious impact on the community, agriculture and wildlife.

In delivering this bill, the Liberal Government is getting the balance right. I say to Dr Woodruff as I reflect on numerous occasions when the Greens came in here and talked about some of these things, if cat containment was so important, Kingborough Council was talking about this issue in 2011 and there were two Greens members of parliament who were in cabinet at that time so you could have very easily progressed this cat containment idea while you were in government if it was that important to you.

[5.41 p.m.]

**Mr BARNETT** (Lyons - Minister for Primary Industries and Water) - Mr Deputy Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to respond in summing up. Thank you for the contributions around the Chamber. With respect to the Greens, we have agreed to disagree and I will respond to some of those remarks.

Thank you very much to my counterpart, Dr Shane Broad, for the positive, sensible, constructive remarks and support for the bill on behalf of the Opposition. It was great hearing a bit about your farm background and Bob Hawke and Fraser.

Tasmanians love their pets. We have one of the highest pet ownership rates in Australia. I was pleased to have a round table with the companion animal operators, Ten Lives, Just Cats, RSPCA and a whole range of others during COVID-19 to help them through these tough times.

It has been tough, I acknowledge that, but I also acknowledge those who have made contributions on this cat management plan over a long period of time. Thank you, Dr Broad. You talked through very sensibly the issue of confinement, the arguments for and against, the issues of cost, the issues of enforcement. You referred to rental properties being a difficult issue where a cat owner has to get permission from the owner of the property.

There is a whole range of issues and I will touch on that further. There is reference to the staged approach. The Government sees there are issues. That is why we want to have a phase-in process. I will be monitoring the implementation of this legislation in the months and years ahead.

Dr Broad responded on the topic of local government. You understand how local government works and its important role in managing animals in municipal areas. You asked a couple of questions about repeat offenders and reclaiming from a cat management facility. Cat management facilities can require the recovery of reasonable expenses from the constituent -

**Dr Broad** - By interjection, not specifically for desexing and microchipping. It can also be for keeping the cat.

**Mr BARNETT** - Correct. I hope that clarifies that particular matter. Repeat offenders will probably not be repeat offenders if they keep requiring that. If they leave their cat there, the cat will then be adopted out.

You talked about toxoplasmosis, which is important. My colleagues, Nick Street and John Tucker, spoke very positively about the bill. John Tucker also spoke about the problems with feral cats. Nick Street spoke about the important role of council and what councils can and cannot do.

I will address the issues raised by Dr Woodruff. She has foreshadowed an amendment. I am happy to deal with that amendment shortly and see what we can do. There is a view to seeing if we can deal with this within the time available. I put on the record the positive, constructive remarks of Madeleine Ogilvie and appreciate that support, understanding the importance of caring for a domestic cat, dealing with stray cats, and of course, feral cats. Thank you very much for those positive contributions, Ms Ogilvie.

With respect to Dr Woodruff, on the impacts of feral cats on wildlife, and impact of toxoplasmosis, the impact on our environment, we are in agreement. There is no doubt that there can be a huge impact on farming and agriculture, and on the environment more generally. On native birds, native animals. They can be not just a menace and a nuisance, but much worse than that. You asked about getting broad support for the management plan we put forward, and how that is justified. I have talked to all the key stakeholders, I think, and had feedback from them. I appreciate that. There is broad support for the management plan of what we want to do, where we want to go.

Where there is some question is around compulsory confinement across the board. That is the view that you hold, and you are entitled to do that. The practicality of that is really difficult. I encourage confinement. I encourage, on behalf of the Government, responsible management of cats. That principle is supported. We need responsible management of cats.

Where we do not want to go is to deal with the cost of penalising people more than \$3000 for putting their cat out the front door, out the back door.

Second, dealing with compulsory confinement under your foreshadowed approach - we will deal with this in Committee - is 20-penalty units, which is four times higher than a 5-penalty unit for a dog that is found at large, that is \$860. Under your proposal it is \$3440 for a cat at large. It is not on. We do not support it.

The other big problem is the cost of modifying your property to keep the cat contained. This could be not only hundreds of dollars, it could be thousands of dollars, to confine the cat at home. This is a cost that we simply do not support. It is unfair.

What we need is full support from local government, cat owners and the community. It is a shared responsibility. That is what I said in the second reading speech. That is the reason we do not support it. In addition, as correctly noted by my counterpart Dr Broad, how do you enforce it? What we do know is that local government has a key role to play. They already have that responsibility. If they choose to use it, whether it be on Bruny Island or other parts of Tasmania, that is an opportunity for local government.

I have dealt with those in the time available. I am more than happy to have further discussion in Committee. We think this is a well-balanced bill. We want to get the balance right. We do not want to go over the top with compulsory confinement across the state. We do not support that. I am happy to hear further arguments from Dr Woodruff, but we are very confident in the merit of this bill. We think it is going a long way. I look forward to further feedback on the bill, monitoring the success and implementation of this bill, and further interaction with the key stakeholders, the cat management facilities, and other stakeholders, where there is an impact by domestic cats, stray cats, and feral cats.

I commend the bill to the House.

## **CAT MANAGEMENT AMENDMENT BILL 2019 (No. 55)**

### **In Committee**

**Clauses 1 to 8 agreed to.**

#### **Clause 9 -**

Section 12 amended (Microchipping of cats)

**Dr WOODRUFF** - In its submission the RSPCA asked whether there would be any encouragement of publicising of where authorised microchippers were situated. Its view was that a registry of authorised microchippers would be useful and that microchipping initiatives or implanting events - for example, where microchipping happened en masse where people could bring their pet cats and have them microchipped - would be a useful way of introducing this, especially where veterinary clinics are few and far between. That is a question from the RSPCA. It is also relevant to note that a vet who made a submission was concerned that some vets are still not comfortable with microchipping at desexing. I will leave this comment for the next clause.

The reduction of six months to four months is strongly supported by people, and we support that. It is really a question of understanding where it can be done in the absence of available veterinary clinics.

**Mr BARNETT** - First, with respect to microchipping, I am advised a registry is accessible to the public through a national website called Pet Address. You can see on that where you can access microchipping. Obviously, vets do this and promote their services from time to time. I met with the president and CEO of the Veterinary Association just yesterday. They are doing a great job and we appreciate that very much.

As I say, a number of databases do exist. I have mentioned Pet Address, but there are recorded details of microchipped cats and their owners at Central Animal Records, Australasian Animal Registry, Petsafe, Global Micro Animal Registry and HomeSafeID. If a cat is separated from its owner, the cat can be scanned for a microchip. If the cat has been microchipped, the number can be entered into a microchip database search engine, such as Pet Address and it will search for that number in various animal databases. If the number is found, Pet Address will provide directions to the relevant address. I hope that is helpful to the member.

**Clause 9 agreed to.**

**Clause 10 -**

Section 14 amended (Desexing of cats)

**Dr WOODRUFF** - This is a comment made by the Australian Veterinary Association - AVA - Tasmanian Division. In its submission it made the point that desexing not only helps to control companion animal populations, but it may also have some behavioural and health benefits for the cat. Currently it is the only widely available effective and permanent method of preventing breeding. It can reduce some behavioural problems for cats such as free-ranging and aggressive behaviour, which can contribute to public nuisance. For all those reasons, it supported it.

The association wanted to make the point that the compulsory desexing of owned cats has not been shown to reduce substantially the unwanted cat population. The evidence for cats is that compulsory desexing of owned animals would have little effect on the cat population as the majority of oversupply comes from the semi-owned or the unowned population of cats. It is the stray, the roaming cats or the ones that have itinerant ownerships. It is important to quash the idea that it will be effective in that regard, but it will make a contribution. Every little bit is a good bit to add. It also has benefits for reduction in behavioural problems for cats and in the potential for neighbourhood disputes as well.

**Mr BARNETT** - I am not going to disagree with the member with respect to the desexing of cats and the views of the AVA Tasmania. I met with its representatives yesterday. They have some very sensible, balanced approaches. As I say, there will be a transition period of 12 months for information materials to be developed and communicated to allow cat owners adequate time to adjust to these changes in terms of desexing by four months of age.

**Clause 10 agreed to.**

**Clause 11 agreed to.**

## **Clause 12 -**

### **Part 3A - Keeping of cats**

**Dr WOODRUFF** - There was a question from stakeholders who are well informed in this area: why four cats? There was a strong view from a number of expert and informed stakeholders that the number should be two. I read from the Tasmanian Land Conservancy, Dr Sally Bryant, who is very well respected in this area. She said that the TLC does not support four and that unless it is a registered breeder, the number of cats allowed per property should be a maximum of two. That would be in line with the current pet dog ownership requirements, unless a kennel licence or a cat breeding licence is required -

The keeping and containing of multiple, (i.e. more than two cats) significantly increases the likelihood of cat roaming and the subsequent impact on wildlife, unless cats are securely contained and the Government has chosen not to do that.

The TLC view is that this unreasonably increases the risk.

The RSPCA was also strongly of the view that there should be a limit to the number of cats per household and that more cats within a household creates stressful situations for cats. They would support two cats as being the preferred maximum number per household because the evidence is that two siblings from the same litter are the most successful combination and that there is stress on cats -

**Progress reported; Committee to sit again.**

## **ADJOURNMENT**

### **COVID-19 - Neighbourhood and Community Houses**

[6.01 p.m.]

**Ms O'BYRNE** (Bass) - Madam Speaker, I want to touch on the vital role of Neighbourhood and Community Houses and particularly their role during COVID-19. I am not going to be able to cover in any way all their work, but I have grabbed a little snapshot consensus in my electorate to briefly highlight some of their amazing work.

Denise, Mary and Sia at the Northern Suburbs Community Centre by themselves cooked nearly 200 meals per week amounting to some 2000 meals during the isolation. They did phone outreach and support, letterboxed 5200 individual letterboxes, and everyone is keen to get back to having a safe and steady transition. They have had lots of new volunteers come through this process and join the existing great volunteer team including Tanya and Nah and they are looking forward to some University of Tasmania students soon.

Their coffee mornings restarted this morning and are reaching a whole new group. Nettie, Julie, Haley, Bethany, David, Michelle and Lyn at Starting Point in Ravenswood are supported by amazing volunteers, particularly Peter and Peta. They give fantastic support also - providing meals, coffees and supplies to the community for collection and delivery to those who have transport issues, and running a mental health and wellbeing program online,

Mentally Well Online, with a wonderful turnout. Some 200 people have participated and it has been adopted around the state and interstate.

Simone and the team at The Hood in George Town kept their doors open with really careful management to support those who needed it. Their energy astounds me. Once again, they are adaptive and responsive with supporting food supplies, groceries and hamper packs. They developed an innovative partnership with the community radio station to keep people engaged. The daily trivia certainly brought out some of the more competitive members of the community; you could also collect ingredient packs and later that day there would be videos online for cooking tips for the recipes.

Jen came back as the new manager at Dorset. She hit the ground running because she is well connected with that community, providing food and fresh vegetable packs, Facebook live cooking experiences; they also set up phone trees. If anyone has a chance, please take the time to check out their beautiful storytime reading in class sessions they ran on their Facebook page.

At Beaconsfield Neighbourhood House, there was Janne, Hannah and Sharnie with grocery voucher opportunities again and phone catch-ups with Christa in case anyone needed to chat. One of the biggest difficulties through isolation was just being lonely, so it was a fantastic piece of work. I cannot speak more highly of their new revamped shop. I encourage everyone to get in there.

Tresca with Ingrid and the team remained available by phone. They had emergency relief, free books and the high level of support they have always offered. It is great to see that their op shop is open and back in action.

I have barely touched on the work of Neighbourhood Houses and the role they played through our difficult months of staying at home, but anyone can see that for many, the ability to stay at home and stay safe was only possible because of the work of these centres and their amazing staff and volunteers.

We owe them not only a great debt of gratitude, but it is incumbent on all of us in this place to remember them when we make funding decisions. They do this work on the smell of an oily rag because they are connected to community and because they care. We must always remember to show them the same support.

Before I finish, I want to touch on the issue of fly in, fly out workers. I have tried not to bring my own circumstances into conversations this parliament has had, but it is no secret that my husband is a FIFO worker, has been as long as we have been together, and has been away since March.

Due to requirements here and the state that he works in, it has not been feasible for him to get home because he would only really be here for two days because of the elongated travel time and the quarantine requirements. We have been missing him, but we have not begrudged it because everyone, including FIFO families, want to keep people safe, but they also want to keep their families together.

We are even looking at leaving our state, and some states have embarked on aggressive relocation campaigns to entice them to do so. I raise it today, because after some 140-odd days, his G2G PASS was approved and he can come home for a short period. He will quarantine at home, appropriately separated from us, for a couple of weeks. Then I will have a couple of

weeks of parliament and he will be gone, and we will not get to have much time together at all, but he will get some much-needed time with our children.

I raise this tonight because of the incredible relief that we as a family feel, to know that we will see him, even though we will not see him again until next year some time. Not all FIFO families can see their loved ones, or their work arrangements mean that any time at home is in home quarantine, despite often the very safe COVID-19 provisions their workplaces offer.

My heart goes out to FIFO families. We are a special breed and it is hard to understand what we experience. Some people will say, 'Well, you chose that life'. We have all heard that and we have all been driven mad by it, but it is the way our partners work. We adapt and we manage. We tear our hair out on occasions as special days are missed and as tragedies are faced alone. This time has been hard on all Tasmanians. I know there are those who are grieving the loss of loved ones, and I know people have lost livelihoods and I do feel for them. I just wanted to give a shout-out to FIFO workers and particularly to their families who have had a really tough year with no real end in sight. I want to say to them, 'Your families do matter, your partners do matter, and you deserve compassion and consideration.'

### **Comments by Member for Clark, Ms Haddad**

[6.06 p.m.]

**Ms O'CONNOR** (Clark - Leader of the Greens) - Madam Speaker, I rise to defend myself from a most terrible slur put on the *Hansard* by my colleague, the member for Clark, Ms Haddad, on Tuesday night.

Ms Haddad, in this place - and I have a copy of her speech here - said she was calling out racism, pure and simple. I challenge Ms Haddad to step outside this place and call me a racist. That is defamatory and she used that language under cover of parliamentary privilege. Ms Haddad has called me a xenophobe in print and a racist in here. It is an understatement to say I take personal offence. I want Ms Haddad to withdraw and apologise.

Ms Haddad said words matter. Madam Speaker, they sure do. What words did I use that were xenophobic or racist? Ms Haddad, in her contribution, could not point to one example, despite being repeatedly challenged to do so by my colleague, Dr Woodruff.

To call someone a racist is a most terrible slur, and as someone who spent the first six years of their life in India, Singapore and Japan, who spoke Japanese as a child, who has been to China twice - once as a guest of Ms Haddad's father, as it happens, and loved the place and its people - who is living a life immersed deeply in the lives and concerns of all people, no matter where they come from, I reject it absolutely.

Ms Haddad should have the insight and the guts to apologise. Ms Haddad is consciously or unconsciously running Chinese Communist Party talking points. It is standard operating procedure.

I go now to Clive Hamilton's landmark book *Silent Invasion*, where he says -

For writing this book I will be accused of racism and xenophobia, epithets flung at anyone who raises the alarm about the influence of the Chinese Communist Party of Australia. The accusation can be made only by

conflating the CCP with Chinese people so that being anti-CCP must mean being anti-Chinese.

This is exactly what the CCP wants us to think. It is a cheap accusation, but it serves as an effective silencing device in this country because of the widespread and quite proper sensitivity to inflaming racial tensions. However, that sensitivity is exploited by those who do not want to draw attention to what the CCP is doing.

Madam Speaker, Ms Haddad, despite saying in her speech that we should all call out human rights abuses, did not take the opportunity to do so. She did not speak out against human rights abuses in occupied Tibet, Xinjiang, Hong Kong or Taiwan.

Ms Haddad had the opportunity to use her voice in this place, and her words, to speak up for the people of occupied Tibet and the women of Xinjiang, who have endured forced abortions, forced sterilisations, the theft of their children, forced marriage, slave labour, and the men, the academics, teachers, artists, poets, fathers, brothers and sons sent to concentration camps. Whole towns have been obliterated in Xinjiang, and ancient mosques flattened. This is documented. There is evidence of this, but Ms Haddad did not. Ms Haddad was silent. She did not use her voice to speak for these people, oppressed as they are by an irrational, genocidal, misogynist, colonialist, planet-plundering regime. She only said that she is not anti-Xinjiang. What does that even mean? What does that even mean to not be anti-Hong Kong or anti-Taiwan? Where was Ms Haddad when the international students from Hong Kong were here last year putting a Hong Kong wall up at the University of Tasmania that kept getting torn down so that we took it to Senator Nick McKim's office. We were there all night with those kids, with those students and they are terrified of the Chinese Government.

Where was Ms Haddad speaking up for Hong Kongers and Taiwanese? We should, as a country, raise our voices very loudly to offer people from Hong Kong asylum in Australia because their city and their lives have changed dramatically.

Ms Haddad, whether consciously or unconsciously, is running a weaponised narrative -

**Members** interjecting.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - Absolutely. We hear the groans from Labor, which is so compromised on this. This is an article written by Chris Zappone -

**Members** interjecting.

**Madam SPEAKER** - Ms O'Connor, we are trying to run a safe workplace here. I think you are just on the border of being very personal. I personally feel extremely uncomfortable with what you are saying.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - Is that right?

**Madam SPEAKER** - I do not believe Ms Haddad had any intention of any of those things that you have claimed. I think it is a personal attack and I am not comfortable with it.



**Ms O'CONNOR** - On that, Madam Speaker, in Ms Haddad's speech, she said, 'I was calling out racism pure and simple'. She said that I have a very strong bias against the Chinese. That is a lie and I am entitled to defend myself in this place.

She has accused me of the most grotesque - grotesque - motives, which I reject absolutely and, in fact, which are an insult to Chinese Australians. When people stand up and speak out against the human rights abuses of the Chinese Government and they are accused of racism and xenophobia, it is an attempt to shut that criticism down. It is a weaponised narrative. I watched the broadcast again last night, which is why I am in here now.

Unfortunately, I did not hear you, Madam Speaker, pull up Ms Haddad for calling me a racist, biased against the Chinese -

**Madam SPEAKER** - Because, quite frankly I did not find her address as insulting as yours was.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - Could you tell me what is insulting about my address?

**Madam SPEAKER** - I know you are entitled to an opinion but you are just one opinion out of 25. I am afraid you are going very close to being out of order. Your time is up.

**Time expired.**

**Ms O'Connor** - Madam Speaker, I will be back in here because I want Ms Haddad to withdraw that accusation and apologise. How dare you? How dare you?

**Members** interjecting.

**Madam SPEAKER** - Excuse me, that is most unparliamentary and it is a disgrace. Do not go threatening someone like that.

**Ms O'Connor** - I did not threaten anyone.

**Madam SPEAKER** - 'How dare you?'.

**Ms O'Connor** - 'How dare you?'.

**Madam SPEAKER** - Yes, 'How dare you?'.

**Ms O'Connor** - Accuse me of racism and xenophobia.

**Madam SPEAKER** - Who do you think you are? Sit down.

**Ms O'Connor** - What I think is that I am an equal member of this place who is entitled to defend myself.

**Madam SPEAKER** - Then you should not make inflammatory comments.

**Ms O'Connor** - I urge you, Madam Speaker, to have a look at what Ms Haddad said.

**Madam SPEAKER** - I did; I listened to every word.

**Ms O'Connor** - I don't think you were paying attention.

**Ms O'BYRNE** - Point of order, Madam Speaker, the behaviour of the member who has just left the Chamber brings into question your rulings. She is not allowed to just abuse you and storm out of this House. I bring to your attention the fact that you have rights in the Chair to be protected as does every member in this House to be protected from that kind of attack. You have the provision within your powers to use the Standing Orders. I really encourage you to do so. She should be named.

**Dr WOODRUFF** - Point of clarification, Madam Speaker, this has all got very debated. I really think it is inappropriate for members to start directing you on what you should be doing. I think the member was defending -

**Ms O'Byrne** - That is what your member just did - she screamed at the Speaker.

**Dr WOODRUFF** - The member was defending herself. Ms O'Connor was defending herself. Ms Haddad made her speech the night before where she was attacking her. I think the *Hansard* will record what people have said. That is simply what is happening in this place. *Hansard* is recording two members who have made contributions in their adjournment debate. I think the record will speak for itself.

**Ms O'BYRNE** - Madam Speaker, in response to the contribution by the backbencher from the Greens, this House does require certain standards. It is not appropriate under any circumstance for a member to threateningly approach another member and yell at them. It is not okay for them to scream at you and leave the Chamber. Every member has the right to make their contribution. They have to do so in line with the Standing Orders which do, Madam Speaker, hold to a particular ethical basis and a basis on how we behave. Ms Haddad -

**Dr Woodruff** - Madam Speaker, on what basis -

**Ms O'BYRNE** - I am still speaking -

**Dr Woodruff** interjecting.

**Madam SPEAKER** - This is over, Dr Woodruff.

**Dr Woodruff** - What is the point of order?

**Madam SPEAKER** - No, Dr Woodruff, I am hearing - thank you - Ms O'Byrne.

**Ms O'BYRNE** - There are times in this House when contributions are made that we all find challenging. Mr Ferguson and I regularly find each other challenging, but we can still adhere to certain standards within this House.

The behaviour tonight of Ms O'Connor attacking Ms Haddad in that way is unacceptable. The behaviour of Ms O'Connor attacking the Chair with you as Speaker, Madam Speaker, was unacceptable. I urge you to name the member because the member behaved absolutely irresponsibly and in complete contravention to the standards that the Standing Orders require of all of us.

**Madam SPEAKER** - The Leader of the House wishes to speak.

**Mr FERGUSON** - Madam Speaker, we are in the middle of the adjournment debate. The opportunity for substantive motions is not available. I would invite that, if members wish to pursue the matter, they be encouraged to write to you.

**Ms O'BYRNE** - Madam Speaker, if I can seek advice. A motion - if you chose to name Ms O'Connor, which you may choose not to do, has to be dealt with immediately. I do not believe that we do it in a separate way but I am happy to seek advice from the Clerk if I have misunderstood the Standing Orders.

**Madam SPEAKER** - Apparently, you can move a censure motion at the next session of parliament. She was reprimanded for appalling behaviour. I am sorry; I totally think it is unparliamentary. I do not want to see it happen ever again. Next time, it will be named. I apologise, Ms Haddad.

**Ms Haddad** - I struck a raw nerve, I think, Madam Speaker.

**Madam SPEAKER** - I am sorry - my experience is limited and I did not know how to interrupt it. Please go on.

### **Stewart McSweyn - Olympic Selection**

[6.18 p.m.]

**Dr BROAD** (Braddon) - Madam Speaker, hopefully, I will bring a bit more joy to the House. I would like to briefly congratulate King Island's own Stewart McSweyn for being selected to compete in the 5000 and 10 000 metre running race at next year's 2021 Olympics in Tokyo.

We know that Stewart McSweyn, otherwise known as the unofficial mayor of King Island, has overcome numerous barriers to become one of the world's best runners. Stewart McSweyn would have been a walk-up start, I would argue, to be competing in the Olympics at this very point if it were not for COVID-19.

However, I think as runners peak in their late 20s that extra year of growth and speed will put Stewart in a very good place to compete in the Olympics next year. Stewart is 25 years old so that extra year will make him that little bit stronger and, hopefully, faster. We would love to see an athlete like Stewart McSweyn on the podium in the Olympics, knowing that the 5000 metres and 10 000 metres are some of the most competitive races in the Olympics. Everybody can pull on a pair of shoes and start running. The barriers to entry are very low and this sport he has taken on is dominated by the Africans, but Stewart McSweyn is way up there.

Only just last week at the Monaco Diamond League, he came sixth in the 5000 and that was in a very impressive time of 13 minutes, 13.22 seconds. He has the Stockholm Diamond League next weekend and I wish him all the best. It must make his preparation that much better for the Olympics knowing that he is now selected.

As a former athlete I know that the ability to plan and pace your training will give him the greatest ability possible to peak right at the Olympics now that he can plan out the next year. If his selection was left up to the last minutes then an athlete has no choice but to try to peak at the appropriate selection event so that they can get on the Olympic team. Then they

have to try to peak again for the Olympics. It can be quite difficult for an athlete to peak twice in a year. It is a balancing act.

Stewart, knowing that now he has been selected for the Olympics and he has a year to plan, will be able to maximise his taper and peak at the right moment.

We wish Stewart all the best as he competes in Europe. It is unusual now that we have athletics competitions opening up again in Europe. I wish him all the best. I hope that he gets a lot out of the very intense racing that goes on in Europe. Most of all I hope that he stays healthy and that he continues to do Tasmania proud.

### **Olivia and Madeline Lowe – Tribute Colebrook Country Market**

[6.21 p.m.]

**Ms WHITE** (Lyons - Leader of the Opposition) - Madam Speaker, I rise tonight to speak about two young girls in my electorate who are working very hard to fundraise and support those who are doing it tough as we head in to Christmas this year. Christmas might seem like quite a distant thing, but this year is going so quickly it will be upon us before we know it.

I recognise and congratulate Olivia and Madeline, who have been doing an extraordinary effort over the last few months. They have been volunteering at the Midway Point Neighbourhood House and they have been attending twice a week to pick up food relief for one of their friends in the community who is unable to support herself the way she would like to. She is a single mum of two with a baby on the way. She has unfortunately been made redundant. Like so many people she has lost employment as a result of COVID-19.

These two young girls, who have been volunteering at the house, are not only supporting people in their community with food relief, they have been making and donating wheat packs through the Midway Point Neighbourhood House along with essential oils so that people can take them home, pop them in the microwave, heat them up and keep warm. They made 71 wheat packs and sold them for \$5 each. They have sold out so they are busily making another 70 wheat packs. They have donated some of these to the Risdon Vale and Warrane community houses, so they can give them to people who might be in need.

That is not where the girls stop. The girls have come up with a new project. They want to make 100 shoe boxes with special Christmas gifts to give to people this Christmas. They have started a GoFundMe page which you can find if you search for Olivia and Madeline Lowe. People can make a donation there and I encourage you to if you can. Even a few dollars would go a long way for these two young girls who are doing so much. Their aim is to distribute those through different community houses, Bethlehem House, as well as shelters for women and their children who have had to escape family violence, and to support other people who might be doing it a bit tough this year who would love to receive a little box of special Christmas gifts to cheer them up.

I wanted to acknowledge the work they have been doing. They have also put the call out for Christmas paper and sticky tape and, of course, any empty shoe boxes so that they can put these packages together. I also recognise their mum, Claire Lowe, who is helping the girls to do this really important work. I am sure they are getting a lot of benefit and learning from it,

but so many people in the community will also benefit from it. It is incredibly kind and generous of them.

I also give a plug to the Colebrook Country Market, which is returning this Sunday at 10 a.m. after having to be cancelled for many months like so many of our community events. The committee has worked very hard to make sure they can put on an event that is COVID compliant. The Colebrook Country Market will be held at the Colebrook Hall from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. They will have Devonshire teas available, which is everyone's favourite. They also have cakes, woodwork, fruit and veg, pottery demo, crocheting and knitting items as well as pre-loved items and more.

It is on the Colebrook Road as you head out of Richmond in the Coal River Valley. If anyone wants to have a bit of a Sunday drive, it would be a great spot to support a lovely little country town and bring some activity into that region after a long time now without having their local country market.

### **Comments made by Ms O'Connor**

[6.25 p.m.]

**Mr O'BYRNE** (Franklin) - Madam Speaker, I rise and unfortunately it is in the shadow of an extraordinary outburst earlier this evening. It relates to the conduct of the member for Clark, Ms O'Connor, and statements she made in the MPI debate about me, which I took offence to, and that goes to the comments she made accusing me, as the shadow racing minister of playing cheap political games with the racing industry through the time of COVID-19, and made a number of other remarks which I took offence to.

In relation to the Greens, they have a clear and long-standing view of the Racing Industry that it should not exist. I disagree with that but I respect their right to have that view, but to accuse me of using what has been a very difficult time, not only for Tasmania but for the racing industry in Tasmania as a cheap political point, I take offence to.

Let us be clear. The racing industry across all of the mainland states and territories has continued to operate through the COVID-19 period. They were not shut down by other state or territory governments. Even now, with Victoria in the depth of the crisis that they are in, the racing industry is still occurring. It is still occurring because it is an industry, because it employs thousands of Australians and thousands of people, it is a livelihood for many people as it is here in Tasmania. As the Premier of Victoria has said, shutting down the industry could cause some animal welfare issues.

The accusation that we were playing politics could not be further from the truth. On 2 April this year, the Government made the decision to shut the industry down. This was a shock to the industry and it was a shock to Tasmanians at that time. At that stage, we did not criticise the Government for doing that. We were shocked and we were surprised. For the following weeks we sat down and consulted with industry about how they were going to work together to respond to the challenge of COVID-19, to respond to the restrictions from the shut-down that was forced upon them. We did not raise the issue of racing and did not criticise the Government on the issue of racing until we raised a question in parliament some four weeks after the shut-down.

We did that to give the industry a voice. The thousands of Tasmanians who are employed in the industry across the industry deserved a voice. The question we raised was to the Premier and this is the question -

The Tasmanian Racing Industry supports jobs in rural and regional communities, injecting over \$100 million a year into the Tasmanian economy. Over 5000 Tasmanians are either employed or are participants in the industry. On 2 April the racing industry in Tasmania was shut down. This is despite the industry itself banning crowds and enforcing nation-leading restrictions in social distancing in the workplace, at the training facilities and race tracks. No other state or territory has put a stop to racing.

The racing industry is on its knees. Jobs have been lost and jockeys, trainers and animals are moving to the mainland, further undermining the future sustainability of the industry.

The industry acknowledges and supports necessary measures taken to protect the public health during the health crisis, but questions why the decision was made to shut them down when places in retail like Bunnings and K-Mart remain open. The industry has worked very hard in putting a proposal to your government dealing with the issues of intrastate travel, restricting the location of race meets, strict transport and on-track protocols, and the most stringent of social distancing measures.

The industry is in desperate need of a date to work towards a recommencement of race meets.

Given the work the industry has done to propose a method of operation that is in advance of other states still operating and other industries that are still operating, for example, building and construction and freight logistics, will you commit to a date for restarting race meets, consistent with the very well-thought-out industry proposal?

That is not playing politics. That is doing my job as the shadow minister. That is giving voice to the thousands of people who are employed in this industry. When so many jobs are being lost and so many jobs will be lost, it is incumbent on us to not only support the Government when they make the right decision, and they have made many correct decisions in response to this COVID-19 crisis, but when they err, when they make a mistake, it is incumbent on us as local members and shadow ministers to raise these issues, to highlight the issues and for the Government to listen and to respond.

The racing industry is back up and going, money is flowing again, people's mental health is improving and the industry is getting back on its feet. That question was absolutely not about politics and I took offence to the words used by the Leader of the Greens, the member for Clark, this morning.

The Greens demand so much of other people. They demand high standards but rarely do they reflect on their behaviour and the currency they use in this House to denigrate and to insult other people. The Greens dislike the racing industry but that does not mean the industry does

not have a right to exist and it does not mean that we do not have the right to raise their issues legitimately, respectfully and appropriately.

**Comments made by Ms O'Connor**  
**Accessible Design in Tasmanian Government Websites**

[6.31 p.m.]

**Ms STANDEN** (Franklin) - Madam Speaker, I rise with a bit of a tremble in my knee this evening because I have just witnessed the most extraordinary outburst from the Leader of the Greens against a colleague. It follows an outburst that was directed towards me in the MPI debate on threatened species today in which the Leader of the Greens said that I 'do not give an - insert expletive - about threatened species'.

I was gobsmacked at the time and not quick enough to respond, but I want to put on record my deep offence at that remark. When the Leader of the Greens rose this evening on the adjournment I expected her to withdraw that comment but instead she repeated a continued attack on my colleague. I believe it is grossly unfair.

The Fair Work Australia website talks about bullying and harassment and it says that everyone has the right not to be bullied or harassed at work. It says that a worker is bullied at work if a person or group of people repeatedly acts unreasonably towards them or a group of workers and the behaviour creates a risk to health and safety. Unreasonable behaviour includes victimising, humiliating, intimidating or threatening. Whether the behaviour is unreasonable can depend on whether a reasonable person might see the behaviour as unreasonable. Examples of bullying include behaving aggressively, teasing or practical jokes and so it goes on.

If that behaviour this evening on top of the behaviour today during the MPI debate does not constitute bullying and harassment I do not know what does. I still have a quaver in my voice as I talk about that because I just do not think that is fair.

Now on to a better subject. I want to talk about the blind community. On 25 June I rose to speak on concerns brought to my attention from members of the Tasmania's blind community regarding a lack of accessible design in Tasmanian government websites and digital resources. I thank the Minister for Science and Technology for providing me with a copy of the Our Digital Future document which outlines the Government's strategy for digital transformation.

I was concerned, however, that as I read through this document I was unable to find a single reference to Tasmanians with a disability or even a broad plan to design digital resources with accessibility in mind. In fact I note that the only inclusions of the word 'accessibility' itself were in regard to mobile network coverage and geographic barriers to government resources.

I stand again today to once more call on this Government to develop a proper strategy with all Tasmanians in mind. I repeat my request for groups representing people with disability to be consulted on this strategy as well as organisations representing people with low literacy and carers.

I understand that the organisation, Blind Citizens Australia, who have been in contact with me, has written to the minister noting similar concerns with their current strategy document along with a number of requests of its own, including a request to be involved in the development of the strategy and that the Premier's Disability Advisory Council be invited to advise on the design of the strategy itself. I find it disappointing that it took my speech in June and my own contact with this organisation for them to have even been made aware that this Government has a digital transformation strategy.

By contrast, the South Australian government has undertaken a highly consultative review process resulting in improved accessibility of digital platforms. The South Australian Liberal government involved community organisations from the beginning. Organisations such as BCA were not on the back foot writing letters asking for involvement for fear of being left out of the process like they are here in Tasmania.

I note with great concern a recent ABC news article of 13 August, in which Tasmania's peak body for the information and communication technology, or ICT, industry, Tas ICT, says that:

... the State Government is trailing behind the rest of the country on delivering online services and warns that in some cases it poses a public safety risk.

Albeit talking about website design in relation to fire risk, it goes on to say that the strategy did not go far enough and that there were no budgets or dates attached to the goals outlined.

The minister in that article was quoted as saying the Government had begun working to implement Our Digital Future strategy. If the Government is already implementing the strategy, there are key organisations that have clearly been left out entirely and now face a future of uncertainty when it comes to critical government resources.

With this Liberal Government once again failing to consult the community, will people with sensory disabilities like Mr Richard Hammond, who was in touch with my office, still be relying on friends and neighbours to help fill out forms? Will he still need to provide his bank account details and personal information to strangers just to arrange patient transport to appointments?

A digital transformation strategy needs to reflect more than the digital foundation business case, as the minister Mr Ferguson, was quoted as saying in the ABC article I mentioned. This strategy must be about ensuring all Tasmanians have independence regardless of their vision or literacy skills. It must be about giving people the dignity of being able to live equitably.

This Government must do better. Go back to the drawing board, Mr Ferguson, and properly consult relevant community organisations. Follow the lead of your colleagues in South Australia and develop a strategy which has accessibility for all people at its core.



**Comments made by Ms O'Connor**  
**Centacare Evolve Property - Mould Issues**

[6.37 p.m.]

**Ms BUTLER** (Lyons) - Madam Speaker, I have some words to say about what has happened here this evening. I am absolutely appalled. I have been involved in lots of different roles in this parliament in the last 15 years and I have never seen anything like that before. It is absolutely appalling. I am actually at a loss for words to explain just how unprofessional that was. We are taught and we teach our children not to speak to each other like that. It is abusive and no-one should ever be spoken to like that, especially in their workplace.

I certainly hope we can resolve the issue, because it is not good enough for our parliamentarians to be attacked in the House. It is not the right behaviour. We are elected by our communities to represent them, and I think the people of Clark would be horrified if they saw what happened this evening.

I visited a lady, Gail Maddocks, in New Norfolk this week at her Centacare Evolve property to personally view the condensation and mould in this property. As a local member, Ms Maddocks' plight was brought to our attention, and we have not been able to resolve the issue through normal channels. Ms Maddocks has lived in the property in New Norfolk for 37 years and takes pride in the cleanliness of her property. She has never failed a property inspection and has always paid her rent. She has raised her children in the property, which is 86 years old and is beautifully kept. Spotless would be the best way to describe the way Ms Maddocks has kept her home.

The garden is also beautiful, neat and well maintained. It is interesting that manferns sprout from under the house. That is always a sign of dampness. Over the years the roof has been replaced, there is new lino in the kitchen area, a heat pump has replaced a fireplace and a newer kitchen has been installed. Windows have also been replaced over the years.

For many years, Ms Maddocks has reported to the relevant housing authorities that the house has a mould problem. I noted there was not one piece of furniture leant against a wall. Every bed, wardrobe, wall unit, set of drawers and couch was at least 10 centimetres from the walls. This is so Ms Maddocks can access the back of the furniture easily when she wipes the mould off each day. Mould comes up from the cement floor of the property. The carpet which she vacuums every day is thin and smells like mould. Ms Maddocks has air fresheners and scent candles to try to stop the odour, which she is embarrassed about, and she should not have to be.

Ms Maddocks wipes down the mould and condensation every day from the walls. She has tried every cleaning product available. It is not a cleanliness issue, it is a structural issue with the cement floors and condensation. Condensation sits on each window and window frame, which Ms Maddocks cleans every day as well. Even so, mould is still the corners of those frames.

Beds cannot be near windows, or they became saturated and there is no ventilation. She has to clean her linen every day to get the mould out of her doonas. The slats on the beds in the bedrooms need to be wiped down daily as well from mould. Even in summer, there is still mould.

Ms Maddocks has repeatedly been advised by Centacare and other housing providers that the condensation and mould is her problem. It is a structural issue, and action needs to be taken.

Ms Maddocks has arthritis, which makes the daily ritual of cleaning down mould from furniture and walls unworkable. Both Ms Maddocks and her daughters are asthmatic. I would ask that the responsibility for mould in structurally unsound properties be addressed by Housing Tasmania and other social housing providers. It is a health issue and it is just not fair.

**The House adjourned at 6.41 p.m.**