



PARLIAMENT OF TASMANIA

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

REPORT OF DEBATES

Wednesday 17 March 2021

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

TasTAFE - Proposed Restructure and Comments by Premier

Ms WHITE question to PREMIER, Mr GUTWEIN

[10.03 a.m.]

Yesterday your judgment was again called into question when you announced that you are going to war with TAFE, a move that will destroy this trusted public training institution. Your anti-public education agenda has been comprehensively exposed. Your Liberal colleagues have launched a similar attack on TAFE in South Australia, which has resulted in the loss of courses and the closure of multiple regional campuses. Wasting money on a war with teachers and communities that depend on TAFE will delay economic recovery and result in diminished training and education. You have clearly learnt nothing from your previous war with TasWater where you attempted to bully your way to fixing a problem but only made it worse. Why are you undertaking this attack on the public training institution when you know it will affect courses and the ability of Tasmanian students to train for jobs at a time when it has never been more important?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the Leader of the Opposition for that question. I agree with her that it has never been more important that we ensure that we have a fit-for-purpose training provider. I am not going to war with TAFE. What I am going to war on is ensuring that we can have jobs for young Tasmanians. That is what I am going to war on.

Last month, in February, we had more than a 52 per cent increase in job vacancies in this state. We have now more than 22 000 people employed since we came to government in 2014 and, importantly, we have returned to pre-pandemic levels of employment. Our economy is one of the strongest in the country. There are jobs available.

We need to ensure that we have a fit-for-purpose training provider, that we take TasTAFE to the next level, that we invest.

Opposition members interjecting.

Madam SPEAKER - Order, please.

Mr GUTWEIN - Over the period that we have been in government we have repaired TAFE. We have rebuilt TAFE. Labor blew TAFE up. We have rebuilt TAFE. Now it is time to ensure that TAFE is fit for purpose as we move forward. Here in Tasmania TAFE struggles under an archaic industrial relations system. We have the highest number of holidays in the

country - 11 weeks. What that means is that for every five teachers or trainers we have on there are 55 weeks of holidays. We lose one teacher.

It is important that we ensure that we are nimble, that we are fit for purpose and, importantly, that TasTAFE can operate like the businesses it is there to serve. We have the highest level of holidays, the lowest levels of contact time, and one of the most inflexible working arrangements, whereas across the country training providers are able to offer flexible training hours, training on weekends -

Ms O'Byrne - They do that now.

Madam SPEAKER - Order, Ms O'Byrne.

Mr GUTWEIN - We need to ensure that young Tasmanians and Tasmanians who want a job are able to be trained and skilled for the growing jobs we have in our community right now.

We accepted PESRAC's report in full. I make the point that PESRAC is not some far right-wing think tank. PESRAC includes people from right across the political divide, people who have spent their time in this state building up non-government organisations and supporting our communities. What they heard from 3500 Tasmanians is that we need to do better. We need to provide a nimble training organisation that can suit the needs of the people looking for work and we make no apologies for that.

We are going to get on with this and I hope that before the end of the year we will have introduced legislation that ensures we can move TAFE to a position where it is fit for purpose and provide the training for the jobs that are there in our economy. If we do not those jobs are going to go to interstate tradies. Those jobs are going to go to interstate fly in fly out people. Those jobs are going to go to others. We want more Tasmanians to be trained. We want more Tasmanians to be skilled and we make no apology for that.

TasTAFE - Proposed Restructure and Comments by Premier

Ms WHITE question to PREMIER, Mr GUTWEIN

[10.08 a.m.]

You have spent the past seven years in government undermining TAFE. The Australian Education Union has said about your latest move against the public training institution that it is:

... a misguided attack on TasTAFE by the Tasmanian Liberal Party and a slap in the face to teachers and regional communities ...

The AEU has been clear that your Government should be investing more, not less, in education, and that your proposed changes to TAFE would shift the full cost of education on to students and employers. The AEU has also said:

The Government has shown complete ignorance towards students and the needs of industry while also showing little research and due diligence in the announcement.

There was no consultation with the TAFE workforce. Key stakeholders found out via a press release. Why are you blowing up TAFE rather than working with them to fix the problems that you have created over the past seven years?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the Leader of the Opposition for that question. I note that the only stakeholders she brings into this place to speak about are the unions. TasTAFE is there to serve our business community, to assist us to grow our economy and, importantly, ensure that our young people can get the training they deserve. Over the last seven years we have put TasTAFE back together. We have invested in TasTAFE, and that is a statement of fact.

We have got TasTAFE to a position where it has been able to achieve its next seven years of accreditation. Importantly, as part of a consultation process, 3500 people provided a message loud and clear that TasTAFE needs to be more nimble and more like the businesses it is there to serve.

We make no apologies for wanting to ensure there are pathways for even more young Tasmanians, more Tasmanians in regional areas, who are looking for the skills they need to get a job. All I am hearing from that side of the House is that they do not want to support young Tasmanians getting more jobs.

We want to invest in TasTAFE to ensure it is fit for purpose and can serve appropriately the businesses it is there to serve. However, most importantly, this is about jobs for young Tasmanians, for regional Tasmanians, to ensure they can become the tradies, trainees and apprentices of the future, and we make absolutely no apologies for backing those Tasmanians.

TasTAFE - Proposed Corporatisation

Ms O'CONNOR question to MINISTER for EDUCATION and TRAINING, Mr ROCKLIFF

[10.11 a.m.]

What is your position on the proposed corporatisation of TasTAFE? Do you take any responsibility for seven years of running down our public training provider? As an example, last year an extra \$1 million was given to the Tasmanian Hospitality Association and the Tourism Industry Council Tasmania to establish a new registered training organisation. As we pointed out in Estimates last year, this money should have gone to TasTAFE.

Despite this constant erosion of funding, TasTAFE has the highest student satisfaction rate and some of the highest apprentice completion rates in the country. Interstate, everywhere TAFEs have been corporatised, there have been job losses and a decline in course quality.

As minister, how do you justify doing this to TasTAFE? Can you guarantee that under the new model, there will be no course cuts, no fee hikes and no closing down of any TAFE locations?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the member for Clark for her question. Like me, the member believes very deeply in the public training provider, and it will always be a public training provider.

Those opposite might have missed the point. This is a government business. It will be more agile, flexible and able to serve the needs of industry and students. I acknowledge the good work of TasTAFE over the last number of years to achieve those high student and higher employer satisfaction rates.

I agree with the member and the Premier that seven years accreditation - the maximum amount that can be achieved under Australian Skills Quality Authority (ASQA) - is a fantastic achievement for TasTAFE.

This is all about rebuilding TasTAFE; that is what we have been doing over the last seven years.

The difference between our agenda for TasTAFE and the opposition agenda is that 10 years ago there was no TasTAFE - you destroyed it, blew it up, so there is a lot of distrust for you lot when it comes to TasTAFE.

Ms O'Byrne - This is exactly like the Skills Institute. That is what you are doing. You cannot have it both ways.

Madam SPEAKER - Order, Ms O'Byrne.

Mr ROCKLIFF - We believe very strongly in the future of the Tasmanian TasTAFE. The public training provider is a public training provider now and it will always be a public training provider. We are continually investing in TasTAFE, which has worked hard to pay off your debt that you left -

Ms O'Byrne - You are not continually investing. You are regularly not running courses, you are regularly undermining them.

Madam SPEAKER - Order, Ms O'Byrne, please.

Mr ROCKLIFF - The facilities prior to us coming into government were dilapidated, appalling facilities right across the state. I am getting nodding heads around the Chamber. You left it in an appalling state, particularly the infrastructure, and now we are investing \$41.8 million in brand-new infrastructure.

Opposition members interjecting.

Madam SPEAKER - Order.

Mr ROCKLIFF - We need to invest in our young people, in education, in training and in skills, so we can give our young people a brighter future. That is exactly what we are doing. We look forward to sitting down with all stakeholders as we implement what I recognise are significant reforms.

Ms O'Byrne - When were you -

Madam SPEAKER - Order, Ms O'Byrne.

Mr ROCKLIFF - It is important that we listen to the stakeholders, industry, the students and the student voice. It is important that we listen to the unions as well. I am committed to this, so we can collaborate and we can work together on TasTAFE's evolution.

TasTAFE has gone from strength to strength from when you blew it up in 2009-10 and bashed it all together. We have continued investing in TasTAFE and paid off your debt, and invested in the workforce, invested in infrastructure, and that will continue. There is no greater believer in public training or the future of our young people than me.

We have an infrastructure agenda, with billions in the forward Estimates to support infrastructure investment in our schools, hospitals and roads - and we need skilled young people to achieve that. We need an agile, nimble and focused TasTAFE that aligns with industry expectations, and that is exactly what we will deliver.

Premier's Economic and Social Recovery Advisory Council - Final Report - Government Response

Mr ELLIS question to PREMIER, Mr GUTWEIN

[10.16 a.m.]

Can you update the House on the Government's response to the Premier's Economic and Social Recovery Advisory Council final report as part of our clear plan to secure Tasmanian's future? Are you aware of any alternative approaches?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the member for his question and his interest in this important matter. While I am on my feet, I will take a moment to acknowledge Oliver Fryett, who is a member of my Youth Advisory Council and is, I hope, enjoying the parliament this morning.

Yesterday, I outlined our clear plan to secure Tasmania's future and the Government's response to the Premier's Economic and Social Recovery Advisory Council. I will take a moment to thank the members of that council for the work that they have done: Don Challen for fantastic leadership, Professor Rufus Black, Dale Elphinstone, Tim Gardner, Kym Goodes, Samantha Hogg, Leanne McLean, Paul Ranson and Brett Torossi - individuals who have all served this state in different capacities over the period that they have been engaged in life here in Tasmania, bringing together not a far-right-wing think tank, but a collection of individuals who are deeply engaged in our community at all levels and across all sectors. They have

worked and toiled and have put together a fantastic set of recommendations for the next two-to five-year period in Tasmania as we rebuild out of the COVID-19 impacts.

Our clear plan is working. Last year we ensured we kept Tasmanians safe, and in keeping Tasmanians safe we were able to ensure that we were ready to emerge from COVID-19. We brought down the construction blitz. In the middle of last year, we said that if we could get our construction sector working, it would grow aggregate demand right across our economy, because it has a long supply chain. Guess what? That is happening. Our economy is one of the fastest growing economies in the country. Our jobs have returned to pre-pandemic levels and confidence is high in the state.

Yesterday, it gave me great pleasure to provide the PESRAC report. I wait with interest to see what the response from those on the other side will be - although they have indicated very clearly that they do not want to support PESRAC's very sensible recommendation to ensure that we can get more young Tasmanians, more Tasmanians in regional areas, trained and skilled and ready for the jobs that we have available in Tasmania. Quite clearly that is the position the other side have taken - they do not want to back young Tasmanians who need skilling up. They would much prefer that those jobs we have on offer go to people interstate. It beggars belief.

Yesterday, we had a lot of commentary and positive reaction on the state of the state speech. Luke Martin said that the state Government has been exceptionally responsive over the past 12 months, consulting industry and responding quickly to priority needs as they emerged. Today's package continues that approach.

TasCOSS CEO Adrienne Picone said all Tasmanians deserve the opportunity of a good life and acknowledged the state Government's compassionate approach and focus on improving wellbeing and building community resilience.

Matthew Pollock, from the Masters Builders Association, said the Government's plan again backs the building and construction industry to create jobs and accelerate the economic recovery, building on stimulus packages like HomeBuilder to put homeownership at the front and centre of the economic recovery strategy.

Tania Hunt, CEO of the Youth Network, said youth navigators were playing an important role in supporting 2020 school leavers into education, training and employment.

The Tasmanian Principals Association applauded the Government's ongoing commitment to supporting schools and important work around student mental health and wellbeing.

The Tasmanian Chamber of Commerce and Industry and the Housing Industry Association were very supportive.

We have laid down a clear plan, which began last year. It started with keeping Tasmanians safe and then moved to ensuring we could rebuild our economy. We are now at a point where our economy is going gangbusters. Jobs are at pre-pandemic levels. We have to take the next step - to ensure that the jobs now available can be filled by young Tasmanians and Tasmanians in regional areas. The key recommendation out of this - and it staggers me

that you would stand in the way of jobs for young Tasmanians - is that we will continue to invest in TasTAFE. The evolution will continue.

Who in their right mind could argue with having a public training provider that is fit for purpose, that is nimble and can operate like the businesses it is there to serve? At the same time, it can provide more jobs and opportunities for young Tasmanians. Who can argue against that? They are doing their very best to stand in the way of ensuring that young Tasmanians and Tasmanians in regional areas are able to grasp those opportunities. That will do nothing to our resolve. We are determined to rebuild Tasmania. Our clear plan sets that out, ensuring that we provide opportunities for young Tasmanians and Tasmanians in regional areas.

Female Politicians - Transit Positive Teens Facebook Page - Sexist Memes

Ms OGILVIE question to PREMIER, Mr GUTWEIN

[10.23 a.m.]

Today I rise in solidarity with women and with good men like yourself. I was also deeply moved by Nicole Flint's speech of truth-telling in parliament, with very familiar tactics. Premier, you have called a meeting of parliamentary leaders to discuss conduct in political life, to which I am invited. I am, of course, looking forward to that discussion. I will be proposing an approach led by the Anti-Discrimination Commissioner and the Parliamentary Standards Commissioner to provide independence.

I have a threshold issue I need your help with right now. There are over 50 sexist, nasty, negative and vile memes published on the Memes for Transit Positive Teens Facebook page about me. They are not funny; they create a sense of endorsement that bad behaviour against female MPs is acceptable. This stuff truly poisons our political environment. Premier, I am asking for your help, not just for me, but for all women who have to put up with this.

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the member for Clark for that question. It is a very important issue. I look forward to the meeting - I believe it has been set up for next week - to discuss how we look at the procedures and practices in this place across ministerial, parliamentary and electorate offices. It starts with us ensuring that the culture is right. I look forward to that.

The member has made suggestions on who might be involved in that. We are taking advice. The most important thing we can do is to have that initial discussion and determine who we collectively think is the best person to take that forward. As part of that, we need to have somebody who has contemporary human resource experience; we can discuss whether there is a joint group that can assist us, and look at how we take it forward.

Regarding the memes - it is a matter the member has raised in parliament before - it is difficult to get the balance right between freedom of speech and what people can or cannot publish. I am prepared to take advice and look at that. Regarding what steps might be possible is something we could discuss when we all come together.

The Attorney-General has a keen interest in this matter. The member is not alone in her concern about the way memes or some unflattering or untrue matters are raised by others across

a range of platforms. It is the bane of public life and a cross we bear. I note the member's deep desire to see action taken in this place. I commit to taking advice on what is possible and what can be reasonably introduced.

Renewable Energy - Proposed Sale of Momentum and Entura

Mr O'BYRNE question to PREMIER, Mr GUTWEIN

[10.27 a.m.]

Momentum and Entura are both important arms of the Hydro business that ensure that Tasmania remains an Australian and global renewable energy leader. Entura has the intellectual knowledge to take Tasmanian expertise to the world. Momentum is a profitable and important entity that provides Tasmania with a profile as one of the most important renewable energy bases in the country in one of our biggest markets. At the same time, you are sacking Hydro workers.

Will you rule out the sale of these assets? If you will not, will you confirm you are just carving off chunks of Hydro business to privatise Tasmania's asset by stealth?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the shadow Treasurer for what is not an unexpected question. I am looking for a point to make in framing my response. It is eluding me at the moment.

Opposition members interjecting.

Madam SPEAKER - Order, please.

Mr GUTWEIN - I will start again by making the point that we see hypocrisy from that side of the House. We saw it yesterday. We seem to be seeing it more regularly almost every time we enter this parliament. What Mr O'Byrne fails to point out is that under him, back in 2011 under the Labor government, Hydro sold 75 per cent of its stakes in its three Woolnorth windfarms.

Mr O'Byrne - You wanted to abolish land tax.

Mr GUTWEIN - The point I am making -

Mr O'Byrne - You took a policy to abolish land tax and where are you now?

Mr GUTWEIN - He is a little touchy on this. Hydro, on the one hand, under Labor, is able to run their business and to have subsidiary companies that they can step in and out of when it suits them.

Regarding Hydro and its forward planning and the role that Momentum plays, Hydro is considering where that fits in terms of what the future might look like in what is a complex, changing National Energy Market -

Members interjecting.

Mr GUTWEIN - I will not rule that out, Madam Speaker. They should be, as they were under previous governments, allowed to consider the way their business operates. The Energy minister has made the point that at the end of the day if they go down that path that is something that we would consider. However, I consider that at the time based on the advice and the business case that was put before me, it would be the appropriate thing to do.

Mr O'Byrne - So if there was a business case to privatise Hydro, would you consider that?

Madam SPEAKER - Order.

Mr GUTWEIN - They go back to the old chestnut - 'Will you sell the Hydro?' I will be absolutely clear - no, we will not.

Mr O'Byrne - But you are.

Mr GUTWEIN - No, we will not.

Mr O'Byrne - But you're hollowing it out.

Madam SPEAKER - Order, Mr O'Byrne.

Mr GUTWEIN - It is an easy link to make suggesting that if Momentum is considered for sale and if they were to go down that path and we were to accept that advice, that would be selling Hydro.

Mr O'Byrne - Privatisation. It is a public asset. Are you lining up TAFE to sell? Is that what it is?

Mr GUTWEIN - I make the point that Mr O'Byrne sold Hydro back in 2011 when he sold down our stake in the wind farms.

Mr O'Byrne - You wanted to abolish land tax at the same time and look at what you did.

Madam SPEAKER - Order, Mr O'Byrne.

Mr GUTWEIN - It is hypocrisy writ large and I think all Tasmanians can see that.

Hydro's view at the moment is that they need to be fit for purpose for the National Energy Market, which is a dynamic market. The steps they have taken, as I pointed out yesterday, are all designed to ensure that we do not get back to where we were under Labor with 65 per cent increases in power. This is all designed to keep downward pressure on power prices for Tasmanians.

As to the question that Mr O'Byrne asked - would I rule things in or out? No, at the end of the day, I will not. We will not sell Hydro but in terms of the subsidiary companies that Hydro engages in over time, we will look at the business case and make a judgment at that particular time.

Harness Racing - Use of Whips

Ms O'CONNOR question to MINISTER for RACING, Ms HOWLETT

[10.33 a.m.]

On Saturday night in Hobart a harness racer won race 7 in the Tasmania Cup after whipping his horse heavily for the duration and using a cruel practice called hocking, where he kicked the horse repeatedly in its Achilles throughout the race. The last 400 metres of the race on the night made for shocking viewing. This harness racer was fined \$3000 for his actions but walked away with around \$45 000 in prize money. The second and third placegetters appealed the win but this was dismissed.

On your watch a harness racer can flog and kick a horse, be fined for cheating and still take the prize money, while another harness racer, Gavin Kelly, was fined for refusing to be cruel. Animal cruelty and cheating has not only been rewarded, it has now been encouraged for future races. How do you explain this?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the member for her question and her concern. I am aware of the charges that were laid against the driver of the Tasmania Cup winner, Bullys Delight. I attended the race meeting at Elwick and have spoken to a number of harness racing participants who have also expressed their concerns to me. It is crucial for all racing codes that integrity is maintained for the welfare of racing animals and to provide confidence in the Tasmanian product.

The Acting Director of Racing has directed a steward to conduct a further investigation into the charges laid. I am pleased that the Office of Racing Integrity has engaged highly regarded ex-Racing New South Wales chairman of stewards, Mr Ray Murrehy, to lead the inquiry.

As minister it is not appropriate that I comment on any matter that is subject to investigation or inquiry. I should also note that the RSPCA has been working at a national level with Harness Racing Australia and the board to improve rules around whip use. It should also be pointed that yesterday I spoke to a board member of Harness Racing Australia. I have a meeting with them scheduled for next week. I will make sure that Tasracing, the Office of Racing Integrity and I work with the national body to ensure we have stronger rules around the use of whips.

TasTAFE - Positioning for the Future

Mr ELLIS question to MINISTER for EDUCATION and TRAINING, Mr ROCKLIFF

[10.43 a.m.]

Can you update the House on our clear plan to secure Tasmania's future, including Government initiatives to get more Tasmanians into work and ensure that TasTAFE is well positioned for the future?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank Mr Ellis for his question. I know of his considerable interest in vocational education and training. This side of the House remains committed to jobs and our public training provider. We have the lowest unemployment rate of any state. The growth in apprentice and training numbers continues. This does not happen by accident. Our skills response to COVID-19 is working and driving business confidence.

As the Premier described in his Address, we are now addressing barriers to work. Delivering wraparound services is critical for jobseekers, especially for those in rural and regional areas or those who have been without work for an extended period. That is why we are delivering \$20.5 million in initiatives to get Tasmania working. It will provide \$2 million for jobseekers to get new tools for a job, help them buy safety equipment, or get a white card. Transport options for people in rural and regional Tasmania will be massively expanded with \$3.2 million allocated for low-cost or free transport options.

We will see the long-term unemployed given a chance to succeed through our \$6.5 million Tasmanian Employer Bonus. We will deliver 600 more free training places in aged care and disability. We will see a network of youth advisers provide one-on-one support for school leavers who are navigating a COVID employment and learning landscape. We will extend TAFE's successful Skill Up campaign and give the unemployed and young Tasmanians skills for new industries or to enter the workforce. Through regional job shows, an online worker portal and job-matching services, our package will help Tasmanians get skilled up, get into work and participate in their community.

Tasmania has the highest completion rates for apprentices and trainees in the country. We have delivered outstanding employer and student satisfaction rates, \$41.8 million in new buildings, and better equipment is being invested, and seven years accreditation from the national regulator.

However, one of the strongest themes PESRAC heard in its consultation with business is the need for our training provider, TasTAFE, to meet the needs of a generation of young people and an influx of jobseekers who need to skill up quickly or reskill to move across sectors as we recover from the structural impacts of COVID-19. They heard this from business, industry and community groups. We must listen and we must continue our evolution of TAFE. We need a public and skills training provider that is agile, that is industry specific and offers training specific to the outcomes required, a provider that looks and operates more like the businesses it serves.

PESRAC heard that the employment conditions for TasTAFE trainers align more closely to a school than an industry environment, with restrictive maximum training loads and inflexible time-of-day training arrangements making it difficult to deliver to industry work patterns for students' out-of-hours needs. TasTAFE is not a school. These restrictive practices do not happen across most TAFEs in Australia. Businesses expect TasTAFE to be able to recruit new staff quickly in response to industry demand.

Those opposite have done their absolute best to undermine TasTAFE for the last seven years.

In fact their commitment of 70 per cent of skills funds will actually decrease the investment going into TAFE. We are committing over 80 per cent of investment in TAFE.

Opposition members interjecting.

Madam SPEAKER - Order. Ms O'Byrne, it is not your birthday today. I will give you a warning now.

Mr ROCKLIFF - Madam Speaker, those opposite have done their absolute best to undermine our public training provider. We have rebuilt our public training provider, TasTAFE, given the disaster we inherited. We have achieved seven years of accreditation, with \$41.8 million being invested into key infrastructure that they neglected when they were in government. We are investing in more teachers, we have paid off their debt and we will continue to invest in more teachers. We want to support our young people to get the skills and jobs required. We want more teachers, not fewer, and that is exactly what we will deliver.

That is why we agree with PESRAC's recommendation. Under the model of TasTAFE, the public will have a clear view of its charter -

Mr O'Byrne - This is not the right approach and you know it.

Madam SPEAKER - Order, Mr O'Byrne.

Mr ROCKLIFF - aligning government priorities to address industry business needs as they emerge. I have great faith, as I have for the last seven years, in our public training provider, to be able to deliver for Tasmanians, but we must evolve and continue to go from strength to strength and that is what we are doing.

We are giving our public training provider a future, aligning with the future for our young people who want the skills to participate productively in our community, to support our infrastructure investment. That is exactly what we will deliver. It is not just the Government saying this. Tourism Industry Council of Tasmania CEO Luke Martin said:

As an industry we welcome the commitment to reform TasTAFE, which is effectively the reform model our industry sought for Drysdale two years ago, now being applied across the whole institute.

National Disability Services said:

... if TasTAFE being re-established as a government business means it will be more agile in responding to the needs of industry, it is certainly welcome.

TasCOSS CEO Ms Picone said:

... we strongly welcome investment in TasTAFE and look forward to working with them to address the demand for an expanded community services workforce.

Michael Bailey from the TCCI said:

We expect the Government to follow through now and make the changes needed to ensure that TAFE will train the workforce of the future and will be flexible, efficient, effective and responsive to the needs of industry. Industry has been crying out for flexible training options delivered in ways that suit them and their employees. That flexibility is critical if we want more Tasmanians to work and see our economy grow.

We are proud of the seven years under our leadership of TasTAFE where we have reinvested. We have got it into a good position and now is the right time for it to evolve and take it to the next level so we can give our public training provider and every single teacher the best possible future and, most importantly, our young people to get the skills they need to support the productivity in our economy and the infrastructure investment.

That is the key difference between Labor and this Liberal Government. We believe in our young people and our public training provider. They have undermined the public training provider at every single turn and their policy is to invest less in the public training provider. We will not be deterred because we believe in this reform and we believe in our public training provider.

Firefighters - Payment of Backpay

Ms HADDAD question to PREMIER, Mr GUTWEIN

[10.44 a.m.]

The entrenched meanness to Tasmanian workers that characterises your Government is on display across all areas of the state. Your Government is waging a mean-spirited battle through the courts to try to hold back a few thousand dollars in backpay owed to Tasmanian firefighters. Your Attorney-General, on behalf of your Government, has already lost this fight in both the Industrial Commission and the Supreme Court and now is going to the Full Bench of the Court of Appeal to withhold this pay to 13 firefighters, which amounts to less than \$20 000 in total. This is an extraordinarily petty battle for a state government to be so determined to fight. How much is this shameful, ongoing court battle costing your Government in legal fees? Do the legal fees amount to more than the figure owed to the firefighters in backpay? Can you explain to the Tasmanian workers why you are going to such cruel lengths to withhold pay from frontline workers who put their lives on the line to ensure the state's safety?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank Ms Haddad for that question and her interest in this. I can only provide the advice I have in front of me here. The agreement was approved by the Tasmanian Industrial Commission on 19 August 2019. The agreement had a period of operation time in the past from 1 July 2018 to 30 June 2019. A dispute arose regarding whether 13 former employees who were employed during the period of operation but ceased employment before 19 August were entitled to the benefits of the agreement or, in other words, entitled to the backpay.

Since the commencement of the matter, nine of the 13 seasonal employees involved in the original application before the TIC have been re-engaged by DPIPWE and, as such, have been paid the relevant backpay. The remaining former employees would also be backpaid if they were re-engaged as seasonal workers.

The appeal to the Full Bench of the Supreme Court is a legal matter in relation to whether the Tasmanian Industrial Commission has jurisdiction to determine whether industrial matters such as a wages agreement can cover former employees as well as current employees. This is an important principle as it has wide application to many previous wage agreements that apply to many former employees and potentially costs of administratively complex and unintended consequences of the Supreme Court decision. We are seeking clarity. I do not think I can provide any more than that.

Ambulance Tasmania - Payment of Travel Allowance and Staffing

Ms WHITE question to PREMIER, Mr GUTWEIN

[10.47 a.m.]

Your Government created the unsustainable crisis now being faced by Tasmanian ambulance crews. You have placed them in an untenable position of having to travel significant distances to cover staff shortages at rural stations because you simply have not given them the resources they require to perform their jobs. Tasmanians are literally dying while they wait for help, but your mean-spiritedness does not end there. You and your Health minister have ordered that a 46 cents per kilometre travel allowance which has been paid to paramedics for many years will no longer be paid. In addition, you are going to the extraordinary length of trying to claw back the allowance that has been paid in the past. That would amount to thousands of dollars for some paramedics over the years of their career.

You have left Tasmanian communities extremely vulnerable by failing to fund Ambulance Tasmania and now you are willing to make them even more vulnerable by preventing help from reaching them. Can you explain to Tasmanians why you have made this mean-spirited, unreasonable decision? Why you are willing to increase health risks to communities for the sake of a small travel allowance?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the Leader of the Opposition for that question. I refute many of the assertions she has made. First, in terms of the north-west paramedics travel allowance issues, the secretary of the department of Health, as I understand it, continues to work through that process. I understand that it is a challenging one for the individuals involved and I am hopeful we can get a reasonable outcome.

I make the point that, regarding paramedics more broadly and ambulance, we have significantly increased the number of full-time equivalents working within Ambulance Tasmania. At the moment we have 170 more full-time equivalents which, broadly speaking, is a 50 per cent increase in the number of paramedics since we came to government. To suggest

that we are not investing is completely false. Regarding the matter the member raised, as I have said, the secretary of Health continues to work through that matter.

Home Ownership - Government Assistance for Tasmanians

Mr ELLIS question to MINISTER for FINANCE, Mr FERGUSON

[10.50 a.m.]

Can you update the House on the Tasmanian Government's clear plan to secure Tasmania's future by helping Tasmanians with the cost of their homes, to buy their first homes, and by helping pensioners move into smaller homes?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the member for Braddon for his interest in this matter on behalf of his constituents.

To answer his question, the Liberal Government does have a plan, and the plan is working for Tasmanians. That is evidenced in our recovery from the pandemic; our state is performing very well on a wide range of economic measures.

Our rate of unemployment is now below the national average, which is great news for Tasmanians. Importantly, we have gone from the terrible years of the Labor-Greens recession and the highest unemployment rate in the country to the lowest unemployment rate of all the states, under the Gutwein Liberal Government.

Add to that, retail confidence is right through the economy. It grew faster in January than in the same period last year - and that was prior to the pandemic and the lockdowns. Tasmania's confidence is greater than any other state, according to Sensis.

We want to continue to maintain that momentum and positive confidence. We want to support people, not just in jobs and growing the economy, but also by supporting them into their homes.

Added to the very buoyant civil construction sector is a boom in housing construction, as a result of the very successful federal and Tasmanian HomeBuilder Grant, and our continuation of the First Home Owner Grant.

Not surprisingly, with a growing economy and strong investment and infrastructure across our state, we are seeing an increased demand for housing and rising house prices. Another factor towards that is that Tasmanians are coming home. They are returning, and we are seeing net migration to our state, which is again a complete reversal of the experience under the previous Labor-Greens government. That is why we are seeing that.

That is why, in 2018, we introduced a new policy - the 50 per cent duty concession for Tasmanians buying their first home, to support them and help them with that cost, to make it that little bit easier for them.

We also appreciate that freeing up some of the larger homes occupied by empty nesters makes it easier for families to be able to get their dream home. This is why, in 2018, we also introduced the 50 per cent duty concession for pensioners who are downsizing to a smaller home, to help them make their next move, and also to free up that listing for the market.

For both these concessions, we placed a limit of \$400 000 on the price of the home, as at that time the median home price in Tasmania was below \$400 000. Through the strength of the economy and the increased demand for homes, as at the December quarter 2020 the median house price across the state was \$440 000. In the larger cities and towns, the median price is higher again, so we are responding to that, and we are continuing to support Tasmanians.

That is why we will now increase the threshold to \$500 000 for both concessions, thanks to the leadership of the Premier. This side of the House understands what it takes to help pensioners make it into their downsizers, to help first home owners into their first home, and to continue to help pensioners make the move and free up homes for Tasmanian families.

I am advised these initiatives will mean a saving of up to \$9100 for these home buyers. That will make a real difference. It will also be seen as an incentive to think about making that next step, and the economy and the housing market stands to benefit.

Earlier this year, we also commenced a review into land tax rates and thresholds, to ensure the tax remains contemporary, fair and equitable for all. As a result of that review, we will introduce a suite of measures to modernise land tax in Tasmania, to take effect in the 2021-22 year.

The tax-free threshold will double from \$25 000 to \$50 000, and the top threshold will increase from \$350 000 to \$400 000.

Also, as the Premier announced yesterday, the premium penalty interest rate will be halved from 8 per cent to 4 per cent. We will also introduce bill smoothing for land tax bills over \$500, and those bills can be paid in three instalments. Collectively, these measures will ease cost of living pressures for Tasmanian families.

The changes in the thresholds will benefit 70 000 landowners, and will mean about an additional 4100 landowners will pay no land tax in the year ahead. This is all in addition to the existing and very successful supports on offer through the state and federal First Home Owner Grant and HomeBuilder grants.

In the past nine months, 678 Tasmanians have applied for the First Home Owner Grant in conjunction with HomeBuilder. Also, 2313 applications have been received for the HomeBuilder grant from Tasmanians building a home, plus a further 433 from Tasmanians who have been renovating their home. This is a stunning level of interest and activity that we are witnessing.

Tasmanians are supporting our policies. Tasmanians are benefiting from our policies, and the net beneficiary are young people wanting to get a start in the building industry, and we support them because we support better outcomes for our young people. We continue to see

the need, even though we have the lowest unemployment rate in the country of all the states, and lower than the national average.

We continue to want to do better for our young people - and there is a very strong choice now, because it is pretty clear the Labor party do not want what is best for our young people. They have made it very clear today through their inane questions to the Premier and the Deputy Premier.

They do not support continued evolution of our public training provider. They do not support what is best to have an industry-supportive training provider that actually delivers on what industry needs. What industry needs right now is more workers.

When you have a youth unemployment rate of more than 10 per cent, we want those young people who are unemployed to get training so that they can get a job.

We will get the taxes right. We will do that, but we need to get the training right, which is why this side of parliament is absolutely locked in behind the interests of young people - not the entrenched interests of the Labor movement on the other side, which has clearly stuck with its Tasmania Tomorrow history.

COVID-19 - Quarantine Hotel Security Guards - Backpay

Ms HADDAD question to the PREMIER, Mr GUTWEIN

[10.58 a.m.]

You promised security guards working to keep Tasmanians safe in hotel quarantine that they would be paid extra money so they would not need to work extra jobs, to cut down on the risks that were seen as key in the second wave of COVID-19 outbreaks in Victoria and South Australia. Last December, you said they would be paid full-time rates, telling them:

It is important that our hotel quarantine workers are adequately supported financially to work only at the specific hotel and not in other settings while they are involved in the international quarantine hotel effort.

We welcomed that commitment at the time.

You made that commitment on 6 December 2020, and asked the guards not to take on any additional work. Last week you said guards began being paid on 25 January 2021. However, workers are saying that none of this pay has yet been received. Can you come clean on this? The point of the payments surely was to ensure that guards were paid sufficiently to not have to take on extra work back in December last year. When will this backpay be paid, and will it be backpaid to 6 December 2020, when you made that commitment?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank Ms Haddad for that question. First of all, what a fantastic job the security guards - in fact, all the staff at our quarantine hotels - have been doing. They are on the cutting edge, and I could not be more thankful for the work they have engaged in.

Let me be clear: regarding the period that they are owed backpay, they will be paid. For security staff working at hotels taking international guests, the deed was signed, I think, around 25 January, and payment was made.

The payments to staff who were working at domestic quarantine hotels are expected to commence shortly when the deeds enabling these payments are signed. My understanding is that process has been finalised. I expect it to be sorted very quickly.

Members interjecting.

Madam SPEAKER - Order.

Mr GUTWEIN - They will receive every cent that they are owed. I thank those who have been managing the health response and those who have been on our frontline working in those hotels. They have kept -

Ms WHITE - Point of order, Madam Speaker, it goes to Standing Order 45, relevance. The question I asked the Premier was whether the backpay will be to 6 December, when the Premier first made the announcement? If you could ask him to answer that.

Madam SPEAKER - As you know, I cannot put words in the Premier's mouth. It is not a point of order, but I ask the Premier to answer that, if he can.

Mr GUTWEIN - My understanding of the way that this is rolled out is that we announced that the international hotels would start in that program back in December. Regarding domestic personnel, we agreed to extend the program to personnel working in quarantine hotels that accommodated domestic travellers, which is at a lower level of risk than were the international hotels. Payments for personnel in domestic quarantine hotels will be backdated to 8 January to recognise the emergence at that time of the new and more transmissible strains of COVID-19. The initial announcement was in regard to international hotels and the challenges they faced at what was considered to be higher risk.

In terms of the domestic hotels, we have extended to the domestic hotels back pay to 8 January.

Forest Protests - Application of Work Health and Safety Act

Dr BROAD question to MINISTER for BUILDING and CONSTRUCTION, Ms ARCHER

[11.02 a.m.]

The Bob Brown Foundation continues to hinder the legitimate activities of the Tasmanian timber industry in its never-ending quest to end all native forestry in Tasmania. Time and time again we have seen dangerous stunts for social media that include standing on loose log piles for photos, locking on to moving machinery, and doing tree sits in remnant trees in logged coupes. These activities are all incredibly dangerous and could easily lead to serious injury or death for protesters. As a result, there have been at least a dozen notifications to WorkSafe

Tasmania by respective members of the timber industry, including contractors, Britton Timbers and even Sustainable Timber Tasmania, yet no charges have been laid.

Members interjecting.

Madam SPEAKER - Order. Excuse me, can we please have some respect in this parliament. We are here because we have differing points of view but we do not have to yell them across the Chamber.

Dr BROAD - Obviously, the Government does not want to talk about what WorkSafe does. Tasmania's existing work health and safety laws could bring an end to these dangerous stunts right now. Yet these laws are not being enforced.

Why will you not enforce Tasmania's work health and safety laws to bring the Bob Brown Foundation's dangerous protest to an end?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the member for his question. I do not think he understands the role of WorkSafe Tasmania. It is an independent regulator and when matters are reported by a member of the public, by an industry body, by anyone -

Ms O'Byrne - You are under resourced. You do not have the staff to do investigations. You said they are going to get back into -

Madam SPEAKER - Order, Ms O'Byrne, warning two.

Ms ARCHER - It is a matter for the independent regulator, it is not a matter for the minister. Your question is misguided because you are asking why I am not prepared to enforce the Work Health and Safety Act. That is a matter for WorkSafe Tasmania. They apply that every day. They send people to worksites where there are unsafe practices. As the Minister for Resources quite rightly said, where is your support of our workplace protesters bill?

You will have a chance in the upper House at some stage. I urge members on the other side of the House to back their calls, back our bill and show that there is meaning behind the words that you come in and use here today. Do not come in here and ask a question that you simply do not understand because the head of WorkSafe Tasmania is also the independent regulator over which I have no influence.

Housing - Statewide Increase in Supply

Mr ELLIS question to MINISTER for HOUSING, Mr JAENSCH

[11.06 a.m.]

Can you update the House on how the Tasmanian Government's plan to increase housing supply statewide is going?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank Mr Ellis for his question and his interest in housing for Tasmanians across all markets and needs.

Tasmania is rebounding from the pandemic. We have good reasons to be optimistic, but more needs to be done. The Government is rolling out the most comprehensive affordable housing strategy this state has ever seen. We need to do more to meet continuing unprecedented demand for housing across the broader market. That is why we have committed to develop a comprehensive whole-of-housing policy framework that addresses the full range of housing market issues across the public and private sector to drive solutions in line with PESRAC's recommendations.

In line with the Premier's Address yesterday, we have committed to action across the broader housing market right away. As we recover from the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, it is reassuring to see that our building industry is booming and we are now seeing record numbers of development approvals across our state. It is important that we keep this pipeline full and support our building industry as it meets the challenge of building more homes for Tasmanians.

Currently there are around 5000 hectares of privately owned, vacant, residential zoned land across Tasmania which could deliver around 60 000 lots for residential development, but for various reasons it is not being used. That is why we will now take immediate action to remove barriers and costs to activate this land and put it to work housing Tasmanians.

To address land supply, we are incentivising landowners to activate land with a \$10 million headworks holiday for new residential subdivisions. This includes up to \$5000 per residential lot for power and up to \$5000 per residential lot for water and sewerage infrastructure to activate up to 1000 additional home building sites. Matthew Pollock, from Master Builders Tasmania said:

Land supply is the first crucial step in boosting new housing supply and meeting housing affordability challenge. Housing affordability and land affordability are inextricably linked ...

and:

\$10 million to offset the significant upfront costs of developing land for new construction will unlock much needed land supply for new housing construction.

We agree. There is nothing better for those who are in the market, trying to get into the market, trying to stay in the market, than there being a bigger market to choose from, and less competition for them in securing rentals and securing homes to buy. We are committed to increasing that supply.

We are also committed to doing it through our planning system. Our planning system is playing its role in responding to our housing challenge. Under the new Tasmanian Planning Scheme, we will provide a much more flexible approach to residential development, providing greater housing choice and affordability options. We recently brought forward a suite of

statewide planning provisions that will standardise the rules and reduce the number of permits required for the majority of new builds in residential areas right across the state. Right now we are also finalising a new apartment code that will establish clear permitted and discretionary pathways for medium-density apartment developments in inner urban areas and encourage more apartment and townhouse developments to help meet growing demand for urban apartment living.

We are also providing a no permit-required pathway for landowners to construct ancillary dwellings such as granny flats or self-contained studios on their existing properties. Ancillary dwellings are extra self-contained living quarters with a floor area of less than 60 square metres that are additional to the primary home on a residential block. Ancillary dwellings can allow homeowners to meet changing family needs and add value to their home, but also importantly add a new class of accommodation to the housing market in established areas.

In coming weeks we will release a brochure explaining just how easy it is to build or buy and install an ancillary dwelling and the benefits it can offer homeowners and people looking for different housing options in the market. To encourage more people to consider building ancillary dwellings to meet demand in the market, our Government will provide \$10 000 as an incentive for the first 250 landowners to construct a new ancillary dwelling and commit to making it available for long-term rental for at least two years, putting more stock in the market for renters.

HomeShare can turn the dream of home ownership into reality for eligible Tasmanians. The scheme opens the door to home ownership for those who have an income sufficient to take the step but who need a bit of help to get into the market. Since the commencement of our Affordable Housing Strategy, 450 low-income Tasmanian households have realised the dream of owning their own home through the help of HomeShare and the Streets Ahead programs.

As part of the Government's construction blitz last year we announced broader eligibility requirements for HomeShare with a \$9.3 million commitment to expand the program to a broader market, and the applications have flooded in. The second half of 2020 saw almost three times more applications for HomeShare compared to the same period the year before and more applications than in the whole 2019-20 financial year. We want to make this opportunity available to more Tasmanians, so funding will now be increased by another \$10 million and the program will be advertised heavily during the course of this year so that at least another 100 Tasmanian households can realise the dream of home ownership. These new measures build on our record \$300 million investment in new housing and homelessness initiatives across Tasmania and they are an important part of our clear plan to secure Tasmania's future.

Time expired.

LIVING MARINE MISCELLANEOUS AMENDMENTS (DIGITAL PROCESSES) BILL 2021 (No. 5)

First Reading

Bill presented by **Mr Barnett** and read the first time.

MATTER OF PUBLIC IMPORTANCE

TasTAFE

[11.15 a.m.]

Ms O'BYRNE (Bass - Motion) - Madam Speaker, I move -

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

I have to say that I spent some time when I saw the announcement yesterday wondering exactly what was going on in the Government's mind. Obviously your first response, knowing the Premier we have, is that he is incredibly desperate when he does not have an agenda, that he likes to be in a fight and that he does not have a vision, so he is going to grasp anything to make it look like he has a plan.

If it were not for the Premier's Economic and Social Recovery Advisory Council (PESRAC) report, you wonder what he would have been saying in his Address yesterday. My first thought was this is a premier who likes to have a fight, an argument. He is not particularly concerned with actual outcomes, he is not concerned about working with organisations, he just wants to be in the fight.

Then I thought that maybe that was giving too much credit to the Minister for Education and Training, because that indicated that the minister was somehow unaware this was all taking place. The flipside of what actually occurred is looking at the last seven years with this minister - and I will quote some of his comments later - he is really quick to talk up his commitment to public education and TAFE, and really not quick in terms of delivering on the ground. So was this a thought bubble? Or has this been a deliberate and calculated attempt to undermine TAFE for seven years under this minister's watch so that he could get to the point of finally carving it off as a government business entity or any other privatisation agenda he may have? To be honest, scratch a Lib and it does not take long to find a lack of commitment to public education.

The minister is good at language, he is good at saying the things that make it sound like he cares about TAFE. If you look into his own commentary, he regularly says things like:

TAFE is an essential public location education training provider, we support it; this Government demonstrates we are supporting and rebuilding; I congratulate the 800 employees of TAFE.

Again and again when we have raised concerns raised by industry or by workers in the community or TasTAFE staff, this minister has said, 'Don't say anything about TAFE, I love TAFE and I am backing them all the way', and yet none of his actions indicate that.

Time after time courses have been cancelled because this minister did not invest enough in staff or in spaces. Time after time this minister has actively undermined TAFE - in fact when TAFE staff themselves had a survey saying how distressed they were, how concerned they were about TAFE, how problematic things were, he utterly dismissed it.

On one side we have someone talking up TAFE, doing a bit of feeding , prepping it for sale perhaps, and on the other side his actions have been to undermine it.

When you look at the concerns raised by PESRAC, there is not one of those that the minister has not his hands on. They say that there not enough people see that TAFE is a viable option for a career path - maybe that is because you cut the pathway planners. They say, 'We're concerned they're not flexible' - when the staff asked to run flexible programs, they were not allowed to. They say 'They're not getting the courses done on time' - that is because you are not funding them enough to be able to pay for their staff.

It appears to me that this minister is going to be happier to spend money on redundancies for hardworking staff than he has been to invest in TAFE, invest in the staff and invest in the teaching.

We will get lots of commentary - and I am sure the minister will stand up in a minute and talk about investment in the trade training centre down here and talk about relocating to Alanvale. What we have seen is selling off Tasmanian buildings and not investing fully in the new facilities. There are still RAFs at Alanvale. There is still a whole host of things at Alanvale you have got absolutely nowhere near addressing. You are more interested in a press announcement than an outcome. In that way, he is exactly like his Premier because it is more about the press release than it is about the outcome. If this minister were genuinely committed, he would be investing in TAFE and building it, because there is not a single concern raised by PESRAC that necessarily gets solved by making it a GBE. That is a philosophical decision of this Government.

Every concern that PESRAC has raised has been raised in the past before and this minister has dismissed them. When we raised concerns about resourcing for TAFE, when we raised concerns about supporting staff, this minister has dismissed it and attacked Labor for being negative about TAFE. The reality is, this minister has spent seven years undermining TAFE, seven years undermining staff, seven years undermining their ability to respond to industry and now throws his hands in the air and says, 'Oh well, you know, whatever, we will just have to get rid of it then'.

Do not think for a minute that we do not know what turning it into a GBE means. I wavered between wondering if he is incompetent or is that an intended action when I saw him give his answer to the question in Question Time today. It was not until we drew it to the House's attention that he was reading every word that somehow supported the action of turning TAFE into a GBE that he went back to his script of how good TAFE is and how much he likes TAFE.

He can do that off the cuff but he could not do off the cuff a commitment and an explanation as to why TAFE should be turned into a GBE, because maybe he might be incompetent but maybe he also believes that he has some responsibility here: that he could have over the last seven years invested in staff, that he could have worked with TAFE staff to resolve the concerns that they have been raising. This is why Labor has been talking about a plan to rebuild TAFE. We fundamentally believe in TAFE as a public funding institution. This minister fundamentally believes in a media release about TAFE.

He has undermined TAFE the entire time he has been there, while he gives out glowing media releases about how much he respects them. If he really believed this plan, before the

Premier was on his feet he would have made a call to stakeholders and said there was a great announcement coming down the line to support TAFE. But he did not.

When the union got a call from the department they did not even know that TAFE was being turned into a GBE. He is so proud of this that people were not even told. That is when you know you are not 100 per cent behind this. Either you are not 100 per cent behind it because you do not back it, or are you not 100 per cent behind it because you just do not give a damn. That is the problem, minister. I do not think you care enough about public education.

[11.22 a.m.]

Mr ROCKLIFF (Braddon - Minister for Education and Training) - Madam Deputy Speaker, I thank the member for the Matter of Public Importance today, and I thank the member for reinforcing the fact that I have said all those things on record about our support for the public training provider, TasTAFE. We have been since we came to Government.

The only ones that appear to be undermining the public training provider, TasTAFE, has been the Labor Party. Not only did they leave TasTAFE in a mess with a debt, but for the last seven years they have undermined, they have criticised and done their absolute best to diminish the confidence of our public training provider, TasTAFE. That is because they realise they have form on this. They abolished TasTAFE. Their history when it comes to TasTAFE is not good because they abolished TAFE Tasmania.

We are proud of the work that we have done to ensure that TasTAFE can build on its abilities by investing in the public training provider. We have paid off Labor's debt left to TasTAFE and we have invested more in TasTAFE.

We have invested in buildings. Facilities are important. The Trades and Water Centre of Excellence is an investment of over \$21 million. There is a critical industry partnership in the \$5 million investment at Freer Farm, which at one point the Labor government was going to close and sell off. We are investing in new buildings, and we are investing in staff. TasTAFE has arrived at a position of strength as evidenced by the achievement of seven years accreditation, achieved 18 months or so ago. It was a difficult task and I commend the management and teachers of TasTAFE for achieving that.

We are continuing to see the need for TasTAFE to evolve, to ensure that it has the flexibility, the industry alignment, the agility to respond to industry demand for skills and training. This is why a GBE is important. This is why we are ensuring that we have the opportunity for greater flexibility among the TAFE workforce - so we can get that industry alignment, so industry and our public training provider can work hand-in-hand in supporting our young people to develop their skills and ensure their skills are used in key areas that industry is demanding and for our economy. That is what is critical.

Those opposite have done nothing but undermine TasTAFE. Suddenly, when they see a political opportunity, they are saying they support TasTAFE. Shame on them. They have opposed every single key reform in education over the last seven years. They have no alternative when it comes to TasTAFE. Their free training has been revealed as an absolute sham. Their policy advocates for less investment in our public training provider. I am not sure if they have missed the point: the public training provider, TasTAFE, will always be in public hands. That is what a government business means.

We are a great believer in TasTAFE. We look forward to working with industry, working with our students, working with our schools, our senior secondary colleges and high schools and the Australian Education Union and other unions to ensure implantation to secure TasTAFE's future. TasTAFE has now arrived at a position of strength but it needs to continue to evolve and secure the future of not only every single employee and teacher but we want more teachers for our public training provider, more teachers and more delivery in our regions; contemporary fit-for-purpose facilities, which we are investing in; and more training options directly matched to jobs. I want to see better pay for skilled teachers, flexible hours aligned to business and industry needs, and an independent government business to meet the needs of young Tasmanians and those looking to reskill or upskill.

We have been through 12 months of the biggest disruption to our economy. We have to rethink where we can do better, where we can support our recovery, and where we can support young Tasmanians who want to embark on vocational education and training. We need tradies. The minister for Infrastructure can attest to that with his infrastructure program rolling out over the next four years but also the pipeline of works over the next 10 years.

Time expired.

[11.29 a.m.]

Ms O'CONNOR (Clark - Leader of the Greens) - Madam Deputy Speaker, I listened with great interest to the minister's contribution. He said we want more teachers. For seven years TasTAFE has been asking for more teachers, for better pay. I just found an article on the *Mercury* website from August 2019, only 18 months ago, which was talking about drastic staff shortages at TasTAFE impacting on students' capacity to do their courses and delaying their qualifications. This has been going on for some time. There has been a concerted effort on the part of both federal and state governments to undermine public training providers to invest more into private training providers, a number of whom have been demonstrated to be dodgy, to deny TasTAFE a quota percentage of government contracts.

Government should be supporting TasTAFE after its tendering processes for training but instead, last year an extra \$1 million in public funding went not to TasTAFE but to the Tasmanian Hospitality Association and the Tourism Industry Council of Tasmania to set up another registered training organisation when we already had Drysdale House here. Imagine what Drysdale House could have done with a \$1 million investment into an existing public hospitality training provider.

The facts speak for themselves. When you read the section on TasTAFE in the PESRAC report it implores members of parliament to put aside political differences and support this legislative change. The issue here is that I am not certain PESRAC has had a good look at what has happened in the past seven years under conservative governments at a federal and state level. I have enormous respect for the authors of the PESRAC report and, in many ways, it is an outstanding report back to Government and parliament, but I question some of the statements and assumptions behind the recommendation to corporatise TasTAFE.

I question, for example, a statement in the PESRAC report that there be no diminution of transparency should TasTAFE become a GBE. For those of us who sat across the GBE Estimates table from entities such as Forestry Tasmania and Hydro Tasmania, I would like to tell the PESRAC authors that transparency is not the name of the game. Opacity is what we

get from government businesses in our rare opportunity in this House, once every two years, to ask them questions.

If we are being asked by PESRAC to keep an open mind on this we should, but there are a number of issues here that require clarification. We need to be absolutely certain there will be no job losses, no course cuts, no fee hikes and no closure of TAFE facilities. Once you corporatise an entity like TasTAFE it is not possible to have those reassurances and one of the things that worries me about this move is that it is intended to be entirely industry led. The best way to make your public training provider effective is to include students and teachers in that conversation and not to make it all about meeting the needs of industry.

TasTAFE has a critical educational role and that is why there is this diversity of courses that are offered. What will happen to that diversity, should it become corporatised, a business which PESRAC says should be full-cost recovery? What will happen to some of those courses if they are not money-making courses and if they do not meet the needs that industry says it has that are currently unmet, like the fashion design course last year?

We are dealing with an entity which was stitched back together by a Greens minister, now senator, Nick McKim, after a reform experiment done with the best of intention by a previous premier, David Bartlett, but we are dealing with a public training provider which has the highest student satisfaction rate in the country. It also has some of the highest apprenticeship completion rates in the country. If you are serious about opening up TasTAFE and providing those opportunities to young people, you should make TasTAFE courses free and that will provide incredible opportunities to young people, particularly in rural and regional Tasmania. Those TasTAFE courses cost thousands and thousands of dollars. For many young people in rural and regional areas it is completely unaffordable.

We need to be very careful about this move when you have an existing public training provider which has such high student satisfaction rates, high apprenticeship completion rates and has the respect and trust of the Tasmanian people. We are sceptical about this because of the years of erosion of the public training providers by federal and state governments. Of course we need to be skilling up our people to fill those huge employment gaps in aged and disability care, but making TasTAFE a GBE is not going to guarantee that. Of course we need to be skilling up our workers with green skills but making TasTAFE a GBE does not guarantee that either.

Time expired.

[11.36 a.m.]

Mr STREET (Franklin) - Madam Deputy Speaker, the only thing that is consistent about this Labor Opposition is their inconsistency and their hypocrisy, and it is on show again today. We saw it yesterday with Dr Broad trying to sell himself as the champion of local jobs. We saw it today with Mr O'Byrne railing against the privatisation of Hydro after selling down the government's stake in Hydro-owned assets while he was in government.

We have seen this played before in the education space and I was in this place to see it. I well remember Labor's opposition to the extension of our high schools to years 11 and 12 with the predictable cries that this would be the death of the college system in Tasmania. I remember the debates, I remember the MPIs and, day after day, the discussion in this place about it. Has it resulted in the death of our college system? No, of course it has not. Our

colleges and schools have worked together to provide more flexible and better learning opportunities for our students. Even Labor had to eventually agree that it has worked with their admission that they will not roll back our policy if they ever return to government in Tasmania. They do not want people to know that they have admitted they were wrong, but they were wrong and they know it.

What we see here today from those opposite is yet again another example of Labor not understanding the current workforce landscape and the needs of young Tasmanians to be prepared for the jobs of now and into the future. Along with that they also ignore their own history with TasTAFE which we have spent years cleaning up. I think they are hoping that Tasmanians will forget about their history too, but the fact of the matter is the world did not start in March 2014 when we came to government and Tasmanians well remember what the Labor Party did to TAFE in this state.

Let us have a look at what they suggest Tasmanians need for COVID-19 skills recovery. Their own plan, if you can call a photo montage of the Labor members a plan, suggests only half of what this Government is delivering. They were suggesting \$10 million-worth of free training which, as the minister correctly pointed out, has now been uncovered as a hoax. While this Government is delivering \$21 million through our JobTrainer program, Labor wants training only to be delivered at TAFE. PESRAC does not agree with this, let alone industry bodies like the HIA or the MBA whose members depend on our far-reaching private training market. To listen to them talking today in this place it is as if they have nothing to do with the worst public provider reforms in a generation.

Staff at TAFE still talk to this day about how terrible Labor's reforms were and they certainly do not see a better future through them now. Their jobs plan refers to a 'major internal overhaul' of TAFE. That is about as vague and useless as it sounds and about as vague and useless as the photo book that they call a plan.

Through the COVID-19 skills recovery, again Labor has a complete lack of strategic thinking or understanding of what the Tasmanian training system does or how we can apply the right investments at the right time to get more Tasmanians skilled up. Now they do not want to listen to the many voices of industry community groups, PESRAC, and the TasTAFE board, chair and CEO. All they want to do is talk to themselves.

The move to a government business will provide TAFE with the flexibility to deliver and respond to training demands, which is utterly consistent with where TAFEs are nationally.

Under this model of TasTAFE, we will have a clear view of its direction, how it aligns with government priorities, and how it will address industry and business needs as these emerge. We want a modern and flexible TAFE. We want salaries that are more attractive for teachers, and salaries that reflect the industries and training that is relevant to the workforce.

I am genuinely gobsmacked at those opposite who have come out to argue against increased salaries for teachers. How can we argue that a business in Tasmania will not see teachers for 11 weeks of the year? This is not what happens in the rest of Australia. Do those opposite realise how a modern and contemporary TAFE services its communities? Look at the awards. We are not in the same league. We pay less than most other states for new teachers, and our top salaries cap out sooner.

The move we are proposing is not about teacher bashing. It is quite the opposite. The minister and this Government want more teachers at TAFE through this process. Industries are behind it. Community groups are behind it. PESRAC has endorsed it. The TasTAFE chair has strongly endorsed it. When will those opposite listen to Tasmanians?

We have delivered fantastic results in TAFE, and now is the time to move forward. TAFE is not broken. Thanks to the hard work of staff and teachers, we have seen the highest apprentice completion rates in the country. We have paid off Labor's debt. We have invested \$41.8 million in new facilities and equipment. We have seen TAFE awarded seven years accreditation from the national regulator, but we know there is more to do.

The talk of going to war with TAFE is ridiculous, just as their claims that we were going to war with the colleges two years ago was absolutely ridiculous.

I wish those opposite would familiarise themselves with the Fair Work Act 2009, as introduced by former prime minister Julia Gillard and the worker guarantees it provides. That includes transition rights and no-disadvantage rules. No teachers will be disadvantaged. No staff will be disadvantaged. The law does not allow that to happen.

The board, chair and CEO of TasTAFE fully endorse our position. If you are not going to listen to us, surely you could at least speak to the board, the chair and the CEO? We are going to make sure TAFE is fit for purpose going forward. We have funded TAFE at 80 per cent of all training funds available, which I would like to point out is more than was promised by those opposite - and we will always deliver more than those opposite.

I will finish with what PESRAC has asked from those opposite. That group of non-right wing-leaning individuals said:

We appeal to members of Parliament to look beyond short-term political advantage and the cries of vested interests and support the government to put through the necessary legislative changes to re-establish TasTAFE.

I would ask Labor to do exactly the same thing.

[11.42 a.m.]

Ms DOW (Braddon) - Madam Deputy Speaker, I want to reflect on some of the comments made by those on the opposite side of the House this morning during question time. I find it insulting that they would say we do not care about the future of young people in Tasmania, and that we have not been consulting with the community and with industry on the future of TasTAFE and the future of skills and training in Tasmania.

We do have a plan - and it is more than just a glossy brochure, Mr Street. You say you do not think it has much merit, but you have obviously taken the time to read through it. There are things in there that you incorporated in the state of the state reply yesterday, including the regional jobs hubs, a fantastic initiative across regional Tasmania that was not introduced by this Government. They were developed in response to gaps in local communities in connecting jobseekers and long-term unemployed people to employment opportunities, and they are models that have been developed around the specific needs and place-based needs of those communities.

You have in fact looked at this document. You have incorporated some of it in the state of the state reply, so you must see some merit in this document. I will draw your attention back to it because we are really proud of it. It is not just a thought bubble of the Labor Party. This has come together from months and years of consultation with stakeholders and the community about what they see as their key priorities for creating jobs right across Tasmania.

We regularly hear from Tasmanians that they cannot access the skills and training they need to gain employment. We also regularly hear from business and industry, through our industry advisory councils, that local employers are finding it difficult to find skilled employees across their local communities.

Labor is absolutely committed to investing in and rebuilding TAFE, and we have been proudly promoting this for a number of years. We will work with TAFE and consult widely through this process.

I want to put on the record today my thanks to the staff and teachers at TasTAFE for their hard work. It comes as no surprise that PESRAC identifies skills and training as a key priority for rebuilding Tasmania post-COVID-19 but, to date, the Government has talked down our positive plan for training the workforce of the future.

The Government said it does not rate our jobs plan, but as I said before, the Premier's state of the state speech yesterday confirmed the Government has in fact included a number of initiatives from our jobs plan. We are pleased the Government sees merit in these initiatives, including the rolling out of regional jobs hubs, a fantastic local community initiative.

Labor's plan for jobs has a clear focus on rebuilding and investing in TAFE. Despite the importance of the Premier's Address having a focus on skills and training, this focus should have been on rebuilding TAFE, not tearing it down, as has been proposed by this Government. This Government says it has succeeded in rebuilding TAFE over the last seven years. If this is the case, why is the current system not meeting demand? Why do rural and regional Tasmanians have less access to TAFE in their local communities over the last seven years? What has the Government done to work with local communities and TAFE to fix this - in regional communities where pathways to employment are critical, where traditional industries are changing, and key industries where COVID-19 has hit particularly hard, including tourism? Why is it only after PESRAC's report that the Government sees this as a priority - and that priority being investment in regional communities and providing better access to TAFE? We have always said it is a priority for us.

Our plan for training the workforce of the future focused fairly and squarely on enhancing regional delivery of TAFE. In these communities, local leaders have driven investment in skills and training in their communities to fill the void that has been left by this Government. A wonderful example of this is the study hub on the west coast. This is an initiative that is now looking to be duplicated across the Circular Head community, where we know there are significant barriers to accessing education and training at TAFE locally.

We believe in the benefits of our free TAFE policy and what it will bring to Tasmanians, but this can only be achieved by investing in TAFE, investing in its workforce, and investing in our fellow Tasmanians. We agree that a highly skilled workforce will be critical to

rebuilding post-COVID-19. In fact, PESRAC in its interim report endorsed our approach to free TAFE in its initial recommendations.

What we do not agree with is Peter Gutwein's decision to go to war with TAFE, rather than actually work with TAFE and local communities to fix the problems. I have experienced firsthand Peter Gutwein's failed fight with TasWater during my previous role in local government, and the lack of consultation or willingness to work together with the local government sector. Largely, not much was achieved, except division, through this fight. Arguably, Tasmanians are no better off.

I now want to draw the attention of the House to the comments of the AEU, which was not consulted by the Government about this proposed change. They have called it 'a misguided attack on TasTAFE by the Tasmanian Liberal Party'. It is a slap in the face to teachers and regional communities. The AEU has been clear that your Government should be investing more, not less, in education, and that your proposed changes to TAFE would shift the full cost of education onto students and employees. The AEU has said:

The government has shown complete ignorance towards students and the needs of industry, while also showing little research and due diligence in this announcement.

There was no consultation with the TAFE workforce and key stakeholders found out via a press release. We are often asked in this place about alternatives. Mr Street touched on this in his contribution, but I wanted to draw the attention of the House to our Training the Workforce of the Future plan, which is included in our jobs plan, and highlight a number of those initiatives. They are in stark contrast to this Government, and they have been developed from working with the grassroots of communities and local stakeholders.

The first thing I want to talk about is our policy for rebuilding TAFE from the ground up. Tasmania needs a TAFE system that gives people lifelong skills to get a job and aligns with the needs of industries. We acknowledge that. Tasmania's TAFE system has been undermined and neglected by the Liberal Government, and Labor will rebuild it. Under Labor, TAFE will be better staffed, more relevant to industry, and training will be delivered where and how people need it. Labor will turn Tasmania's TAFE system into the engine room of our economy, driving qualifications and employment. We talk about the need for more teachers. We talk about enhancing regional delivery. We are passionate about creating a more efficient training system and promoting the value of vocational training across Tasmania.

Time expired.

[11.49 a.m.]

Ms BUTLER (Lyons) - Madam Deputy Speaker, it is disgraceful that after seven years of doing absolutely nothing to bolster the Tasmanian TAFE system, it took Labor to come out with a fabulous policy on how we would rebuild TAFE for the Government to finally react.

You can put it under the guise that you are doing this as a reaction to COVID-19 but you have had seven years of doing nothing. There was no consultation with the Australian Education Union about the plan you announced yesterday. The AEU has said it is a misguided

attack on TasTAFE and that it shows ignorance towards students. Even they have said publicly that there was no consultation.

Time expired.

Matter noted.

MOTION

Note - Premier's Address

Continued from 16 March 2021 (page 48).

[11.51 a.m.]

Ms WHITE (Lyons - Leader of the Opposition) - Madam Deputy Speaker, a year ago the Premier and I stood in this place to deliver our view of the state of the state.

The first case of COVID-19 in Tasmania had only just been confirmed and there was little warning of the upheaval that was to come. So much has changed in those 12 months.

Our health system was stretched to the absolute limit. Sadly 13 people lost their lives and others who were infected with the virus are still suffering after-effects today.

Structural weaknesses in our economy were exposed. At the height of the pandemic nearly 20 000 Tasmanians lost their jobs and the jobs recovery is incredibly uneven across industries and regions to this day.

The pandemic reinforced the importance of the highest quality public services, whether it was teachers in our schools adapting to home learning or health professionals, police and emergency services and cleaners, everybody played their part to keep the community safe.

We saw the innovation of individual businesses to adapt and survive. Tasmania is now enjoying freedoms that many in the rest of the world can only dream about. That does not mean that the Government is done.

For too long Tasmanians have been conditioned to accept mediocrity. We have been desensitised to having the worst outcomes in health and education in the country. Intergenerational poverty and regional disadvantage have been normalised and put in the policy too-hard basket.

I have said many times before that we should not rush to return to normal after the pandemic. Returning to normal means returning to mediocrity - returning to social and economic outcomes that are the worst in the country. I fear that is exactly what is happening.

While the Premier claims the state is recovering, his version of recovering is entrenching - and in many cases, worsening - inequality and disadvantage in our community.

The most recent Report on Government Services found that 52 per cent of category 1 patients for surgery wait more than the recommended 30 days, up from 16.1 per cent in 2015. Ambulance response times are up 32 per cent since 2014, when the Liberals came to power.

There are 86 per cent more people waiting to see a health specialist than when the Liberals came into government. The outpatient waiting list numbers are more than 40 000 people, up by about 10 000 people since the Liberals came to office.

There are 3594 people on the public housing waiting list, up 65 per cent. The Premier wants to return to normal because that is where his Government has always felt safe. It is not a place where all Tasmanians are doing well.

For nearly eight years now Tasmania has had a government that is committed to defending the status quo. In the words of respected economist Saul Eslake, 'the Liberals have been minding the store.'. The trouble is Tasmanians need more than what this Government is selling.

While many other things have changed in the past year, Tasmania's most stubborn challenges remain the same. The Premier cannot wash his hands of these issues. He cannot pass off the blame for the consequences of the cuts he made as Treasurer. As good as the Government's management of the pandemic has been, it cannot be used as an excuse for the failure to make the lives of Tasmanians better by working hard to uphold the many other responsibilities the Government has.

The PESRAC report released yesterday is a good start. I commend the members of the council and particularly the work they have done consulting with the broad cross-section of the community. The PESRAC process is an opportunity for a step change in the priorities of government and the way public services are delivered.

It is clear that is not the approach the Premier has decided to take. He is quite happy to continue on the road he has always been on. Sadly, we know too well where that leads. Peter Gutwein may have committed to implement all the report's recommendations, but we have heard a lot of promises from this Government and this Premier over the past seven years.

The Liberals promised to fix Tasmania's health system. They promised to address traffic congestion in our cities. They promised to deliver more affordable housing. They promised to improve the delivery of mental health services. They promised not to introduce new taxes for Tasmanians. They promised to be more transparent and more accountable. Ultimately, actions from this Premier will speak much louder than words.

I am not prepared to settle for mediocrity. A recovery that ignores the very real problems of our health system, the rapidly worsening house crisis and spiralling rates of regional unemployment is no recovery at all.

Labor's focus between now and the election is holding the Government to account for its broken promises to address these challenges and to articulate our plan to use the aftermath of this pandemic as an opportunity to build a better and more inclusive Tasmania.

There is no higher priority right now than getting people back into work and giving young Tasmanians the skills they need for the jobs of the future. Peter Gutwein's only measure of

jobs recovery is returning to the way things were before the pandemic, which is selling Tasmania short. He wants to celebrate a participation rate that is the lowest in the country - the highest rates of underemployment in the country and rampant casualisation.

Wages are now nearly \$12 000 a year below the national average, with no growth over the past six months. The wage gap is growing. It is nearly \$1000 more than when the Liberals were elected. A regional breakdown of Jobstart shows Tasmania's economic recovery is highly uneven, and outside Hobart much weaker than the rest of Australia. The unemployment rate on the west and north-west coasts is 8.3 per cent. It is 7.9 per cent in the south-east and it is 7.1 per cent in Launceston and the north-east.

Whatever the Premier says about jobs coming back, it is clear that regional Tasmania is being left behind by this Government. Peter Gutwein is not on the side of these people who are struggling to find work in the aftermath of the pandemic. He does not support meaningful increases in the JobSeeker payment to lift Tasmanians out of poverty, instead repeating Scott Morrison's claim, not backed by any evidence, that JobSeeker is stopping people looking for work. There are still 14 jobseekers for every job vacancy in Tasmania.

Peter Gutwein has refused to lobby for an extension to JobKeeper, even in the face of warnings from the tourism industry that 9000 jobs could be under threat when the wage supplement is withdrawn at the end of this month.

Labor does not want to return to the normal. We believe things can be better. Only Labor has a fully costed jobs plan that will deliver 35 000 jobs across all regions and sectors of the Tasmanian economy. We will mandate that at least 20 per cent of workers on all government projects are apprentices, including civil construction works.

We will give older Tasmanians greater opportunities to get a trade through our second chance career scheme that covers the increased costs of employing a mature-age apprentice. We will fund a climate action workforce to protect communities from the effects of a change in climate, including flood, erosion and fire mitigation. We will embed career education back in classrooms so Tasmanian students are guided in their career choices.

Unlike the Government, Labor will not sit back and hope that jobs return. We will partner with businesses to drive innovation and create jobs. Our \$55 million Tasmanian jobs and innovation fund will leverage at least \$2 of private investment for every public dollar spent to drive innovation in new industries as well as allow traditional industries like forestry, mining, aquaculture, manufacturing and agriculture to continue to grow.

At the heart of Labor's plan is skills and training. Labor will rebuild TasTAFE from the ground up by employing more specialty teachers and ensuring that the skills and training system delivers what jobseekers and employers need. Our plan to rebuild TAFE includes increasing the TAFE workforce by 20 per cent by attracting new trainers with experience in private and public industry. We will make sure that more Tasmanians can access skills training by delivering more courses in our regions. We will make TAFE free in areas of known skill shortages including building and construction, tourism and hospitality, agriculture, and aged care and disability care. Ours is a positive plan designed to work with the TAFE workforce to rebuild confidence and pride and restore TAFE to its rightful place as the state's training institution of choice.

Labor has been talking about the need for increased investment in TasTAFE for years. It is not just some thought bubble like the Premier had overnight. Sadly, rather than responding to calls for increased investment, what we heard yesterday from Peter Gutwein was a declaration of war against TAFE teachers. Just like his vendetta against TasWater, the Premier would prefer to have a fight than actually fix the problems at the heart of skills and training. That is easier for him than acknowledging the fact that his Government has ignored, undermined and underfunded TasTAFE for the past seven years. True to form, the Premier thinks he can bully his way to reform.

The Australian Education Union responded to the Government's announcement yesterday, calling it a misguided attack on TasTAFE by the Tasmanian Liberal Party and a slap in the face to teachers and regional communities. They said:

Wasting money on a war with teachers and communities that depend on TAFE will delay economic recovery and result in diminished training and education.

...

The Government should be investing more, not less in education, but the proposed model would shift the full cost of education onto students and employers.

The Government has shown complete ignorance towards students and the needs of industry while also showing little research and due diligence in the announcement.

Unlike the Liberal Party, the Labor Party will always back TAFE. The impact of the Liberals' cuts is plain to see. TAFE enrolments are down 31 per cent since 2014 and less than half of all school leavers are working, studying or doing an apprenticeship. That is down from 80 per cent since the Liberals were elected.

You only need look at the once-proud hospitality training institution, Drysdale, to see the Liberals' ideological agenda to undermine public skills training. The tourism and hospitality industry presented a comprehensive proposal to the Government to restore Drysdale to its proud and rightful place as a flagship of hospitality training in this state but the Liberals walked away from the industry's preferred model and left a confusing mess in its place. That is the fate that awaits the rest of the TAFE system if the Liberals have their way. You cannot trust the Liberals with public education. There is now a clear choice between the Labor Party that wants to rebuild TAFE and the Liberal Party that wants to blow it up.

I will now talk about another key issue for Tasmanians and that is housing. Last year Peter Gutwein made the laudable comment that no-one should be homeless in the middle of a pandemic. Sadly, once again we see the Premier rushing to return to normal and the impact is seen in the escalating stories of homelessness and the growing public housing waiting list, stories of people like Crystal who resorted to pitching a tent on the lawns of parliament last week to raise attention to her homelessness situation. Crystal still does not have a roof over her head. I am not sure if you went down to see her, Premier, but you really should have.

The Premier has let protections against rent increases and evictions expire even for those who continue to feel the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic. This Government has proven incapable of fixing the housing problem. Peter Gutwein is not on the side of renters and young people struggling to get into the housing market. He disputes that rents are out of control despite all the evidence. The problem stems back to his Government's failure to build enough social housing. He is either out of touch with reality or he does not care.

Meanwhile, the Minister for Housing, Roger Jaensch, has given up trying to clear the public housing waiting list, claiming, 'We are not in charge of all the circumstances that drive people to social housing'. What an extraordinary comment to make. Record high waiting lists are a policy choice of this Government. Poverty drives people into social housing, like the JobSeeker and the JobKeeper cuts championed by the Premier. Unemployment and job insecurity drive people into social housing. A lack of access to health care drives people into social housing. These are all things well in the control of a government that wants to do something about them, but that is not this Government. Instead, this Government settles for mediocrity, excuses and endless promises with no delivery. Ultimately the Government needs to acknowledge that everyone deserves access to have a roof over their head and feel safe, no matter what their circumstances.

House prices in our major cities are now amongst the highest in the country. Our rents are more unaffordable than Sydney and Melbourne, but Tasmanians earn \$450 a pay less than the national average. Council to Homeless Persons has found that people on JobSeeker in southern Tasmania will be paying 97 per cent of their income on a two-bedroom rental property. In the north and the north-west it is barely any better, with jobseekers forced into situations where 79 per cent and 65 per cent respectively of their income goes on rent.

The lack of affordable housing and the rapidly rising cost of housing are having a significant impact on the Tasmanian way of life. In the past governments have tried to justify Tasmania's lower wages by arguing that house prices and the cost of living were low compared with other states. That is no longer the case. Thousands of Tasmanians in the rental market are caught in a pincer movement between low wages and high costs of living, which is having an impact on their quality of life. The best thing the Government can do to reduce the record high waiting list is to build more houses, yet in budget Estimates last year Roger Jaensch, the Minister for Housing, confirmed the overall stock of social housing had increased by just five homes in a year. He also admitted he had failed to build a single home with the Commonwealth housing debt waiver funding, despite promising an additional 80 homes a year.

It is also the official policy of this uncaring Government to discourage people from even applying for public housing, instead telling them to rely on the charity of friends and family. When the goodwill runs out, as it inevitably does, people are sleeping in tents and caravans, and cars and garages and sheds, or even on the streets. The Government has ignored the 61 recommendations of the housing affordability select committee which was based on broad consultation with experts and stakeholder groups and achieved tripartisan support. They refused to regulate short-stay accommodation to relieve the pressures in the private rental market.

Only Labor can be trusted to build more houses. We did it in government and we have the policies to do it again. Labor's Housing Works policy will fast-track the construction of 490 additional houses in three years in partnership with community housing providers. Housing Works will help an estimated 1100 people into new homes at below market rent. This

policy will create more than 550 jobs, 75 apprenticeships, and inject more than \$300 million into the Tasmanian economy. These 75 apprentices will benefit from Labor's free TAFE policy that will help them get a foot in the door on job sites across Tasmania. We will put a temporary pause on new listings of whole dwellings for short-term accommodation in areas of high housing stress. We will work to action the 61 recommendations of the housing inquiry that the Premier has ignored. Labor will always stand up for the battler and there is no more important priority than making sure that people have a roof over their head.

During the pandemic our health workforce went above and beyond the call of duty to keep the community safe, even when it came at the expense of their own health - and we saw that during the north-west outbreak. For Tasmania's health system, a return to normal has meant a return to ambulance ramping that is the worst in the country. It has meant a return to wait times for elective surgery that are the worst they have ever been and, tragically, it will mean more people will die when these deaths could have been avoided.

Peter Gutwein wants people to forget that as Treasurer since 2014 he has been the architect of the problems confronting the Tasmanian health system. In his first budget he cut \$210 million out of Health. It took a global pandemic for him to finally abandon the almost \$100 million in additional cuts announced in the 2019 budget. The consequences of the Treasurer and Premier Peter Gutwein's cuts are plain to see. Seven years of abysmal Liberal failures have left our health system on life support. For years, the Government has papered over the cracks, treating health like a public relations problem to be managed only when it becomes too loud to ignore. It is a cynical approach to health and a national disgrace.

Tasmanians are waiting for an ambulance for hours not minutes, patients are languishing in emergency departments on the floor or tucked away in cupboards with a bell to call for assistance because there are not enough beds. Patients are dying while they are waiting on waiting lists. Patients are dying while they are waiting for an ambulance.

They do not seem to matter to a Liberal Government that increasingly relies on spin doctors, not real doctors, to run our health system. With each bandaid the structural problems are worse and the health workforce has become more disillusioned. Health professionals are burning out. They have little support for keeping vulnerable Tasmanians safe. This Government does not seem to understand that healthcare is being delivered by real people - nurses, paramedics and medical practitioners. The Government is exploiting the goodwill of many and it is vulnerable Tasmanians who are suffering the consequences.

Accepting these failures is a policy choice of the Premier. It is not, however, an outcome that the Labor Party is willing to accept. The grand promises made by the Liberals at the last election have been broken by this Premier and Treasurer who has only delivered cuts and disappointment. The promise to make Tasmania the healthiest state in the country by 2025 has been abandoned because it would never be achieved under the policies of this Government.

There has been little progress on promised infrastructure projects like the new Burnie Ambulance Station, additional mental health beds that have not been delivered, and the redevelopment of Ward 4K in Launceston has been constantly delayed. Unfortunately COVID-19 has highlighted what we have known for far too long: Tasmania's health system is at a crisis point and Tasmanians are not getting the care they need and deserve.

As the devastating north-west COVID-19 outbreak demonstrated, regional Tasmanians and our regional health systems are particularly vulnerable, with numerous challenges compounded by our ageing population, poorer health outcomes and limited public transport. The Government cannot even get the basics right in Health.

The recently announced Legislative Council inquiry into rural health is a long-overdue step in the right direction that we hope will lead to improved health outcomes and access to community health and hospital services in rural and remote parts of Tasmania.

Labor's jobs plan will reduce reliance on expensive locums by converting long-term contract positions in the public service to permanent jobs, including full-time positions where appropriate. Permanent jobs in the health service result in better continuity of care, which leads to better health outcomes for all Tasmanians.

We will put mental health workers in all schools to ensure that the mental health needs of young Tasmanians are supported from an early age. I look forward to releasing more policies in the months ahead that keep people out of hospital and cared for in the community.

This Government has banked Tasmania's economic and jobs recovery on building infrastructure. There is no escaping the fact that this Government cannot build anything. The most recent Budget update confirms the Government's infrastructure program - the centrepiece of its economic recovery plan - is simply not being delivered as promised. Just \$205 million of the more than \$1 billion allocated has been expended in the first six months of the year. Allowing for the fact that in previous years 60 per cent of infrastructure spending has fallen in the second half of the year, the Government is currently on track to underspend its infrastructure budget by nearly \$600 million.

What this Government lacks in delivery it makes up for in announcements and reannouncements. They are clearly counting on people forgetting about promised progress before that news is recycled again. There is not a single major infrastructure project that was promised by this Government at the last election that has started major construction. Not a single project promised in 2018 will be completed before the next election.

Let me just run you through a list of examples: the underground bus mall, the northern suburbs passenger rail, Project Marinus and Battery of the Nation, the Bridgewater bridge, the northern prison, the Tamar River bridge, the fifth lane on Hobart's Southern Outlet, the duplicated Sorell causeways, fixing Launceston's disgraceful sewerage problem, the duplication of the Charles Street bridge, and the Cradle Mountain cableway. That is not an exhaustive list.

Nothing quite sums up the Government's inability to deliver infrastructure like Peter Gutwein and Michael Ferguson's farcical handling of the *Spirit of Tasmania* ship replacement. This ridiculous episode calls into question the Premier's judgment and amounts to a monumental broken promise that will cost hundreds of jobs and millions of dollars. This Liberal promise to build the ships and have them on the run by the end of this year is a massive broken promise. Instead, nine months ago, the Premier ignored TT-Line's expert advice and tore up the contract with RMC. That decision created uncertainty in the tourism and freight sectors, which were banking on increased capacity. And for what? We are right back to square one with the ships to be built in Finland but delivered at least two years after they were

originally promised. The promise that the new ships will be built in Australia has been exposed as a cruel jobs hoax.

Ultimately no one wins as a result of the Government's bungling and incompetence. The delay will put a handbrake on job creation and investment in the tourism and freight sectors, and the cost of the new ships will almost certainly blow out. That is money that could have been spent directly in Tasmania creating Tasmanian jobs.

As another reminder of how hopeless this Government is at delivering major infrastructure projects, there was more money announced for Macquarie Point in yesterday's Address, with little detail of how that \$77 million will be spent. What we do know is that in a saga comparable to an episode of *Utopia* we have seen the failed minister for Infrastructure, Michael Ferguson, heralding the opening of a new driveway only for that driveway to be closed off immediately after the photo opportunity; the bike path built through the site just a few years ago that has been closed and ripped up; and the sewage treatment works plant that Peter Gutwein promised to remove years ago but still stands as a repellent to investment.

When Peter Gutwein, the Premier, says he has a plan to build his way to recovery but he cannot build anything it means he does not have a plan. You cannot build infrastructure out of media releases and consultants reports. It takes more than a few photo ops in hard hats. It takes hard work and this Government has proven that it just does not have the ticker for it.

Labor can build. We proved that over our 16 years in government. In energy we delivered Basslink, we built wind farms and we piped natural gas across the state. Labor delivered the irrigation schemes that have transformed agriculture, supported new industries and created jobs up and down this state.

We delivered the two *Spirit of Tasmania* ferries which sparked the tourism boom. We built major roads like the Kingston and Brighton bypasses, and did much of the planning for the upgrades to the Midland Highway before the Liberals even came to power. Labor's jobs plan will continue that record of delivery. Not just announcements like this Liberal Government but delivery.

As an island state Tasmania's sea highway across Bass Strait is the most important highway we have. It has been taken for granted and treated like a political football by the Liberals. Labor would invest \$150 million over four years to deliver major upgrades to the Burnie, Devonport and Bell Bay ports. These projects would increase efficiencies, put downward pressure on shipping costs and create jobs.

Peter Gutwein's cuts critically undermined the capacity of State Growth to design and deliver infrastructure -

Mr FERGUSON - Point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker, you have asked the Leader of the Opposition repeatedly to refer to the Premier by his correct title and I ask you to enforce that.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER - Thank you. I remind members that we respect each other across the Chamber. I ask that members refer to each other by the titles that we all know are in our Standing Orders. I ask that you do so for the Premier.

Ms WHITE - Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker, I look forward to that being applied consistently throughout all debates.

Labor will rebuild permanent capacity within the department to get infrastructure investment back on track. We will also develop an internship program so that design and engineering graduates can gain practical experience in the public and private sectors. We will invest \$17.5 million to address the critical maintenance backlog in public housing properties, creating 150 jobs and helping to make sure that Tasmanians can live in warm and safe houses.

In the past few weeks the deep ideological divide in the Liberal Party has been exposed for all to see. We have seen extraordinary war waged by press release to stymie debate on the voluntary assisted dying laws - make no mistake, the ideological split is not limited to voluntary assisted dying; that was just the issue that brought it to the surface. These are the same fault lines that emerged last January, when the Premier, Peter Gutwein, and the Deputy Premier, Jeremy Rockliff, edged out rival leadership team Michael Ferguson, not the Premier, and Elise Archer, not the Deputy Premier, by a single vote.

Opposition members laughing.

Ms WHITE - These divisions feed the Liberal Government's policy paralysis and ultimately they are holding Tasmania back. People might know who Premier Peter Gutwein is, but the weakness of the Gutwein Government is seen across their benches, with no-one left to promote and the rest of them looking pretty tired and bumbling. They have run out of ideas of their own and that was pretty obvious yesterday, Premier, when a number of the announcements you made were drawn largely from policy that Labor announced last year in our fully costed jobs plan.

In contrast to the worn-out Liberals, I am incredibly fortunate to lead a strong, capable and united team. My deputy, Michelle O'Byrne, is a former federal MP and has a wealth of ministerial experience across a range of portfolios in government.

Government members interjecting.

Ms WHITE - You should listen. I know you are jealous because you have nothing like this team.

David O'Byrne, also a former minister, has headed a national union and worked with respected charity the Beacon Foundation. I have a former teacher in Josh Willie as our shadow minister for Education; a GP in Dr Bastian Seidel as our shadow Health minister; a former mayor in Anita Dow as the Local Government and Planning shadow minister; an agricultural scientist in Dr Shane Broad as the Primary Industries shadow; Alison Standen, the former head of the Smith Family and state manager of the Department of Social Services as Our Human Services shadow; a lawyer in Ella Haddad as our shadow Attorney-General; Jen Butler brings a strong community connection and human resource management to the Police, Fire and Emergency Management portfolio; Sarah Lovell, a former union organiser is our workplace relations shadow; Jo Siejka and Jennifer Houston bring community sector and peak body experience to the table; and Craig Farrell has earned respect across the political spectrum as a fair and principled President of the Legislative Council.

Opposition members - Hear, hear.

Ms WHITE - Every single member of my team is passionate about their communities, committed to making a difference, and absolutely locked in to running for the next election.

Labor has a shared vision of the place we want Tasmania to be. We want Tasmania to be a better and fairer place for everyone. Realising that vision requires a government that is willing to admit that there are still far too many people who have been left behind. It requires a government that is prepared to acknowledge that the magnitude of the challenges ahead of us to close this gap are huge, and it requires a government that is not prepared to accept mediocrity.

Right now Tasmania is at a crossroads. We can choose to return to normal in the full knowledge that normal was not great for thousands of Tasmanians, or we can choose to grasp this once-in-a-generation opportunity to make Tasmania a stronger and more inclusive place. I know my team has the talent, the drive and the deep commitment to make the important decisions for our state that would make it a better and fairer place. We have a comprehensive plan to create jobs and support our state's economic and social recovery from the impacts of the pandemic. We have the energy and the ability to deliver in our promises, unlike the Liberals.

The truth is Tasmanians deserve better than what they are currently getting from the Gutwein Government. Every Tasmanian deserves a good education, a roof over their head and access to health care when they need it. Every Tasmanian deserves the opportunity to gain the skills they need and get a foot in the door to get a good job, and every Tasmanian deserves a government that cares about them. The Labor Party will work incredibly hard to be that government. I am under no illusion as to how difficult and how important the next 12 months will be, but I have never wanted anything as bad as I want Labor to win the next election, because after nearly eight years under a Liberal government I see far too many people who are getting left behind and far too many important projects that have stalled.

Government members interjecting.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER - Order. The Leader of the Opposition has the call.

Ms WHITE - The fact of the matter is this Liberal Government does not deserve 12 years; they simply do not. That is why my Labor team will work as hard as we can to demonstrate to the Tasmanian community that there is an alternative because we know that Tasmania can be a better and a fairer place.

Opposition members - Hear, hear.

[12.26 p.m.]

Mr ROCKLIFF (Braddon - Education and Training) - Madam Deputy Speaker, I congratulate the Premier on his very strong leadership and for outlining such a comprehensive plan to secure every Tasmanian's future. Our people are our greatest asset and by focusing on the PESRAC recommendations, we are also ensuring that Tasmania's priorities are the Government's priorities.

While employment is back to pre-pandemic levels and we are seeing strong growth in apprentice and trainee numbers, getting more people into jobs and training is critical to continue

Tasmania's economic recovery and to drive business confidence. I therefore welcome the Premier's announcement of a \$20.5 million package to help more Tasmanian workers into jobs. This important package of initiatives will address the barriers that some jobseekers face when looking for work. We will deliver wraparound services that best support educational outcomes for all members of our community. As the Premier explained, we are going to focus on the underlying issues and barriers that jobseekers face in their search for employment. Federal incentives and job networks do a great job to help those looking for work, but by combining those efforts with localised responses we will assist even more Tasmanians into jobs.

Tasmania has the most dispersed population with the highest proportion of people residing outside its greater capital city - 58 per cent - of any state. Transportation can be a barrier for those in rural and regional locations. The major expansion of our Area Connect service will see a trebling of low-cost or free transportation services right across Tasmania. Giving people the opportunity to present for a job interview or gain new skills at TasTAFE is crucial. It is a key stepping stone to help make a positive change in someone's life.

Our job ready fund will see \$2 million to help jobseekers increase their employment opportunities by providing money where jobseekers need it most, such as training costs, licensing for a new career or equipment in a new trade. We are removing barriers to employment and making life easier for those struggling to find work. As the Sorell Jobs Hub has shown, jobseekers are most successful when they are connected with real employment opportunities in their community. It is critical to ensure jobseekers are supported to train up and apply for obtainable and ongoing employment. Our successful job-matching service has done just that. I am delighted it will be boosted with an additional \$2.4 million so we can continue to develop the advice and career support jobseekers need to get back to work or start afresh.

We will complement these services with a strong focus on communication and connection for employers and jobseekers. The Worker Connect portal will provide employers with a clear view of what help is available to find new staff, those looking for work or those re-entering the labour market. The Worker Connect portal will also provide information and advice on how to access services, available JobSeeker funding and local networks that can also offer support. It will enable Tasmanians looking for work to better connect with employers who have jobs available. In partnership with local providers and jobs hubs, we will invest in regional job shows to further connect employers with school leavers and those seeking new opportunities.

Whilst we are recovering from some of the worst impacts of the pandemic, there remain those in our community who need extra support. Our recent school leavers are encountering a jobs and learning landscape that has changed in ways they did not think possible. Whilst we adjusted the Tasmanian Assessment, Standards and Certification (TASC) courses and have implemented the highly successful Schools Recommendation program to year 12 - and I commend the University of Tasmania for their initiative - we ensured that year 12 students were not disadvantaged, as university is not for everyone.

Despite stronger pathways into vocational education and training, we need to recognise that there are young people who struggle in those important steps after leaving school, and even more so in a COVID-19 environment. Through our \$800 000 funding of the Youth Network of Tasmania Youth Navigators project, disengaged youth will get the extra triage services they need to navigate further education, training or employment opportunities. Youth navigators

will be located in Hobart, Launceston, Burnie and Devonport, with outreach in our regional areas. Through a statewide partnership of not-for-profit community-based youth service providers, our 2021 school leavers will receive holistic, wraparound support from a youth employment specialist. This includes individualised coaching, interview practice, job search skills, and guidance to parents and carers on supporting young people into work or further training.

I am pleased to see training opportunities will also be expanded, with TasTAFE's successful SKILL UP initiative extended for a further 12 months with a \$1 million investment. SKILL UP saw the development of a small targeted suite of online short courses, skill sets specifically focused on transferable skills useful to employers across various jobs and industries, as well as skills to support people to successfully enter into employment.

SKILL UP is a stepping stone to higher-level training, and supports our key industry areas. Demand was so high last year that TasTAFE had to expand offerings across each course, with a total of 685 enrolments received. It has proven to be a highly supported and valued initiative, and another stepping stone for our youth at risk.

While supporting jobseekers is critical, we also know employers can be cautious taking on a long-term unemployed person. We must look to change attitudes, and give more Tasmanians the chance to earn a decent living - and the Tasmanian Employer Bonus announced by the Premier will do that, with \$6.5 million available over two years to incentivise employers to take a long-term unemployed person. It represents a threshold moment to get Tasmania working.

Some industry areas are already firing ahead. The aged care and disability sectors afford some of the best opportunities for jobseekers. Our \$3 million career in aged care and disability support program will see an additional 600 Tasmanians undertake training in one of the biggest areas of future demand.

It is timely to note that this Government has already made a very strong commitment to training workers in areas of jobs growth. JobTrainer is a \$21 million initiative providing nearly 7000 no-cost training places for Tasmanian jobseekers, young people and school leavers right now in areas of strategic priority for the state, and where there are strong future job prospects. These are additional placements being delivered by TasTAFE and private RTOs, and they are real. We are powering ahead, even with a COVID-19 pandemic. At the end of January, total enrolments at TasTAFE were up 20 per cent from 12 months ago. Our public training provider, TasTAFE, is in the strongest position it has been in.

We have paid off Labor's \$2.5 million debt. We have committed \$41.8 million for new buildings, facilities and equipment, and TasTAFE has been awarded seven years accreditation from the national regulator. As PESRAC notes, employer and student feedback has been very positive. It is some of the highest in the nation, but there is more to do.

The transformation of TasTAFE is far from over. We agree that more flexible staffing arrangements are the key to an agile and responsive TAFE to meet the training needs of industry, and that is a view also widely shared by industry. Businesses expect TAFE to recruit new staff quickly in response to industry demand. They want TAFE to support emerging industries by having appropriately skilled teachers available. That is what we will deliver - a

responsive and flexible training provider that services Tasmanian workforce needs, and the needs of our community.

Madam Deputy Speaker, our plan for TasTAFE supports businesses in Tasmania - business such as Elphinstone, based in Triabunna. I met Graeme Elphinstone with the member for Lyons, John Tucker, a few weeks ago. He knows that making TAFE attractive is critical, so important, and as Graeme says:

We start with fresh apprentices who need support in a wide range of areas, including IT and basic work skills, but our business is far more complex now. For example, our machinist skills are now very advanced, and teacher currency is critical, along with training in all the basics matching teaching skills to the workplace, is very important. Moving TAFE to a new model where they pay a fairer salary for skilled teachers and have a stronger industry focus will help my business grow with the skills we need.

PESRAC's recommendations to make TasTAFE an independent government business will give TasTAFE the flexibility it needs to better meet industry needs and train the next generation of Tasmanians.

Let me be clear, TasTAFE will always remain in public hands. It will not be privatised. It is very straightforward. It is such a critical public training provider. It is an institution, and I commend all who work within TasTAFE. We are securing their future, and ensure our valued public training provider will always be there for young Tasmanians.

Regardless of background or circumstance, every young person deserves a quality education. I was pleased last week to make an important commitment that, by year 7, all young people will meet an expected reading standard that is above the national minimum, and by no later than 2030. The Department of Education will determine that standard in coming weeks against progressive achievement tests. NAPLAN results show that we have seen progress in years 3 and 5 reading. I want to see that progress accelerated. We must aim higher, knowing we can do better.

I also made commitments on phonics and teacher professional learning, as well as establishing an expert advisory panel to review current literacy programs and supports across our community, and provide recommendations on how we can continue to improve our approach.

We are serious about improving education outcomes for students, which is also demonstrated by our record investment of \$7.5 billion in education. I have always taken the approach that local communities need to be engaged when it comes to the future direction of education provision in their area.

That is why, last year, the Government accepted a recommendation for Ogilvie and New Town high schools to go co-educational in 2022 as part of the city schools partnership they have with Elizabeth College. We recognise there will be immediate infrastructure needs. As the Premier has flagged, \$1.6 million will be provided for essential capital works, such as toilets and refurbishing some general learning areas, ahead of the 2022 school year. The development of a master plan is expected to identify and guide future investment.

It is hoped that through this transition to co-ed, and strategic investment in infrastructure, Ogilvie and New Town high schools will be part of the solution to taking the pressure off Tarooma High, and providing alternative options for parents who are looking at high schools in the greater Hobart area.

I often also talk about the importance of the student voice. I was moved by a letter I received last year from an Exeter High School student. This student put to me that there were female students who struggled to regularly access sanitary products at home, and sometimes that meant missing school. We must do everything we can to remove any barrier to learning, and I thank the Premier for his commitment yesterday for free sanitary products to be made available in our government schools from term three this year.

We know there is a link between student wellbeing and learning outcomes, and that is why we have prioritised mental health and wellbeing in our schools with an investment of \$81 million since we came to Government and across the forward Estimates. Our commitment includes wellbeing teams in every school and the delivery of an extra 80 full-time equivalent professional support staff, including social workers, school psychologists and school nurses. As the Premier announced, we are going to strengthen supports already in place by upskilling our school nurses and school leaders.

Commencing later this year, every school nurse in a government school or college will have the opportunity to complete the latest youth mental health first aid training, ensuring they have the specialised skills to assist and support students until appropriate professional help is received or a situation resolved. We will also fund the wellbeing lead teacher and principal in every government school to undertake online professional learning focused on student mental health and trauma-informed approaches from a teaching and learning perspective.

This will empower senior people in our schools to adapt and tailor classroom teaching to better support students with mental health challenges or who are impacted by trauma. There is no single solution to dealing with mental health issues, which is why we have taken such a holistic and multifaceted approach within our schools.

COVID-19 has made us put more value on our mental health. We have listened to many experiences within our community across a range of areas about the mental health impact of the pandemic. It is as essential as good physical health in maintaining wellbeing. Our Government is taking a best-practice approach to building a contemporary integrated model of mental health and alcohol and other drugs care so people can get more holistic support at the right place and at the right time.

We have a \$120 million plan for new facilities, additional staff and more support for the community mental health and alcohol and other drug sectors to help Tasmanians. I am very pleased the Premier has been able to commit \$41.2 million to fully fund stages 1 and 2 of our child and adolescent mental health reforms. This was a key area of priority for the Government. We had the report last year highlighting where there were gaps within our child and adolescent mental health services despite the very efforts of the teams that work within Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS). That report was upfront and honest, and ensured that the Government was accountable for ensuring that CAMHS was better resourced, and that better systems were in place to ensure they are able to support our young people in Tasmania.

The commitment from Government, as the Premier outlined yesterday, gives confidence to many families across Tasmania, and also to the hardworking staff in the child and adolescent mental health area. The new position of statewide clinical director of CAMHS was recently advertised. I look forward to being able to announce a successful candidate in the coming weeks. This new role will be critical in progressing the Government's response to the CAMHS review and its recommendations.

Yesterday, building works commenced on the \$9.6 million Peacock Centre redevelopment. It was a pleasure to visit the site yesterday to speak with representatives from the Department of Health as well as the key team from Hansen Yuncken. They expressed excitement that the work they are going through over the next 12 months will provide real social benefit to many Tasmanians in the future. It was not just a redevelopment of a historic building but I sensed pride - they know they are building something very special.

It is a key commitment to deliver the redevelopment of the Peacock Centre integration hubs, bringing together a range of clinical and non-clinical care and treatment services in the one location to support people on their recovery journey as well as information and support for families and friends.

The Peacock Centre will also provide a short-stay 12-bed wing under a best-practice integrated community-based model of mental health care. This new model is aimed at providing better outcomes for Tasmanians living with mental health challenges by reducing hospital admissions and readmissions.

These important milestones show that work is progressing well to achieve our long-term vision for a Tasmanian mental health system with an increased focus on community support options and a reduced reliance on acute hospital-based services, including our emergency departments.

I am also committed to delivering our 10-year reform agenda for the alcohol and other drug sectors in Tasmania. This important agenda will ensure our Government and community sector organisations work closer together and we have the right services and supports in the locations in which they are most required. Over the next year we will employ more staff in the sector, bring in a trial of the detox-in-the-home program and develop a drug and alcohol emergency department brief intervention team. I commend Alison and others at the Alcohol Tobacco and other Drugs Council (ATDC) for the frank conversations we have had over the course of the last 12 months and their commitment and each community organisation as well. I look forward to delivering on that important reform agenda.

Alcohol and drug and mental health services provided by government can dovetail better with support provided by community organisations. This is why I welcome the Premier's announcement that the Government will support the development of a master plan to revitalise the Salvation Army's New Town site into a purpose-built village, providing tailored care and support for vulnerable Tasmanians, including alcohol and drug rehabilitation. This can only result in improved services and access for more Tasmanians.

Last year was a year like no other. This year can also be a year like no other but in a much more positive sense. I see around me a greater sense of community emerging, more

people connecting and more people openly caring for others. I see challenges, but I also see resilience, growing confidence and opportunity.

In my home electorate of Braddon I could not be more proud of the leadership shown in the advanced manufacturing sector. The north-west coast manufacturing company Jayben Group has made its first foray into the defence supply sector, signing a memorandum of agreement with Boeing subsidiary Insitu Pacific.

I have known the Jayben team for some years now. In 2015 we had a most concerning situation when Caterpillar centralised its operations in Thailand. Through that experience I understand we have some highly capable, skilled people within the north-west region - my electorate of Braddon - in the advanced manufacturing sector. That is reflected right across Tasmania. No longer can we afford to hide our light under a bushel. We must be very positive in our approach, ensuring that the rest of Australia and the world understand the capability we have in Tasmania in advanced manufacturing. We have enormous opportunities in defence. There will be \$270 billion of investment by the Australian Government over the next decade. Tasmania wants to and can play a key role in that area.

Jayben is an example of a success story through the Tasmanian Government's Tasmanian Defence Industry Strategy. If Jayben is successful, it will open up more international markets and opportunities for Jayben and Tasmania's manufacturing sector, and will continue to raise the recognition of our high-quality bespoke manufacturing capabilities.

Other north-west small-to-medium enterprises such as Penguin Composites, Direct Edge and Storemaster are winning significant supply contracts, and many are actively engaged with respect to millions of dollars' worth of upcoming defence contracts. I am sure members from Braddon from all sides of politics would have visited a number of these places and commended the ingenuity, capability and innovative and skilled approaches of these small-to medium businesses to compete on a global scale. I think that is fantastic.

The memorandum of understanding signed between the University of Tasmania and Thales Group Australia to establish a presence in the Defence and Maritime Innovation Design Precinct builds on an early commitment for the two parties to establish state-of-the-art trials and test facilities for submarine and surface ships sonar systems, utilising Tasmania's deep coral and acoustically quiet lakes such as those on the magnificent west coast.

This is a very exciting time for advanced manufacturing in Braddon and around Tasmania. In fact, following my trip to Canberra last month I am advised that the Chief of Navy will be travelling to Tasmania next month, ensuring his time here will be spent meeting with maritime and defence industry businesses to get a greater understanding of our world-class capabilities and how Tasmanian businesses can play their part in maximising Australian industry content and increasing our Australian defence sovereign capability.

We are delivering a plan to secure every Tasmanian's future. The last 12 months has been challenging but yesterday we saw in the Premier's Address a very clear plan for Tasmania, a plan that is not without its challenges and one that will take courage to implement, but I can say that having worked alongside Peter Gutwein for the last 19 years, the Premier is a person -

Ms O'Byrne - Point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. For consistency, you mentioned that people should use people's proper names. I wonder if that might apply to the Deputy Premier.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER - He did say Peter Gutwein, the Premier.

Mr ROCKLIFF - I have worked alongside Peter Gutwein as a member of the House of Assembly as a shadow minister, a shadow treasurer, as a Treasurer and as the Premier of Tasmania, and that was the most outstanding speech I have heard. From this side of the House there have been some absolutely outstanding ones with very clear direction.

Very clearly it will take courage to implement a number of those reforms but we are dedicated, just as the Premier and our team were dedicated to ensuring we kept Tasmanians safe over the course of the last 12 months. I highlight the Minister for Health there, but also every one of our team. I also commend very strongly every Tasmanian and every member of the Tasmanian public service who absolutely stood up - and I will say this in public and private forums. Our public service was absolutely outstanding right across government in ensuring that every single thing was done to keep Tasmanians safe and secure in what was one of the most challenging times and periods of disruption we have ever seen, one we never foresaw and one we hope we never see again.

Clearly, from the Premier's Address, we are delivering a plan to secure every Tasmanian's future. We are creating a skilled workforce for the future, capitalising on opportunities to build a more diverse and resilient economy, and providing support to those who need our help most. I could not be more proud of our Premier, his Address and all the actions contained within it than I was yesterday.

[12.55 p.m.]

Mr O'BYRNE (Franklin) - Madam Deputy Speaker, in responding to the Premier's Address, I acknowledge that the last 12 months have been the most remarkable of times. I recall the lead-up to the debate in March last year when the pandemic was unfolding across the globe, and we saw in country after country the disease spread like wildfire across the planet. It had a cataclysmic impact on economies and communities, and governments around the world had to quickly come together to work together to respond as a community to keep each other safe.

All sides of the House welcome and celebrate Tasmania's world-leading achievements in containing the coronavirus, but we must also acknowledge that we lost 13 Tasmanians during that period - we mourn their loss and our heart goes out to their families. The lessons learned from the response and from the rock in a pond-like impact of those deaths will not be forgotten.

It was a bipartisan effort, backed by strong community support and solidarity, that achieved the outcome Tasmania has achieved. I recall the debates in our Caucus and the debates in this parliament and in the community in the early part of March when the full impact of coronavirus on Tasmania was being speculated about. We knew there was danger and the threat was coming our way, but many voices in the community at that time were providing and offering a range of different scenarios. We saw leaders of countries dismissing it. In March, medical professionals had been talking about this risk for many weeks. I recall in our Caucus

a long debate around the issue of border closures and the various decisions we thought the Government would have to make in response.

I was very proud to be part of the Caucus that in question time, prior to the Premier making the decision to close the borders, stood up and said, 'Premier, you are going to have to close the borders. That is a reasonable and decent act to do to keep this state safe and keep Tasmanians safe'. That was met in some corners by a bit of cynicism and probably not taken as seriously as they would have liked at the time, but the Labor Party made it very clear at that time that we would take politics out of that equation, and we told the Premier that the Labor Party would support him if he made the decision to close the borders and there would be no political game-playing. In that decision and the eventual decision by the Premier to do that, I was proud of the role the Rebecca White-led team played in ensuring that the Premier and government were allowed the space and time to make those decisions.

Those decisions were made. History has shown they were the right decisions, particularly in those early days, following the advice and the actions of other state governments in responding to the risk of COVID-19. As the pandemic rolled out and as time moved on, whilst we did not always agree with the Government - and it is important that as an opposition we critique decisions by government - the health advice and the decisions made were overwhelmingly supported and backed in by the Labor Party.

I remember standing in this place in early April when the Treasury supply bills were brought into this House where in the most extraordinary of times budget allocations were made, and scope and grace was given to the Treasurer to make financial decisions to get money out the door in a whole range of projects to support our community, support the economy, and ensure people had a roof over their head and could cope as best as they possibly could. At no stage did we quibble on those bills and at no stage did we argue the toss. We gave the scope to the Premier to make those decisions.

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

MOTION

Note - Premier's Address

Resumed from above.

Mr O'BYRNE (Franklin) - Madam Speaker, I will continue my contribution.

Concluding my opening comments on the state of the state, I want to make it very clear that I - and I am sure every member of this House - congratulate and acknowledge the work of our health professionals, and all those people who have been stood up and tasked to respond to the varying needs that evolved over the last 12 months.

Over the last 12 months we have all spoken to health professionals in the community, as they work, in supermarkets, in various social interactions. Their professionalism and their ability to stand up and respond has been nothing short of inspirational given the challenge in front of them, and given the nature of the risk and the danger they put themselves in to protect us. We make it very clear that I and other members of this House give our heartfelt support to

those people, and also their families. Obviously, when a health worker goes to work in a dangerous environment they have a family that supports them, and the risk and the danger is not contained to the worker themselves. So our heartfelt thanks to the families of public servants and health workers who have been put in challenging circumstances over the last 12 months.

As we move out of the critical phase of coronavirus, Tasmanians want both parties of government to focus on the future. It is about jobs growth; it is about living standards; it is about a quality of life. It is not about returning Tasmania to pre-COVID-19 normality, but to aspire to, and to build, a stronger Tasmania - a Tasmania that is more confident, more robust, fairer and more equal than the one we have left behind.

This is a moment in time, when you have a cataclysmic event like a pandemic, where you can reimagine the future of the state, and you can build a greater opportunity for Tasmanians. For many things, pre-COVID-19, governments would sometimes respond in the negative - 'Oh, no, we could not possibly do that' - but I think COVID-19 has shown that where there is a will to deal with inequality, where there is a will and a community expectation that you respond to a challenge, government can step up. It can set the example.

That is the kind of state that Tasmania and the Rebecca White-led Labor Party team want us to aspire to. We do not blame the Government for the impact of COVID-19, but we will hold them to account for the recovery. Yesterday's Address from the Premier underlines two very different rebuilding paths offered to Tasmanians. There is a Rebecca White Labor pathway: active government directly supporting and investing in the economy to drive growth and secure sustainable employment; active government that supports Tasmania's regions, and leaves no community behind; active government with an ambition to make Tasmania the equal of the nation; and active government that ensures all Tasmanians share in the benefits of growth.

Or, a complacent Gutwein Liberal Government that does not believe Tasmania can be the equal of the nation. A complacent Liberal Government content for Tasmania to be second-best. A complacent Liberal Government with no plan to share the benefits of future growth. A complacent Liberal Government with no plan for Tasmania's regions.

Or, an active Rebecca White Labor government that has a multifaceted plan for 35 000 jobs across all regions and industries, driven by a competent and experienced team. It is a stark contrast to the complacent Gutwein Government with a one-dimensional failing infrastructure plan, which is clutching for 25 000 jobs, with a tired and incompetent team of ministers barely driving it forward, because COVID-19 is not the starting point of this Government.

This Government has been in power for over seven years, and we cannot erase the lack of innovation, the lack of drive, the lack of microeconomic reform that has been the hallmark of this Government - initially, cuts to services, undermining fundamental public services, and a lack of an economic plan or strategy that will build sustainable jobs or a diverse industry. COVID-19 is not the starting point of this Government. COVID-19 is a mark in the road, a juncture if you will.

The seven-plus years of this Government needs to be taken in totality, because there is some economic growth under the Liberals, but lower than in the early 1990s and the mid-2000s. It is lagging on all key indicators. Per capita, GSP is 20 per cent below the national average.

Average wages are \$11 000 below the national average. There is low labour force participation. There is the lowest household disposable income. There is lower life expectancy. Year 12 attainment is 58 per cent, which is 14 per cent below the national average, and functional illiteracy levels are 48 per cent. There are blowouts on outpatient, elective surgery and public housing waiting lists.

We have an older population, with a much greater dependence on government benefits than the rest of Australia. We have entrenched regional and social disadvantage, and we believe that as Treasurer, Peter Gutwein wasted the fruits of growth and left thousands of Tasmanians behind. The pre-COVID-19 normal is not acceptable to Labor.

When coming to government, the Will Hodgman and Peter Gutwein Government, led by those two people, had an opportunity. They had an increase in GST receipts. They had an increase in revenue from stamp duty. They increased the dividend policy from the GBEs, so they had more money to deal with these structural issues, but they have wasted the opportunity.

Labor welcomed the belated Liberal conversion from austerity to a more expansionary fiscal approach. The Tasmanian economy is heavily trade-exposed and more vulnerable to external shocks than other states, so there is always a need for government to act counter-cyclically when circumstances demand.

As economic development minister I can recall a time when our terms of trade, governed by the exchange rate, were hammered in the government of 2010-14. The Australian dollar had hovered between mid-50 cents US to 60 cents US - but at the height of our challenge, not only were we at parity with the US dollar, we were at \$1.08. For an export-oriented economy, when you have a depreciation like that in terms of trade, we know how difficult it is for businesses. That is why we went to work with an economic development strategy and a range of initiatives that supported businesses to innovate, to become more robust, more resilient, and to diversify the economy in a way that was not so reliant on the few strong industries Tasmania has historically had.

Contrary to the Premier's claim that Labor talks down the Tasmanian economy, we welcome good economic news. We celebrate every job that comes back after the COVID-19 hit. Federal stimulus - notably JobKeeper - and some state Government measures have seen Tasmania avoid the worst predictions of a complete collapse in output and double-digit unemployment. We welcome that. We supported those initiatives in this parliament. We supported those initiatives publicly when the federal government announced a number of initiatives.

We knew. Labor at both a state and federal level have experienced economic challenges and downturns. We know the importance of expansionary fiscal and economic policy to support people in their jobs. State final demand has recovered. Unemployment is now just under 6 per cent and export growth has improved but this is not a cause for self-congratulations and complacency on the Government benches. The recovery is still very fragile and the abundant evidence of this should not be ignored. We need to learn from our history.

I remember as economic development minister at the peak of the stimulus package impacting on the Tasmanian economy in 2011, we had the lowest unemployment rate in the country by a significant margin. Small economy, large stimulus, mass impact rippling through areas of our economy. The lowest unemployment rate, strong economic growth. The

Australian dollar at that stage was low on the US comparable. Only 18 months later when the stimulus money was withdrawn, and our terms of trade changed and we lost the advantage of a favourable exchange rate, our economy turned on a dime. Unemployment grew and economic growth stalled.

If you do not learn from history you are bound to repeat it. If you purely rely on economic stimulus, or if you remove that stimulus too early, an economy like Tasmania will be significantly impacted. It will be a harsh impact. In hindsight, if we are being straight and honest about learning from history, we would say, perhaps, the stimulus was removed too early. It is a warning. Let us not pat ourselves on the back. Let us not think the job is done. Let us not put the feet up on the desk and think everything is okay. It is not. We have a long road to go.

We celebrate some of the economic data that is coming through because we know every Tasmanian relies on having a good sustainable job to have a functioning life in our community. A decent life is what we should all be aspiring to. Let us not forget the lessons of history. If we think a narrow stimulus will work, if we do not think about and pitch ourselves forward beyond the stimulus, or if we do not buffer the stimulus in a reasonable way, there is a significant concern for the future ahead.

While growth in the state final demand of 3.3 per cent in the December 2020 quarter was above the national average of 3.1 per cent, trend rates are below average and seem to be slowing. That is a message. That is a sign.

The ANZ February 2020-21 Stateometer suggests that Tasmania is the only state where growth is decelerating. ANZ projects Tasmania growth of 3.5 per cent in 2022 whereas Victoria is 6.5 per cent, New South Wales is 3.75 per cent, Queensland is 4 per cent and South Australia is 4.25 per cent. While building approvals have grown strongly over the last 12 months there was a fall of 25 per cent in January 2021. Although retail sales grew by 7.6 per cent in the year to December 2020, this was the second-lowest growth in the country. The contraction of 2.2 per cent in the December quarter was Australia's worst result.

Unemployment has fallen but there are worrying employment trends. ANZ reports that Tasmania has the highest capital city employment growth in the December 2020 quarter at around 1 per cent but conversely the biggest fall in regional areas of minus 3 per cent. This is underlined by the February ABS data. Outside of Hobart, unemployment was 7.7 per cent. Launceston and the north-east was 7.1 per cent, south-east was 7.9 per cent, west and north-west was 8.3 per cent. Under-employment was the highest in the country at 8.9 per cent.

There are 14 people for every one job vacancy. That is the highest in the country. Economic and employment growth is not consistent across the state. Regions are being left behind. We saw that reported in *The Advocate* yesterday. Sean Ford reported that the recovery is lagging.

To point all of this out is not to undermine confidence or fail to recognise important improvements. We do. It is a measured and prudent assessment of the evidence. Ignoring this evidence and not acknowledging the fragile nature of the recovery smacks of complacency and hubris. Sadly, it is a hallmark of this Gutwein Liberal Government.

It is too early for stimulus to be gradually withdrawn and the Government needs to maintain an integrated and active role across the whole economy and labour market to drive a sustained recovery for every region and every Tasmanian. This is particularly so given the imminent withdrawal of JobKeeper.

We have seen a shambolic approach from this federal government with the voucher scheme for airfares for people in regional areas. We welcome that they acknowledge Launceston, Devonport and Wynyard/Burnie, but to leave Hobart off the list and then after the outcry to bash it back on to the list and say they were always going to include Hobart but just did not announce it, is shambolic. It does nothing for economic confidence. It sends a message to business that you are making it up as you go along. It demonstrates you do not have a structured, strategic, layered plan to respond to the changing needs of the Tasmanian economy.

We should also acknowledge the state of the budget heading into COVID-19. Let us not presume that everything was tickety-boo heading in. We were trending on a billion dollars of net debt. Was it not for an Olympic-standard-style raid on the GBEs, the budget would have been in deficit.

Can you point to one microeconomic reform of this Government in the last seven years? Everywhere I go I talk to businesses, I talk to community groups, I talk to peak bodies. I ask them, 'What has this Government done?' The consistent response is 'They mind the shop'. There is no innovation, no microeconomic reform. The state of the Budget was tough going in heading towards deficit and heading towards significant net debt. In our Budget response our fully costed jobs plan, we talked about ensuring that we could invest in the areas which needed it and the response. We were very clear with our numbers. We were open with our numbers and we put them down in writing.

The Treasurer's Reserve has significant scope in it and we know that the PESRAC allocation is there, but there are no costings attached to yesterday's state of the state which give reference to the state Budget and what impact that has.

There is a whole range of commitments. It seems to be a blank cheque for the attack on TAFE and the undermining of sustainable jobs and sustainable training delivery there based on the Premier's performance in question time today. That is a major question. We want to see how this impacts on the bottom line. Or is this history repeating itself with the Gray Liberal government in the 1980s? The Groom Liberal government, the Rundle Liberal governments in the 1990s and now the Hodgman Gutwein Government just spending in a way that is unsustainable.

The Gutwein Liberal Government is relying on infrastructure as the way through but they do not have an integrated plan to drive sustained recovery. It has chosen to place all its eggs in the infrastructure basket. This one-dimensional approach will not produce sustained and consistent outcomes for all regions and for all Tasmanians. It is failing even on its own terms.

Under the watch of the minister for announcements and reannouncements, the minister for Infrastructure, Michael Ferguson, the Liberal infrastructure plan is a shambles. There are 64 projects behind schedule: two by five years, three by four years, four by three years, 18 by two years and 37 by one year. Mr Ferguson recently said everything was on track despite all the published and physical evidence of these delays. A master of pompous obfuscation and evasion, he claimed in this place that building for the infrastructure plans was 'red hot' but the

only thing that is hot about infrastructure delivery is the air he blows when reannouncing projects which have not started or announcing further feasibility studies.

Mr Ferguson - More passion, David. It is your birthday.

Mr O'BYRNE - I know you are a bit sensitive. Under his watch, it is likely that the 2020-21 Infrastructure budget will be under-delivered by over \$1 billion. No amount of pontificating can disguise the failure to commence real building work on key promised projects.

The Hobart underground bus mall, Macquarie Point - \$77 million more into that sinkhole - the Southern Outlet, Devonport East port upgrade, the northern Hobart light rail corridor, a new Tamar bridge and the Hobart public ferry terminals. How can anyone forget the broken promise to deliver the two new *Spirit* vessels in 2021, two years ahead of schedule?

On top of all of these broken promises is a long list of delays across health, ambulance, road and school infrastructure projects. These delays cost jobs and jeopardise our fragile economic recovery. With the minister, Mr Ferguson in charge, there is little real prospect of 25 000 infrastructure jobs being delivered anywhere near on time.

A disturbing feature of the current state of the state is the gradual and continuous erosion of the core community and social focus of some of our most important government business enterprises. Nowhere is this better illuminated than by the blowout in expenses on executive pay of consultants. In the last year, reported total executive pay increased from \$31 million to over \$33 million, a rise of 7.4 per cent. Tasmanian wages only grew by about 1.5 per cent over the same period. Spending on consultants over the same period was \$44.37 million.

TasPorts increased executive pay by 43 per cent from over \$2 million to now a little under \$3 million. The Hydro increased executive pay by 16.3 per cent from \$4.68 million to \$5.44 million but now finds it necessary to announce the sacking of 50 workers. So much for the jobs bonanza. The minister, Mr Barnett, and the Premier have failed to intervene to save or reduce these job losses, saying that the efficiencies created will put downward pressure on electricity prices. But this contradicts Hydro management, which said that the job reductions will not affect prices. You cannot have it both ways. The minister, Mr Barnett, says it is not up to government to intervene in the operational management of Hydro, but this principle did not apply when Hydro was negotiating pay increases with its workforce when the Government insisted it stay within the public sector wages cap.

Tasmania's economic future partly depends on GBEs which are not only efficient but also aggressively focused on delivering high-quality services at lower prices for all Tasmanians. These public assets need to be driven by public and social needs, not managerial jargon and pay, and dividends should be used to reinvest in these important businesses, not to prop up the bottom line of the state budget.

Labor's jobs plan will create 35 000 jobs across all sectors of the economy. Unlike the Liberals, our plan will also ensure that the benefits of growth are delivered to all regions of the state and that longstanding social and economic disadvantage is tackled head on. Tasmanians expect no less.

Regional job hubs, a one-stop shop; a \$55 million jobs and innovation fund and \$220 million in private investment will be leveraged from that with 1600 jobs; a \$15 million second chance adult apprenticeship schemes, 500 jobs; \$55 million of housing works and maintenance, 500 more houses than the Government with 550 jobs; a \$15 million environment jobs plan, 200 jobs; a \$10 million tourism package; \$18 million small business package; and \$99 million on skills, job replacement and a rebuild, renew and free TAFE program. We will work with TAFE. We will not blow it up. Public sector procurement for disability local businesses, 300 jobs and 75 apprenticeships; we will end the excessive use of casual and insecure work in our magnificent public sector; and \$12 million for the north-west centre of excellence in agriculture. Labor will inject a further \$150 million to upgrade Devonport, Burnie and Bell Bay ports and we will overhaul State Growth to deliver infrastructure on time.

Our plan is fully costed and we will release further details over the course of this year. We will improve Tasmania for the better in economic growth and employment, in health, in education, in housing, in income levels and in quality of life. We will use the power of government to support businesses and to directly invest in jobs and growth. We will boost our disadvantaged regions and leave no Tasmanian behind.

Under Labor, unemployment will always be lower. A Rebecca White Labor team will be a government of ambition and compassion, ambition to make Tasmania the equal of the nation and compassion to make sure that all Tasmanians share in the fruits of growth.

This Premier has no vision. He has been stumbling around in the dark and he has been saved by the PESRAC report that will give him something to talk about. With his attack on TAFE he shows his Government is incapable of delivering on even the simplest of plans.

[2.56 p.m.]

Mr FERGUSON (Bass - Minister for Finance) - Madam Speaker, from the outset I acknowledge the work of the Premier and all our colleagues and team members on this side of the House for the tremendous work we have been doing together as a team and, in particular, the Premier for leading us through not just the COVID-19 period, which so massively affected our daily lives and the health of the economy, but in keeping people safe.

He and our team have worked very closely together looking after the needs of our beautiful state. I commend the Premier on his Address yesterday. This now makes 12 Premier's Addresses since being elected to the House of Assembly in 2010, counting Governor's Addresses. That was a phenomenal cast around the needs of our island communities. It was a phenomenal delivery of some of the issues that are going to help unlock potential that is being constrained at the moment. Thanks to the Premier and it is an honour for me, and I know all my colleagues on this side of the House, to work with him.

The COVID-19 impact is well understood. We have had a lot of histrionics and trying to rewrite history from the member who has just resumed his seat. Some of the things he said surprised me. At one point he tried to argue all the reasons that they were such a good government for the economy but then spent so much time making excuses for why they took us into recession, saw tens of thousands of people out of work, enough to fill Aurora Stadium. They blamed the global financial crisis for the troubles that happened three or four years later. It surprised me that that he spent so much time talking his own role as economic development minister when really, as the Premier quipped this morning, he was the architect of that recession. The economic development plan that sits in the rare book section of the

Parliamentary Library honestly was not worth the paper it was written on, and that is the constant feedback from around the state.

We had two COVID-19 support packages last year that hit the need areas at the time, supported our business community, supported people in work, and worked hand-in-glove with the incredible stimulus efforts and job protection efforts of the federal government. We had the Tasmanian budget delivered last year. Now we have the long awaited and anticipated PESRAC report, which has been rubbished by the Labor Party. Despite their sycophantic saccharine praise of the members of the panel they have rubbished some of their key findings which is, frankly, incongruous.

As stated in the Premier's Address, the Premier and the Government have agreed that we will implement all the 52 recommendations of the PESRAC report. The council spent an incredible amount of time and effort in developing it, listened to and consulted with and spent time with 3500 Tasmanians and many peak bodies and organisations. I welcome the report and commend members to read it thoroughly to understand not just the recommendations but the rationale for them. It is now helping all of us as parliamentarians to fashion good policy that helps to prepare Tasmania for the future.

We have witnessed an economic turnaround, which the shadow treasurer wants to continually talk down and talk about how fragile it is and how things are not as good as those ABS stats might suggest, or the Sensis report might suggest, or the COMSEC state of the state report might suggest. When there is some good news, far from welcoming it, they waited until everybody put their pyjamas on to put out a release that they did not want to be printed, by putting it out at 8.30. Talk about putting out the trash. If the Labor Party want to call good economic news for Tasmania putting out the trash, shame on you. The elephant in the room -

Mr O'Byrne - If you are going to bed at 8 o'clock at night, you need to get out more. Put the slippers on, we will bring you the slippers at 8 p.m. Can we get some Milo in here? A little Horlicks?

Mr FERGUSON - I know it hurts. I understand, so I will get off this subject in a moment. Can we just get back to composure?

Mr O'Byrne - No wonder you cannot do anything, you are always sleeping.

Mr FERGUSON - Madam Speaker, the elephant in the room was that disastrous deal with the Greens. And it was a disaster. Ms White was there, Mr O'Byrne was there; they signed up. They were members of the Labor-Greens government. They trashed the state, they trashed jobs, they trashed businesses. They cannot blame the dollar for what you did to the forest industry and locking up 400 000-plus hectares to keep Nick McKim happy. You cannot blame the GFC for what you did to Triabunna.

Madam Speaker, if you go back a few months, the initial advice from Treasury was frightening. We were facing a forecast unemployment rate in the mid-teens, which would have meant maybe 34 000 people out of work. Incredibly, we instead saw a very different economic recovery and revival that is frankly the envy of the rest of the country. Unemployment is back to pre-pandemic levels. Just fantastic. There are 257 100 Tasmanians employed. Over

90 per cent of Tasmanians have returned to work since May; as we know, April-May was the peak of the lockdown period.

Over 22 000 jobs have been created since the election of the Hodgman majority Liberal government in 2014, when the economic renaissance began. That is right, renaissance - raising from the dead. And we have a new package of supports to help get more people into work, particularly the long-term unemployed, which is what we now must do. We have more support to keep projects moving.

The Tasmanian Liberal Government recognises the important role the building and construction sector is playing right now in rebuilding our economy. The PESRAC report identified that one of the most important concerns of Tasmanians continues to be jobs and incomes. We have a strong and proud record of achievement, with now over 22 000 more Tasmanians employed since the Labor-Greens days. Our economy is one of the strongest in the country, if not the strongest, and we have the lowest unemployment rate of any state. But there is more to do.

To address a need identified by PESRAC, we have announced the establishment of a \$30 million Building Construction Support Loan Scheme to bring forward commercial construction projects that have been paused, that will support jobs and create new and approved buildings and infrastructure. I have to say, this has been widely welcomed in the Tasmanian community. The scheme will provide loan finance, supporting private sector development of stalled or delayed projects in these uncertain times. Projects of \$3 million or more will be able to apply for low-interest commercial loans through the OCG, under this job-creating scheme.

Already the scheme has been warmly welcomed by industry. I want to reference MBA Tasmania commenting that:

the announcement of \$30 million in low-interest commercial loans will help unlock the value in the pipeline where projects have stalled. This funding will help keep the momentum in the construction industry to drive our economic recovery.

I anticipate that the loan scheme will open for applications in the very near future. I am working with my department and OCG on that.

We are building our way to recovery, as we said we would, and the construction sector is playing a vital role in our plan to secure Tasmania's future.

I have to remind the House that this builds on our \$10 million grant fund that was announced in the state Budget to support stalled projects that were shovel-ready. This program will bring forward community or commercial shovel-ready projects, again to help achieve the same strong outcomes.

The program is a merit-based grant program, specifically designed to help stimulate the Tasmanian construction sector, support jobs and deliver demonstrated positive community benefits, as well as broad economic and social benefits to our state. Importantly, to be eligible under this scheme, projects need to show they will be able to start within six months of receiving funding approval. There has been a good response already, I am told. Funding will

mean that projects that may not have proceeded, that might have been marginal, can now get under way, delivering local benefits sooner and more jobs in our community.

Our plan to recover and rebuild is demonstrably working. Really clever investments like this one - targeted, supportive, taken on board from the feedback of industry - will help us ensure we get the balance right, get the mix right, get the policy tailored to what is needed in the community, and come out of the pandemic stronger than ever before.

Madam Speaker, I did mention the business conditions and I will come back to it. The CommSec State of the States report for January 2021, which I do not think was mentioned by the shadow treasurer, found that Tasmania now holds the mantle of the best-performing economy in the country for the last four consecutive quarters. Again, you can sort of feel it. Labor does not like this positive news. The December 2020 -

Mr O'Byrne - You know it is a 10-year anniversary report, which was my point before.

Mr FERGUSON - You gave a boring speech. You rubbished the good things happening in Tasmania. I am not sure who gets the prize but, I must say, they were pretty lacklustre.

Madam Speaker, the December Sensis Business Index found more Tasmanian businesses have recovered -

Opposition members interjecting.

Madam SPEAKER - Order.

Mr FERGUSON - so the mockery does the opposition no credit. No new policies, only mockery and sarcasm. But people have not forgotten what you did to Triabunna, what you did to the forest sector, what you did to the economy, what you did to young people, what you did to regional communities when you tried to shut those schools, and what you did to those 200 police you sacked, Mr O'Byrne. That is what happened in the Labor-Greens disastrous years.

The Sensis Business Index told us that the Tasmanian business community is the most confident in the country. That is great. This is not by accident; it has been supported by our targeted business and industry programs. As Minister for State Growth, I want to say how proud I am to be working with businesses right around our state, together with my colleague minister, Ms Courtney, working with the small business sector. They are great people. They have worked hard. They have taken some hard knocks along the way, but they accepted that we needed to look after public health, and look after each other. Their recovery and their confidence that they continue to reinvest in our state is something I am very proud of.

A key focus of the past year has been providing measures to minimise the impact of COVID-19 on Tasmanians and our businesses. This has included commercial land tax waivers for the 2020-21 financial year, and payroll tax waivers for Tasmanian businesses with payrolls under \$5 million. Importantly for the hospitality, tourism and seafood industries, which were hit particularly hard as we responded to the global pandemic, we have waived payroll tax and liquor and gaming licence fees. That is helping people. It is what they said they needed.

Our \$50 million business support loan scheme supported over 350 businesses during 2020, and it has been a lifeline. The feedback I have had from the recipients of that loan scheme will remain with me forever. Some of them have said it saved their businesses. Some have said it may have saved lives. That is what our Government is so proud of doing. This was an interest-free loan scheme that provided much-needed financial support to impacted businesses at a time when their traditional sources of business lending were very difficult.

Our additional \$60 million Business Growth Loan Scheme, which is currently active, opened in September last year, and is providing low-interest loans to help existing businesses develop post-COVID-19 sustainable business models that support the retention of jobs and the creation of new ones. We are after growth now, and with that confidence and sense of positivity in the air, everywhere you go around Tasmania, the feedback is very positive. I can advise the House there has been a very strong response to this scheme, with around 35 businesses already supported.

The Tasmanian Development Board continues to stand ready to support Tasmanian businesses and industry as they grapple with the impacts of the pandemic, and as the economy recovers. Some examples of the loans that have been recommended for approval have included funding for the reopening of the King Island scheelite mine I announced back in January 2021. That is government working with business, not against it, and supporting jobs. There is a \$10 million loan to support investments in Tasmanian Alkaloids in the new employment-creating medical cannabis facility which I was very pleased to announce and open last year. There is a \$6 million loan to Tasmanian Stockfeed Services for a new stockfeed mill in Devonport; I was very proud to support the opening of that last year -it is a wonderful family business with devoted employees.

We also know that how we use the Government's buying power has the ability to support businesses and jobs. That is why have beefed up our Buy Local Policy, which was opposed by the then Labor-Greens government, to provide more support for local businesses, create jobs and stimulate the economy more. Our Buy Local Policy enhances opportunities for local suppliers. Last July we made a number of improvements to the Buy Local Policy and allowed tenders worth \$100 000 to have a greater focus on Tasmanian social and economic factors, increasing it not to zero, which was Labor-Greens, not 10 per cent, which was our starting point, not the 20 per cent that we increased it to, but 25 per cent. That has also allowed us and the departments to raise the low-value procurement threshold from \$50 000 to \$100 000, allowing them to go directly to their local suppliers and saving the need to tender. That has been warmly received, particularly by the small business community.

In the December 2020-21 quarter, where an open procurement process received one or more bids from Tasmanian businesses, the contracts were awarded to Tasmanian businesses 100 per cent of the time when they bid. That is a fantastic improvement. I cannot say it will always be 100 per cent but that is an amazing step up in success for Tasmanian businesses getting government contracts, and well done to them.

We recognise that a growing economy and the desirability of Tasmania as place to live means increased demand for houses, which in turn leads to increased house values. Home ownership remains a realistic goal for many Tasmanians, including younger people. That is why we moved to increase the duty concession to \$500 000. That is the limit for first home buyers and we have done the same to the threshold house value for pensioners downsizing, as I told the House this morning. This is about ensuring that our community is encouraged and

the older community is encouraged to move into a smaller home if that suits their life stage, thereby freeing up larger homes for other Tasmanian families.

The Government also recently asked Treasury to review land tax. As a result of that the Government is increasing the thresholds from \$25 000 to \$50 000 and the upper threshold from \$350 000 to \$400 000. As I advised the House this morning, these two changes will reduce land tax for around 70 000 landowners by up to \$612 and will also result in an additional 4100 landowners no longer having to pay it at all. That represents a contribution to people's pockets. It also means it has taken some of the pressure off rents.

The Government's First Home Owner Grant and the Tasmanian HomeBuilder Grant, in conjunction with the Morrison government's HomeBuilder Grant, continue to help more Tasmanians build their first home, and what an exciting time it is for those people. I am so happy for them. There have been so many people who wished we could extend the time frames, and we did. That meant more people were able to get on with their plans, and good luck to them. There has been an amazing response. A total of 2746 applications have been received by SRO and up to two days ago 1763 applications had been conditionally approved and 357 applications had been paid.

This level of activity is helping to keep Tasmanians in jobs and is supporting an important building and construction industry and growing the Tasmanian economy. I believe it is an investment that has been well leveraged in the community. I think it was the Labor shadow Housing spokesperson who referred to it as 'home blunder'. That is unfortunate because it has been a winner. For a lot of younger couples, older couples, individual people, it has been a phenomenal and incredible use of public funds to leverage their own private investment. It is employing so many people in the construction sector. Talk to a tradie - if you are looking to get a cabinet repaired or a wall rebuilt or something like that, you might just be waiting for a while because that industry is running hot. The policy is working, despite the disappointment of the Labor Party.

We also know there is currently around 5000 hectares of zoned residential land in Tasmania. This could potentially deliver around 60 000 lots for residences; however, for various reasons this land has not been taken to market. That is why yesterday the Premier announced we will take immediate action to remove barriers and costs to encourage further land activation. That is what we need.

Landowners who wish to activate residential zoned land not currently being developed will benefit from our headworks holiday for new residential subdivisions. What this means in practice is that up to \$5000 per residential lot for power and up to \$5000 per lot will be delivered for water and sewerage infrastructure, again providing that little marginal level of support that can get a development over the line.

I have spent a lot of time and work on reducing red tape in Tasmania, not just in building and construction but also particularly there. We need regulation; we just do not need too much of it, and the burden of unnecessary regulation is an impediment to the efficient and effective operation of any business. That is why last year the Government introduced two separate bills which came into effect in November along with a set of regulations that support and, I would say enforce, TasWater's service standards.

The reforms have been endorsed thoroughly by a large number of peak industry bodies which know what the changes will mean to their members and the broader industry. We have been guided by industry itself in choosing which measures were the most urgent and useful, and the ones that, if you like, are unnecessary and were more of a barrier and annoyance to them. We have been working through those. We have further red tape reduction initiatives in development based on the next set of priorities we have been identifying in partnership. I look forward to bringing them to the House later this year.

As to Macquarie Point, the Premier announced in his address the success of a further \$77 million spread over the next three-and-a-half years to realise the full development potential of Macquarie Point. As I was able to tell the media this morning, this means stages of the development that were scheduled for later years have been brought forward.

Ms White - Better than *South Park*.

Mr FERGUSON - Indeed, better than *South Park*, which I commend to you. Get some policy advice from there.

Ms White - It seems like you have.

Mr FERGUSON - This means that we have today taken to market the next important land release, even while the escarpment land release is maturing, and we expect an announcement on that as to a final developer.

Ms White - Is that where he gets his policy advice from? He is commending it.

Mr FERGUSON - Madam Speaker, we obviously hear the sarcasm and the wit - that is great; a bit of fun is good, a bit of wit is good. We like that.

Ms White - We are concerned about where you are getting your policy advice from.

Mr FERGUSON - Let us focus on what is important.

We brought forward \$77 million of investment that no-one else has talked about but this is going to help to realise the dreams of Macquarie Point and bring them to reality. By about the middle of this year, we expect to have a developer for the escarpment land. That is obviously very much commercial in confidence at this point, but I have been advised in time for this debate to be able to inform the House that it is highly mature. We look forward to being able to tell people what the final bidder intends to do with that development.

I can further advise the House that development works are expected at this stage to commence early next year. I think that is great news but why wait for the future? We are bringing it forward and that is exactly what we are doing there.

Ms White - We have been waiting for years.

Mr FERGUSON - We have actually been getting on with it.

Ms White - Oh, right.

Mr FERGUSON - Again, if Labor still wants to whinge and carp, that is their decision but I am not even sure they have a policy on Macquarie Point.

Ms White - We'd just secure the money in the first place.

Mr FERGUSON - On infrastructure, I am very proud and grateful to be working with infrastructure community in Tasmania. This Government is turbocharging the economy with a record infrastructure program of nearly \$5 billion which right now is underpinning jobs in Tasmania with huge opportunity for growth. The Budget provides record funding to deliver on our election commitments on roads and bridges, public transport and congestion management in the cities and regions right around Tasmania, with \$2.4 billion in funding for the Roads and Bridges Program in my portfolio across Tasmania, but across government all ministers are flat out working with their departments getting infrastructure out of the ground.

We are enhancing the role and function of Infrastructure Tasmania. It would have been good had Labor known about this before they delivered their Premier's Address replies today because we have just provided an additional \$7.78 million for an expanded role in infrastructure policy and priority project delivery to Infrastructure Tasmania (ITas).

I welcome PESRAC's recommendation that the Government's infrastructure pipeline consider capacity enablers and constraints, including workforce planning and market capacity. That ties in with the need for further reform in TasTAFE, to make sure we are training the workers of tomorrow with the skills we know they need.

ITas will further consider PESRAC's advice and incorporate it into the next pipeline. The best way to get our state back on track and to grow the economy is to support business confidence and to create jobs. That is exactly what we are doing. The plan is working.

The construction industry, particularly in the civil construction industry, is running red-hot right now. I was at the Women in Infrastructure function in Hobart on Friday night. It was an incredible evening. I think it had a record turnout. The shadow Treasurer was there and Ms Archer was there. It was great.

The positive feeling in the room was palpable. I am pleased the attendance was not just a record of over 200 people - I think it may have been the largest function I have been to since March 2020 - but it was also 50:50 men and women. What a lot of support for placing the importance upon women in that industry, giving them a greater sense of support particularly for newer entrants, and encouraging girls and women to consider this as an option for their career base.

Alicia Leis was a phenomenal guest speaker and greatly admired by everybody in the room. For the avoidance of doubt, the feedback in the room was very positive towards the Government's work. Industry was saying to us, 'Stop giving us work, you have given us too much already.'. That is interesting.

We have to continue our pipeline. We want to build infrastructure that our state needs into the future.

One of the larger civil construction firms I spoke to on Friday night is currently looking for 50 workers right now. What a great impetus for TasTAFE reform. I encourage the Labor

Party not to be so embarrassed about their shameful history on blowing up TAFE when it was in Government. Come along with the Government. Follow PESRAC's recommendation and let us get some sensible reform that helps our younger people get the skills they need so they can get these jobs that Hazell, Fulton, Shaw and others are looking for right now. Support them - help them succeed and you will help the state with its infrastructure pipeline.

Since being elected in 2014, this Liberal Government has delivered more than 150 separate road projects. In the last financial year state roads had the best year in a decade for delivery of discrete projects, with 38 projects completed. Just brilliant.

In my electorate of Bass, we have completed the Mowbray Connector roundabout upgrade and the intersection upgrades through Invermay. The delivery of a West Tamar priority highway project is now well advanced. The 10-year \$565 million Midland Highway action plan is tracking ahead of schedule, with 67 per cent either completed or under construction. I have to give a shout-out to the Perth links road project jointly managed by Shaw and VEC. That is phenomenal. Everybody here who visits Launceston will drive on it. That project was completed around nine to 12 months ahead of schedule.

We have a lot to do. Industry is struggling to take all this work. We understand that, but we have saturated the building and construction industry in Tasmania with work. Just what they needed.

Previously we had people looking for jobs. Under the Liberal Government, we now have jobs looking for people. We need more people. We need more skilled workers. We need more people who are available for work. We need the unemployment cohort to be supported with skills. The best way to do that is to work hand in hand with industry to be able to give them a contemporary public skills training provider. That is what our next steps should be.

The Bridgewater bridge project is tracking extremely well. We are progressing with two shortlisted ECI contractors. They are working with the department on their separate detailed designs as part of the competition while we continue the work through the major projects framework.

This is important infrastructure for our state. It is what we need. It has been promised for 22 years. The previous government had the money and spent it. We have the money back and are on track. The city deals in both Launceston and Hobart are tracking extremely well. We are achieving so many separate pieces of work separately but also corporately.

I conclude with a message of gratitude to the Tasmanian community. Thank you for working and struggling with us through the pandemic last year. Thank you for your confidence in Tasmania, for the investments you continue to make, for the sacrifices you made, thank you also for the confidence you are displaying right now. The feeling around Tasmania is so positive. While we acknowledge there is still a lot to do, I acknowledge the Premier's address, and the new plans and priorities that he has outlined.

[3.26 p.m.]

Dr BROAD (Braddon) - Madam Speaker, there is no doubt the state is now coming out of the COVID-19 pandemic. Now is the time to focus on the future of the state. We are through the emergency. Hopefully it is well behind us, especially with vaccinations on their way.

The Premier chose to take the advice of health professionals during the COVID-19 period and we thank him for that. We thank the health professionals for providing him with sage advice. We supported that advice.

During that whole period Labor and the Liberals differed on only a couple of issues. One such issue was support for the racing industry. However, we were all together in this parliament dealing with issues, constituents, all the changes required as one outbreak started and another one finished, with the uncertainty that they caused and with the shifting programs of both state and federal governments in response.

We were constantly dealing with these issues. For a while we had support from the Government with regard to liaison. We managed to solve a lot of problems and we managed to provide information to people when there was little information in the public space. This parliament can be proud of the way we worked together through that period.

Now we are coming out the other side, and the Premier must resist using COVID-19 as cover for not fixing the many problems in the state that were here before COVID-19 and are now getting worse. The state of the state is that many problems need fixing in this state, and the Government is not fixing these problems.

The Government is continually kicking the can down the road, or as eminent economist Saul Eslake says, the Liberals are minding the shop. This is not problem solving; this is shifting problems into the future. These problems are not going away. There are problems in my portfolios but there are problems in other areas which Rebecca White discussed at some length earlier today in a very eloquent speech. There are issues in Health, Housing and Education. These entrenched problems are all getting worse.

As my colleague David O'Byrne, the shadow treasurer, mentioned, we are sitting on an economic knife edge at the moment. JobSeeker is ending at the end of this month along with a lot of the stimulus packages that were put in place. This will have an impact on businesses. We will see businesses go broke. There is no doubt about that.

The moratorium on bankruptcies and on trading insolvent will also come to an end. We are going to see businesses go broke. Another concern is the exchange rate, which is largely driven by the massive boom in iron ore prices. The Australian dollar is once again creeping up to around 80 cents. It is up to about 78 cents and is hovering around that level at the moment.

This is a major concern for an export-oriented state like Tasmania. Once the Australian dollar versus the US dollar gets up to around 85 cents, industries like our potato processing industry start to suffer. When the dollar gets to around 85 cents, imports from places like the US become competitive with our local product. That puts us under a lot of pressure. When the dollar was at parity imports were flooding into the state and put businesses like McCain and Simplot under immense pressure. We do not want to go there again, but that is what we could face if the Australian dollar keeps climbing due to the massive boom in the iron ore price. No doubt that is doing great things for Western Australia but it will not do great things for Tasmania.

In primary industries and water, there are also a number of problems. The rock lobster industry was one of the first industries hit by the COVID-19 crisis because people in China did not go out to restaurants so did not require Tasmanian rock lobsters. There were basically no

exports for a long period of time. That was compounded by the Chinese government putting an unofficial moratorium on Tasmanian imports. That meant instead of getting \$100 a kilo for the product, our rock lobster industry was getting around \$35. That has had a massive impact on the industry, which has effectively been smashed. There is no doubt about it.

Fishers in the industry have already gone out of business. Many of those are fishers who leased quota at high prices back in 2019 and were unable to catch those fish, but they carried that quota over into the following season. It was great the Government allowed them to carry that quota over because it could not be fished, but it also meant that as the prices remained depressed, they had to make a grim decision - to go out fishing only to lose money because the price they had paid for that quota, they could not get for the beach price. They were going to go fishing to lose money, but not to fish would have meant they lost more money. I know that this has driven fishers out of business; they have gone bankrupt, gone broke.

Now there is talk of it taking years for the industry to get back into China so this is not something that is going to resolve itself any time soon. We are now into the new quota season and what is happening? The people most impacted by this are the fishers who lease quota from quota holders because at the moment the quota holders are hanging on to their quota, hoping that later in the season things will get better. However, the problem is that things are not getting better. This is having a real impact on these lease fishers and the people who rely on them, like deckhands and their families.

This has led to a mental health crisis in the rock lobster industry. I do not want to go into more details but the Tasmanian Seafood Industry Council (TSIC), together with Rural Alive and Well, is doing a great job with its Stay Afloat program but it is not enough. I have heard that up to 60 fishers could be forced out of the industry, which would be devastating for families in regional towns reliant on fishing.

The minister, in his response, has decided to waive the fees for the quota holders. That is good for the quota holders but it does not do anything for the fishers who are reliant on leasing quota. They are the ones most impacted. The minister has not mentioned it. It is under the radar at the moment, but it is creating a mental health crisis, the outcomes of which have been devastating for families. That will flow on and be devastating for regional communities. This is something the minister has to address. It cannot stay under the radar much longer. There needs to be a response. Sixty fishers losing their income, losing their livelihood, losing their sense of identity, would be a tragic outcome.

Other industries like the abalone sector were initially hit by the COVID crisis but from what I gather the market has rebounded somewhat. However, there is massive tension over the future of the abalone industry which has caused resignations and so on from the Tasmanian Abalone Council board. This is something the minister also does not seem to have addressed.

The minister has talked about the deer population, with the deer report presented late last year. The Government's own report highlights that the population of deer will double every 13 years. The minister has made some changes in allowing antlerless deer to be shot and so on but I think the population is still gathering in numbers and there are huge herds of deer roaming around. There are more of them because of the extra irrigation capacity in the state - there is more grass and no droughts anymore for the deer because there is always a green pick around somewhere. The population is booming - so much so that on the drive down here on Monday I saw roadkill for the first time. At St Peter's Pass a dead deer was in the middle of the road. I

am not sure what actually struck that deer - it looked like a rather large doe - but I hope it was a truck rather than a small car.

I am starting to hear about wild deer on the Southern Outlet in Hobart and on the outskirts of Launceston. This is something that really will come to a head. The biggest threat is not only the impact they have on the environment but the dangers they pose as roadkill. They are large animals with long legs and it can be really ugly if a car hits them. We may have to start considering a targeted cull rather than these piecemeal approaches because on the Government's own figures, the population will again double in 13 years.

The agritourism sector has also seen the impacts of COVID because of the lack of the tourists coming into the state whom they have relied on and have built their businesses around. We also need to keep an eye on that because with the reduction of JobKeeper, there will be big impacts on staff in these agritourism projects, one of which would be Bridestowe Estate lavender farm. Owner Robert Raven said:

Unfortunately, with the cessation of JobKeeper we will face some staff reductions and that is an inevitability of trying to keep the balance sheet together.

We need to keep an eye on these things because JobKeeper is across the Tasmanian economy. At the end of the month businesses, including agritourism businesses and others, that are relying on JobKeeper will have to make some pretty serious decisions about who they are going to keep on and whether they are going to stay in business. These are the things we are facing.

I would like to reflect for a second on the salmon industry because the Government has effectively capped the salmon industry. Their salmon growth plan is not a growth plan - it is a lack of salmon growth plan. What we were seeing now is very disappointing. Businesses like Tassal are having to choose to shift their capital to Queensland for their prawn farms. They are shifting hundreds of millions of dollars to Queensland for prawn farms because they cannot see a way to grow their product in Tasmania because of what the state Government has done to cap their industry.

The capping of the industry is also coming about because of the bottleneck I have talked about on Bass Strait with the TT-Line. Producers have to be able to get their product to market in a timely way and that is also impacting on their growth. All this capital that Tassal has been shifting to Queensland to grow prawns could have been used to grow jobs in Tasmania. That is what the Liberal Government is standing in front of with their salmon lack of growth plan.

This is a nice segue into time-sensitive freight. We know that the Government is not talking to this sector. We have spoken to the sector; in the lead-up to the decision on the *Spirit* replacements and the so-called task force, the Government did not speak to the time-sensitive freight sector. It did not speak to the big players. We heard yesterday in question time that the Premier simply does not understand the freight requirements of the industry. When we asked what the Government was going to do about the lack of capacity on the *Spirits* for the next three or maybe four years, the Premier started talking about day sailings. That shows a complete ignorance of what is required from this sector because day sailings do not suit their business models.

Businesses like the salmon industry and the berry industry harvest to order. They get an order, and they then go out to the fish pens and they harvest that day; they get it processed, whether it be gutted or whatever, put it on the truck and it is on the *Spirit* that night if there is room. That is the key point - if there is room. If there is not room and those fish or those berries or those packaged lettuce have to wait until the next day or go by Toll or SeaRoad early the next day at 3 o'clock, that impacts their business model. It impacts them because their business model is based on things like their shelf life. Taking an extra day out of their shelf life has an impact on their market. It also impacts their quality. More importantly, it is about meeting your market when your market wants you there.

Salmon is harvested to order. They have to be on the *Spirits* that night to get off early in the morning to meet the international freight connection to get to international markets. Without the *Spirits* that does not happen. From about 2013 that capacity was taken up. Every night the time-sensitive freight industry and freight companies are making decisions about what can go on the *Spirits* and what cannot. Simply saying that you can put them on Toll and SeaRoad is just not sensible. It is not how that business works. Day sailings have no impact on that businesses. The 40 per cent extra capacity that is coming with the new *Spirits* is what this industry needs. The Premier and the task force had not spoken to major freight customers. They were so frustrated they wrote directly to the Premier.

Chas Kelly at SeaRoad is leasing a new vessel. That \$80 million investment over three years will see Devonport-based SeaRoad *Tamar* replaced with the *Liekut* until SeaRoad's new \$190 million permanent vessel arrives in the second-half of 2023. That extra capacity is great. The problem in Tasmania is every time the capacity increases, it gets filled up. There is latent demand that is not being met. When Chas Kelly got his bigger boat, when he replaced the SeaRoad *Mersey* with the SeaRoad *Mersey II*, it was much bigger, yet, the *Spirits* remained full. When Toll brought its new ships back into Burnie, they massively increased capacity, yet, the *Spirits* remained full. That is because the *Spirits* are essential for the time-sensitive freight sector. This is a bottleneck on our state economy. This is hampering the growth of industries like vegetables, small fruit and salmon.

Cherries, for example, have a six- to eight-week window. They need to know that in that six- to eight-week window they can get cherries on the *Spirit* every night to meet their international flights to get them to those lucrative Chinese and Japanese markets. Without that capacity on the *Spirits* and the confidence that they are going to be able to get their product to market, get their product on those planes, get it overseas in a timely way, they question their own investments. That is why everyone was so excited about the new *Spirits*. That is why everyone is so disappointed that the Government has managed to stuff this up.

This brings me to the *Spirits'* delay. These problems could have been solved. Regarding their infrastructure track record, despite the comments of Mr Ferguson, who has just left the Chamber, let us make a comparison of Labor's first eight years versus the Liberal's first eight years. The Liberals like to selectively bring up the past to defend themselves. We heard that again today when Mr Ferguson was on his feet. What did Labor do in the first eight years in government after, I would add, a Liberal-Greens disaster. In the first eight years of a Labor government there was major state-changing infrastructure projects, not just minor tweaking of a few council roads and a little bridge here and there. We are talking about major infrastructure projects that changed the state.

The *Spirit of Tasmania* vessels were bought by Labor in 2002; the gas pipeline, 2002; the Woolnorth wind farm stage 1. Basslink was in the first eight years of a Labor government. What have the Liberals got in comparison in their first eight years? Nothing that compares to the *Spirit of Tasmania* purchase, nothing that compares to the gas pipelines, nothing that compares to Basslink. Labor even managed to deliver tourism projects like the Abt railway.

What has the Liberal Government done? There is no Cradle Mountain cableway or comparative project. They have done very little in their first eight years compared to the first eight years of the Labor government. The Liberals might say they did the Midland Highway and the Royal Hobart Hospital. We know that, but the funding for those projects was locked in well before the 2014 election.

The Midland Highway is missing a lane; they promised four lanes, and they have delivered three and it is still not finished. There are long sections of two lanes. The Royal Hobart Hospital money was locked in before the election. The Royal Hobart Hospital is still not fully operational, despite the Government having held the keys for that for some months.

At the last election they promised a lot and they simply have not delivered. We know they have not fulfilled last year's elections promises, so why should Tasmanians believe that they would fulfil them next time? As Labor leader Rebecca White pointed out, there is not a single major infrastructure project that was promised by this Government at the last election that has started major construction. Not a single project promised in 2019 will be completed before the election.

Things like the underground bus mall, nowhere to be seen. Northern suburbs rail, nowhere to be seen. Project Marinus and Battery of the Nation at least six years away. Instead, they are sacking workers. There is no jobs bonanza; still years off into the distance. The minister talked again about the Bridgewater bridge. There is not a rivet driven, not a wheelbarrow load of concrete that has gone into it. They have been in Government for seven years and still no progress. The northern prison, Tamar River bridge, fifth line on the Southern Outlet, the duplicated Sorell causeways, fixing Launceston's disgraceful sewage problem, fixing the duplication of the Charles St bridge, the Cradle Mountain cableway. There is \$1 billion in projects and funding promised and only \$200 million delivered. That is a shameful record compared to Labor's record.

We see reannouncements followed by delays and underspend. A complete lack of vision in infrastructure. With the duplication of the Cam River Bridge between Somerset and Cooe, the Government is considering replacing a two-lane bridge with a two-lane bridge. This could not be more ridiculous. How does that fix the traffic? How does that fix the Cooe crawl? We have seen no action on traffic in Launceston, and no action on traffic problems in Hobart. Now the Cooe crawl: what complete lack of vision. What they should be doing is talking about a four-lane bridge. That could be in the form of a two-lane bridge in addition to the current two-lane bridge, or build one new four-lane bridge. There is no way that the traffic is going to improve on that section of road with a set of traffic lights like the Government is proposing. It is ridiculous. There should be four lanes from the Mount Hicks Road turnoff in Wynyard all the way through to Cooe.

Then there is the fiasco that is the Devonport bus shelter, the so-called Devonport transit centre. It is just a chopped up shipping container with no shelter, poor signage and a dodgy park bench. How are people supposed to know that Cornwall Square is actually Launceston?

This is ridiculous. This is the level of detail the Government works on. The timetable says 'Cornwall Square'. How are people supposed to know that is Launceston? The minister has been there and has had a look, but he is denying facts.

He says that the Paranapple Centre is the better transit centre in the state. It is not a transit centre; it is a library, it is ServiceTas, it is a function centre. It is not a transit centre. Has he been there? Has he taken baggage from the chopped-up shipping container all the way to the toilet to see how long that would take? It is at least 100 metres and you have to cross the road, you have to walk through the Paranapple. If you are waiting for the bus and it is raining, you wait in the Paranapple Centre. You have to wait among the bookshelves in the library. It is farcical claiming that this is a transit centre. Has he thought about what would happen if you got a Redline bus from Smithton to Hobart? You have to get off that bus in Burnie, buy a completely new ticket, get on a different bus, a passenger bus with a low floor, go through to Devonport, get on another bus, wait an hour and off you go to Hobart. It does not make any sense.

If you are talking about farce, then we have to talk about Macquarie Point - \$77 million for Macquarie Point? We heard in Estimates last year that the reason they were handing them money from the sale of assets was because they were insolvent. They are not going to be insolvent anymore because they have given them \$77 million. Was \$50 million not enough to get development on that site? They have blown \$50 million. How do you reward that? You give them more money. It is like digging a hole, filling it in and then digging the hole again. What do we have to show for it? We have a cul-de-sac. There was a bike path there. I used to use the bike path when I would go running along there but that was torn up. They still have sewage there. I used to note as I ran on that bike path that you could always get the smell of sewage. You could almost smell what Hobart had had for dinner the night before. It is still there.

Now they are talking about an underground carpark. It was hilarious - in his interview the minister let slip that he now considers himself to be the minister for *South Park*. Now we can say, 'Oh my god, he's killed the underground bus mall! Oh my god, he's killed the fifth lane on the Southern Outlet! Oh my god, he's killed the Tamar bridge!', because he is the minister for *South Park*. One of my favourite episodes of *South Park* is when Cartman finds the brown note. If you watch that episode you will have a good laugh but that is okay at Macquarie Point because the sewage treatment plant will still be there. It is an absolute farce.

Even more recently in a farcical sense there is the Leith Overpass. The Leith Overpass has been long delayed but now it is very disappointing to find out that halfway through phone calls that people had from a consultant - there was no meeting, no face-to-face, no nothing - there was a comment that the consultant could hang up at any stage only to advise that their home was going to be compulsorily acquired. It is pretty obvious from the concept design that other homes will also be acquired but they are not being told. It has been long delayed and now residents are finding out that their homes are to be compulsorily acquired and yet the design apparently is not finalised. I honestly thought that the Government had a design that was totally on the public land alongside the highway. I support the overpass. I do not think that speed reductions or roundabouts on the highway are the right option, but this process is far from ideal.

What now? In the shadows of an election the Liberals are once again in their Infrastructure portfolio ordering new consultants' reports or simply putting on hard hats and

high-vis to relaunch a stalled project. Indeed, we saw the minister do that again today at Macquarie Point. It is absolutely ridiculous.

In forestry the Liberals are failing the timber industry by refusing to enforce Tasmania's work health and safety laws to bring these dangerous protests to an end. We heard in parliament today the minister, Ms Archer, not taking the opportunity to stand up for timber workers. Instead she refused to lift a finger. What do we see from the Liberals? What are they actually doing about protesters? They have been sitting on their once-failed bill already for over a year and it was brought on for debate under a suspension of Standing Orders and debated well into the night because it was an emergency, apparently. Well, some emergency. It seems the minister, Mr Barnett, and the Liberals have been holding on to this bill and not bringing it into the Legislative Council until the Legislative Council elections. Mr Barnett even said as much in parliament. What a disgrace. Treating the forest industry once again like a political football by bringing a bill like this on in the shadows of an upper House election is a disgrace. Instead of doing something about it using the existing work health and safety laws, they are playing politics with this. That side of the House knows that their stalled bill will only give Bob Brown the platform he needs to go straight back to the High Court and he will end up being 2-0 up on the Government.

If the Liberals were serious about doing something they would not have tried to amend legislation that had already been thrown out of the High Court of Australia, but rather put up new legislation that would actually work. It appears they are more interested in politics rather than fixing the problem. We heard the cat calls today during question time. The industry has done everything the environmental movement has asked but now the Greens and Bob Brown want to end all forestry.

We know Bob Brown is very clever at appearing to be a mass movement and he gets magnificent media coverage. But, if you have a look at their financial report, their membership fees only brought in \$9555 last year, down from \$16 000 in 2019. They have had a 40 per cent drop in their membership fees. I am not sure how much their subs are. Perhaps the Greens could let us know and we could work out how many people \$9000 actually represents. I am pretty sure that my rowing club brought in more subs than that.

The coverage the Bob Brown Foundation gets is way out of balance with their actual membership. We now see the Bob Brown Foundation back again protesting mining. Nothing will end and they are likely to try to block the Rosebery tailings dam that needs to go in to extend the life of that 85-year-old mine. The Bob Brown Foundation is going to stand in front of that too.

In mining, we know exploration is down and the Burnie Port remains a bottleneck. TasPorts has not been funded to deepen the port. Is the woodchip loader in Burnie fully operational? We have not had an answer to that. There was an accident with the woodchip loader and a partial collapse of the wharf. From what I understand, the ships have to be parked the other way to berth, which is a problem if there is an accident.

The state of the state is that there are many problems I have highlighted that the Government is simply not dealing with. They are not talking about some of them, many of them they are completely ignoring, and some of them they are pretending to do by putting on a hard hat and high-vis. That is not going to solve anything. It has to be less high-vis, more vision, less hard hat, and more hard work.

[3.56 p.m.]

Ms ARCHER (Clark - Attorney-General) - Madam Speaker, it has been an extraordinary time for the Tasmanian community over the past 12 months. During this exceptionally challenging period our Government has continued to do everything we can and give everything we have to support, protect and rebuild our beautiful state from the impacts of COVID-19. Across my many ministerial portfolios and within my electorate of Clark, I have been focusing on delivering a suite of legislative, financial and program-specific measures to support our communities, organisations and individuals.

I am pleased to speak in response to the Premier's Address and discuss some of the many positive measures that impact not only on my portfolios, but indeed on community measures.

In relation to my Arts portfolio, I acknowledge the significant impact the last year has had and continues to have on Tasmania's arts and cultural sector. Our Government responded quickly to the impacts of COVID-19 and certainly were the first government to act by providing a \$3.5 million cultural and creative industry stimulus package in March 2020. The majority of this funding was disbursed through the Arts and Screen Digital Production Fund, the Tasmanian Contemporary Music Fund, and the 2020-21 round of Arts Tasmania's organisations program. That was put together very quickly and we followed that up with a further additional \$4 million in new funding in the 2020-21 State Budget to allow for a range of new programs and initiatives aimed at assisting the sector to bounce back from the impacts of COVID-19. That was attached to our Cultural and Creative Industries Recovery Strategy 2020 and Beyond.

The budget package included our Arts Recovery Support Initiative which has offered support of up to \$10 000 for artists, arts organisations and arts businesses to cover earnings lost as a result of cancellations due to COVID-19. In December last year I announced a further \$2 million to support the Tasmanian Live Performance Support Program. This program aims to give event organisers and arts organisations confidence by sharing some of the risk of holding a live event in a theatre or other performing arts venue.

We recognise the importance of building further confidence and momentum of our creative and cultural industries. That is why yesterday the Premier announced that we are now providing an additional \$4.5 million in new funding to assist the sector going forward. Never before have we provided so much funding for the arts and never before has it been so needed.

I met with some theatre company people yesterday and I continue to meet with them. I have more meetings set up and I have also arranged for meetings for them to sit down with the Director of Public Health as well so they can discuss the restriction requirements not only for them but moving forward. I acknowledge that it is a difficult situation. I have spoken to them personally and think they will benefit a great deal from speaking with Dr Veitch directly as to why the need for restrictions in Tasmania are the way they are and perhaps with a plan moving forward in relation to coming out of that.

It has stood us in good stead. The entire way through COVID-19, as a government, we have followed public health advice. Some of that advice has been very difficult for the community to take and for the community to understand. As a Government we will continue to communicate those measures as best we can. That is why various ministers go out to explain the restrictions that still exist in our community.

I am quite excited about the \$4.5 million package. It is a substantial package which includes - and this is in no particular order - \$3 million in additional screen production investment funding to attract and support the production and filming of works that showcase the state, and build on our successful marketing of the Tasmanian brand. I know of quite a few, because I have met various people putting together projects, a few people who will apply for that straight away. Of course, that is assessed by our independent panel, the Screen Tasmania Expert Advisory Group (STEAG). I have no doubt the panel will have a very good range of high-quality applicants to select from for that funding.

Tasmania has cemented itself as a premium destination for the creative screen and production sector and we, as a government, want to continue to see growth in this area. Screen productions provide jobs for local production companies, for creatives, for actors, for crews, as well as valuable cash flow to local Tasmanian businesses in areas such as accommodation, transportation and hospitality services, particularly at a time when such expenditure is greatly needed. When screen producers move around the state for their productions, regional areas benefit as well. We have seen that recently with the production of *The Tailings*. In southern Tasmania, we currently have *Rosehaven* season 5 on location. I visited the set last week, and it is pretty exciting for the Tasmanian community to come across that as well. It just shows the reach and the extent of the broader community and businesses that benefit from that expenditure - and it is assessed on at least a three-to-one ratio of return on investment.

This latest funding will enable our screen production sector to build further capacity and support the development of new stories and concepts across the film, television and indeed the games industry. We have a very healthy games industry that is internationally renowned. It will ensure that Tasmanian creatives will continue to intrigue, engage and entertain audiences at home and around the world. Because of our COVID-19 status, there are companies looking to film down here, and when those productions have been completed they can be broadcast all around the world.

In addition, there is a new \$1 million live performance reactivation program, which will specifically support the delivery of new larger-scale professional live performance productions in Tasmania, and assist our artists, theatre venues, actors and producers to get back up and running in a COVID-19 environment.

That \$1 million funding will also coexist with the existing \$2 million Live Performance Support Program, which will help performing arts production companies and venues to stage live performances by providing significant grants of up to \$200 000 towards things like professional fees, set design and construction, equipment and costume hire and licensing costs.

Even if a company has already accessed the security of the \$1 million Live Performance Reactivation Program, they can still apply for that \$2 million Live Performance Support Program, which will allow them to apply for up to \$200 000. That is significantly addressing some issues that some of the larger companies have with needing to pay out professional fees, licence fees, and equipment and costume hire.

We are also, out of that fund, providing \$500 000 in additional funding to support arts organisations to deliver a range of high-quality arts activities that strengthen Tasmania's arts sector. Of course, we already have our arts organisations funding, and that is topping that up.

While Arts Tasmania is busy running these new programs and initiatives, it is also making sure it continues to offer its regular suite of funding programs. All those programs still exist and are still fully funded. All this new money is exactly that: it is new money.

These core initiatives being delivered to both Arts Tasmania and Screen Tasmania will assist in ensuring that the sector has ongoing stability, alongside our tailored support and recovery programs.

As the responsible minister, I am very proud of what our Government has managed to deliver so far to support our cultural and creative industries. I will continue to work closely with the industry to respond to its issues, especially around the public health restrictions messages, which are there to keep Tasmanians safe.

Continued momentum and confidence are both vitally important to the ongoing growth and development of the Tasmanian arts sector. This latest substantial funding injection will help ensure that high levels of production activity can be sustained going forward.

There are some really exciting things there. I specifically wanted to start off with my Arts portfolio in my contribution this afternoon, which demonstrates how important that funding is to me as the responsible minister. I thank the Premier and Treasurer for that commitment.

In relation to the Corrections portfolio, one of my many long-term priorities is to further boost correctional officer numbers, being totally committed to ensuring that the state's prison system is well staffed.

Staffing levels across the Corrections portfolio increased during the last financial year despite COVID-19, and it is these valuable staff members who deliver the services that rehabilitate and support offenders in Tasmania. I take this opportunity to thank them all, whether they are in the Tasmania Prison Service (TPS) or Community Corrections or are our hardworking public servants. The people who worked in our Justice and Corrections areas throughout COVID-19 did a phenomenal job, particularly in the Corrections space.

Many things went on during COVID-19. I want those who worked on the suite of measures that we had to ensure we had no positive cases in the prison - and that is still the status as of today - to know I am terribly grateful for their efforts, because they will appreciate how one positive test in an environment like that could be a real issue for us.

Keeping correctional officer staffing at appropriate levels maximises cost efficiency by ensuring sufficient staff are available to cover shifts and any vacancies arising from personal leave, training, long service leave and workers compensation. It also reduces the demand for overtime, which goes without saying. Ongoing recruitment processes will also deliver and improve work/life balance for staff across correctional facilities, while also providing prisoners with greater access to rehabilitation and other services.

Correctional officer recruitment processes have been occurring at an increased rate while I have been minister. Despite some interruptions due to COVID-19 with the structure of the courses offered, we were still able to maintain training throughout 2020 to increase the correctional officer staffing levels throughout the recruitment process. Despite the interruptions due to COVID-19, in 2020 alone there were still three recruit schools, which is

amazing in itself, and the staff in the training area were absolutely wonderful. A total of 75 new correctional officers have been recruited through these schools and are now working within the Tasmania Prison Service.

Applications will soon be open to attract the next round of recruits, and it is anticipated two recruit schools will be run throughout this year. I can report to the House that we are finding that we are getting a really diverse range of applicants. Some of it is because people are changing jobs because of COVID 19. Some people were in business or other areas and decided to have a change. I always meet with the recruits and certainly a lot of them in the last couple of teams have come from different areas - from call centres, from child care, from aged care - so there are some really good life skills there and a broad range of ages.

One of our schools in particular had a real cultural diversity, which I am pleased to report as well. We are getting more women applying, but I would like to see still more so I have just put in an advertorial there. It is all about balance across a whole range of diverse backgrounds. The major prison staffing increase demonstrates my strong commitment to providing a safe and secure environment for staff and prisoners for the reasons I outlined - it reduces overtime, allows for more staff training and, it goes without saying, creates a more positive environment and better work/life balance.

The ongoing recruitment drive is in conjunction with a strong plan to invest \$365 million to meet future prison capacity and upgrade existing facilities, including the northern regional prison and the new southern remand centre, which are going very well and are on track, and are currently being built. Significant prison infrastructure projects will alleviate capacity pressures at the current facilities at the Risdon site. We are futureproofing the Corrections system. It is a simple fact that prison populations around the country have increased and Tasmania has not been immune to this trend, but our Government has both an infrastructure and a staffing and recruitment plan to deal with that trend.

As Minister for Corrections I have a strong focus on improving opportunities for rehabilitation and reintegration for those who interact with the Corrections system. That is across the TPS and Community Corrections as well. Over the coming year my focus will continue to be on this area, particularly as we plan for the northern regional prison. We want to make this a strong focus for those working across our Corrections system in all our facilities. As a state we have a strong opportunity to get better outcomes for individuals, which reduces the rate of reoffending, which benefits the whole community, and those rehabilitation programs are essential to that. I look forward to saying more about that over the coming year.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I am very pleased, with the commitment of \$1.3 million, to introduce body-scanning technology in the Hobart and Launceston reception prisons and the Risdon Prison Complex as well as the Ashley Youth Detention Centre. That centre does not fall under my area of responsibility - it belongs to Mr Jaensch, who is sitting behind me - but it is important that the body-scanning technology is consistent across our facilities, and I am very pleased with this outcome.

I certainly asked about it in terms of taking on this portfolio back in 2017, and I am glad it has now come to fruition with the funding that has become available. While we want to minimise personal searches as much as possible, they are necessary for the security of all

prisons - they not only stop potentially harmful items such as drugs and weapons from entering the prison system but they also reduce the risk of self-harm.

Personal searches may be conducted on prisoners and detainees entering or leaving prison, prior to and on completion of contact visits, and at any other time deemed necessary by a superintendent to ensure that the safety and security of the prison are maintained. TPS staff understand that entering prison, especially for the first time, can be a traumatic event and conduct personal searches in a professional manner.

Last year I announced that the draft legislation designed to protect young people in custody has been released for public comment. The Youth Justice Amendment (Searches in Custody) Bill 2020 is part of the Government's response to the Commissioner for Children and Young People's memorandum of advice to the Government in relation to the searches of children and young people in custody in custodial facilities.

The amendments are intended to minimise any associated trauma, distress or harm related to searches conducted in custodial facilities in Tasmania. I am sure the commissioner will not mind me saying but she rang yesterday to provide her support for the body scanning. Indeed, I think she tweeted as such, but she fully supports this move. It is something she has proposed and supported for quite some time.

The department continues to work through the submissions received with the intent to table a bill in the first half of this year. We want to go further and implement steps that minimise the need for personal searches to take place in the first place. New body scanners will be another tool to help ensure the safety of our correctional staff, as well as prisoners and detainees, and, importantly, they will minimise the requirement for personal searches. The new scanners are able to detect objects on or inside a person's body and clothing without the need to physically remove clothing or make any physical contact with the person being searched, providing a less intrusive process for personal searches. The scanner is able to provide an instant internal image which can reveal contraband such as drugs, mobile phones and weapons.

The Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse recommended that state and territory governments consider technological options such as body scanners to detect contraband to minimise the need for conducting personal searches on juveniles, and we are pleased to be able to implement this recommendation. As well as the benefits to those being searched, the scanners will have a positive impact in our correctional facilities through increased safety for staff, reduction in the time required by correctional officers to conduct searches and the likely deterrent effect the scanners will have on people attempting to bring contraband into a correctional facility.

I turn now to the building and construction industry. It has never been more important as we rebuild or build our way out of COVID. As the Minister for Building and Construction there are a few things that cross over portfolios. Mr Ferguson with his Infrastructure and Finance portfolios is responsible not for only infrastructure build and civil contracting, but he is also, under Finance, responsible for administering the HomeBuilder Grants, just to name a few things.

I know Mr Jaensch deals with things in his Housing and Planning portfolios, but as the Minister for Building and Construction I have been responsible not only for the legislative change required during COVID and our emergency provisions in relation to rental protections

but also generally in relation to the industry itself. My contact with the Master Builders Association, the Housing Industry Association and all the other associations that deal with the other trades in connection thereto - if I can be so broad as I run out of time - has been a valuable experience in terms of providing input for all our initiatives announced by the Premier yesterday.

The \$30 million building construction support loan scheme will provide low finance to support paused commercial-scale building and construction projects to create new or improved building or associated infrastructure. I am excited about that, particularly for the Masters Builders Association members. Under the scheme, projects of \$3 million or more will be able to apply for low interest commercial loans through the Office of the Coordinator-General. I welcome this important initiative.

PESRAC outlined the challenges inherent in our housing market. Although Tasmania is building houses at an increased rate, we must build more, which is why I welcome the announcement that we will also take immediate action to remove barriers and costs to encourage further land activation. Landowners who wish to activate residential zoned land that is currently not being developed will benefit from a \$10 million headworks holiday for new residential subdivisions. This includes up to \$5000 per residential lot for power and up to \$5000 per residential lot to deliver water and sewerage infrastructure. That will make a massive difference to many residential subdivisions and encourage those sorts of developments.

In relation to the rental market, I have put on record in this place the substantial protections we put in place throughout COVID, and particularly the COVID-19 funds we provided to assist tenants - the COVID-19 Rent Relief Fund and the COVID-19 Landlord Support Fund. I do not think I have enough time to go through all that again. Suffice it to say we are now in a transitional period until 31 March when those funds will continue to be available. Tenants and landlords can also access the payment plan option without needing to go to court. They can have that determined by the Residential Tenancy Commissioner. Tenants can go to the Residential Tenancy Commissioner for a determination if they believe any rent increases are unreasonable. There are numerous protections under the Residential Tenancy Act 1997, and I encourage tenants to seek out that assistance. Talk to the Residential Tenancy Commissioner. Do not be afraid to go to the commissioner, because the commissioner is there to help.

I also confirm that as at 12 March, Tasmanian tenants and landlords have collectively accessed over \$3.6 million worth of assistance through the support funds that our Government has paid for their rent arrears. That is significant, and I am specifically mentioning that amount because the Leader of the Greens said that we provided no assistance. She did not mean that we had not provided any financial assistance - I am not trying to verbal her - but I do want to highlight that this is substantial assistance already. That represents over 93 per cent of rent arrears listed by owners or their agents, upon applying to the COVID-19 Landlord Support Fund, as being entirely resolved, with only 7 per cent remaining. That is significant. I encourage landlords and tenants to take up the payment plan option.

I mention land tax as well in this context. As many in this House would be aware, the Government is currently waiving land tax for commercial land impacted by COVID-19, and to incentivise the availability of long-term rentals, providing land tax exemptions of three years for newly built housing, and one year for former short-stay accommodation. I welcome the Premier's announcement yesterday that our Government will reset the land tax thresholds to

reflect today's strong property market, and that we will double the land value at which land tax becomes payable from \$25 000 to \$50 000, and will increase the maximum land value threshold by \$50 000 from \$350 000 to \$400 000.

As the Premier has indicated, these changes will save around 70 000 Tasmanians up to \$613 in their land tax bill. It will also mean an additional 4100 landowners will now pay no land tax in the year ahead, putting downward pressure on the need for rental increases to be passed on.

WorkSafe inspectors make a real difference in people's lives, helping employers and workers ensure their workplaces are safe, and that workers return home to their families and friends safe and well at the end of each day. It is fair to say that the job of a WorkSafe inspector has never been more important. Inspectors are a key component of our Government's COVID-19 Safe Workplaces Framework, working with industry to ensure that each and every workplace managed its COVID-19 risks effectively. WorkSafe inspectors have been on the frontline, educating businesses to ensure that workplaces are actively applying COVID-19 controls, protecting the safety of all Tasmanian workers and the broader community.

Since the launch of our Government's COVID-19 Safe Workplaces Framework on 8 May 2020, WorkSafe Tasmania inspectors have visited over 3500 workplaces to check they are COVID-19 safe. In response to the pandemic, WorkSafe Tasmania has reprioritised and refocused its work to assist with reducing the risk of COVID-19 spreading in high-risk workplaces. In order for WorkSafe Tasmania to maintain a focus on compliance and enforcement in relation to COVID-19, and to also continue their normal targeted harm-reduction activities, six additional inspectors are being recruited for at least the next 12 months to bolster the capacity of the team to meet the high demand for their services.

These inspectors will be located across the state, with three working in southern Tasmania, two in the north and one in the north-west. New inspectors will receive at least three months training before being authorised to exercise powers and functions under the Work Health and Safety Act 2012.

I thank all the staff at WorkSafe Tasmania. They are independent. The head of WorkSafe Tasmania is the independent regulator, and I do not instruct her how to perform those duties. I do not instruct inspectors to inspect workplaces. That is the role of WorkSafe Tasmania. As minister, I have the administrative responsibility for the Work Health and Safety Act. I do not enforce that act; that is WorkSafe Tasmania. I am mentioning that because of the ridiculous question Dr Broad asked me today during question time. I think he was set up to ask it, quite frankly, because he just showed complete and utter ignorance as to how WorkSafe Tasmania operates.

I will turn briefly to Justice, in the time that I have available. Her Excellency, the Governor of Tasmania, the Honourable Kate Warner AC, as Governor-in-Council, has signed the order to formally establish the commission of inquiry into the Tasmanian Government's responses to child sexual abuse in institutional settings. I look forward to their work. I thank the president, Marcia Neave AO, and our two new commissioners in anticipation of the work they will be undertaking.

As I said yesterday, the Government is shining a light on an area that has been dark for too long.

Time expired.

[4.26 p.m.]

Mr BARNETT (Lyons - Minister for Primary Industries and Water) - Mr Deputy Speaker, it is a great honour, pleasure and privilege to stand here as Minister for Primary Industries and Water, Minister for Energy, Minister for Resources and Minister for Veterans' Affairs. I thank Tasmania's forty-sixth Premier, Peter Gutwein, for the ongoing support he has shown me in all my portfolios and in my role as a member for the Lyons electorate, which covers more than 50 per cent of the great state of Tasmania.

There is no doubt this past year has been a testing one, a year like no other for Tasmanians from all walks of life. I could not be more proud of the job our Government has done, led by the Premier, Peter Gutwein, during the most difficult of circumstances.

Tasmania is the best place in the world to live. We should all be proud of that fact, and the fact it is one of the safest places in the world to live right now.

I know all Tasmanians know that, and would agree with me, but we are going to require continuing leadership and steadfast, resolute efforts on the part of the Premier and our Government to take Tasmania forward as we work our way through the COVID-19 pandemic, as the vaccinations roll out, and as we rebuild our economy.

Our top priorities are to keep Tasmanians safe, to rebuild our economy to deliver a brighter and more prosperous future, and to keep Tasmanians secure. I think that key message will flow through everything I share today in support of the Premier's address, and in support of the Premier's plans for Tasmania.

It is fair to say that over the last seven years, we have demonstrated that as a government we are not only disciplined, united and responsible to the Tasmanian people, but we are also adaptable. During the last 12 months - and today is the 12-month anniversary of the declaration of the public health emergency - we have had to pivot: so P is the pivot word for 2020 through to 2021.

In the last 12 months we have had to pivot, adapt and be flexible. I remember in this place 12 months ago when the Premier, with a tear in his eye, said 'Look, we have to make this decision for the good of Tasmania, to keep people safe.'. It was a really tough day; it was a really tough week. It was one of the toughest weeks of my political career at a federal or state level, and it is one I remember well.

I look back on that with some level of pride, knowing that we worked our hearts out for the Tasmanian people. Fancy having a Cabinet meeting on Easter Sunday. It was incredible. The commitment given and led by the Premier, Peter Gutwein, to get through this difficult time was incredible. Now we have to rebuild, and that is our focus. You have seen the plans and we on this side back them in 100 per cent. I thank Don Challen, who chaired the Premier's Social and Economic Recovery Advisory Council, and all members of PESRAC for their work and contribution to the people of Tasmania. We have backed the recommendations made in

the PESRAC interim report. They have been or are being implemented. We are backing in every single recommendation in that report, as the Premier outlined yesterday.

We are a government of conviction, we are a government of compassion and we are a government that ensures that opportunity is there for the Tasmanian people and community. Certainly my objective and that of those on this side of the House is to see Tasmania achieve its potential. We want communities to achieve their potential, business to achieve its potential, individuals to achieve their potential, families to achieve their potential - that is what we are on about. We want the best for Tasmania. These last 12 months have been a tough time but we have set our sails for the months and years ahead with those commitments, which I will touch on in my various portfolios, which are consistent with the PESRAC report and with our commitment to Tasmania and Tasmanians.

I want to say thank you to all those key stakeholders in government and in the community, for that effort over that last 12 months. It has been Team Tasmania at work. I often use that phrase, 'Team Tasmania'. We are so pleased and proud to have worked with various stakeholders on behalf of Tasmania and Tasmanians - working in partnership, Team Tasmania. Consistently during the last 12 months, I met regularly with the agricultural stakeholders, and had roundtables with the seafood industry. I am meeting regularly with the stakeholders in the forestry, mining and energy spaces. In terms of the primary industries, we have regular roundtables to ensure we get the job done.

One of those first roundtables was identifying agriculture as an essential service, and hasn't agriculture delivered in spades big time? I thank our agricultural stakeholders for the service they have provided to the Tasmanian people. We produce 4.5 times more in Tasmania than we consume. Tasmania is delivering in spades in that agriculture space; I will have more to say about that shortly.

I want to thank all Tasmanians for their perseverance and positivity - another couple of 'Ps' that I talk about a lot - in coping throughout this coronavirus pandemic, but now it is time to rebuild. We will continue to work through the pandemic. Thank you to Sarah Courtney for her leadership in the health space and to those on the front line - the frontline workers, thank you on behalf of the Tasmanian people.

With respect to the Premier's Economic and Social Recovery Advisory Council, I have indicated my thanks to the chair and to its members. It is helping shape Tasmania's short-, medium- and longer term planning and the rebuilding of our economy and our community. We have accepted all of the 52 recommendations in the final report. The Premier outlined the immediate steps the Government will take in each of the five priority PESRAC areas. These are important actions that are material points of benefit for the Tasmanian community. What is even more impressive about those steps is that they will work hand in glove with our productive industries such as agriculture, forestry, seafood and mining and the mineral processing sector as well as with our nation-shaping renewable energy vision.

We heard from the Deputy Premier and Minister for Education and Training this morning about the commitment to TasTAFE. This is fundamental and one of the key recommendations that we strongly support. The Premier has made it clear. We could not be clearer. This will be a government business enterprise. It needs to be flexible, adaptable, to deliver for young Tasmanians to get them into a job, build capacity, build their skills, give them training, give them support. We need to build that part of our economy to give young Tasmanians and their

families the best chance going forward, and this is going to be so important for the productive industries that I represent and the rest of our economy.

It is not just building and construction, this will benefit all of our economy across agriculture, forestry, fishing, mining and the works. I say thank you to the Premier and Deputy Premier for their leadership in backing in this recommendation, and on behalf of the Government I can assure you my stakeholders will welcome that initiative to ensure that training is available to deliver jobs for young Tasmanians and to give them the training they need, which is so important.

Under our jobs priority, Tasmania should be immensely proud. There are now 22 000 more Tasmanians employed since coming to government in 2014. Our economy is one of the strongest in the country and we have the lowest unemployment rate of any state in the country. Shouldn't we be proud of that? Of course we are. We can back it in. The predictions were much more dire than that over 12 months ago and soon after the pandemic hit. Those predictions were much worse but we have recovered with a much better situation now. We are backing up our excellent work on the jobs front with a \$20.5 million package to help more Tasmanians workers into jobs with a range of initiatives to strengthen links to job opportunities and ensure more Tasmanians have the opportunity to live and work in the place they call home.

PESRAC clearly notes the challenges inherit in our housing market at this time, with Tasmanians saying that access to affordable housing was one of their concerns for their future. They got feedback from more than 3500 Tasmanians and that is one of the key ingredients to the success of that report, and that is why we are backing it in. We know the Tasmanian people support what we want to do here and that is why we are looking to communicate that further with the Tasmanian community and we will do that uphill and down dale. We will do what is required to ensure the Tasmanian people fully understand the benefits of these policies we are putting on the table and delivering. We will do that.

The critical actions outlined by the Premier included the \$10 million headworks holiday for new residential subdivisions to support landowners who wish to activate residential zoned land that is not currently being developed. Good news - development, growth, jobs, opportunities - it is incredible. It is going to be great. That will include \$5000 per residential lot for power connection, which is important, and up to \$5000 per lot delivered for water and sewerage infrastructure.

I want to touch on energy and speak to one of the most compelling twenty-first century competitive advantages that Tasmania has and it is two words: renewable energy. We are already the powerhouse for Australia and we have big plans to attract investment, create more jobs, and support Australia in its transition to the renewable energy supply in the years and decades ahead. Tasmania is now 100 per cent fully self-sufficient in 100 per cent clean electricity and renewable energy. It confirms Tasmania as a world leader in renewable energy generation. I am so pleased and proud of the fact that Tasmania in November last year hit that target and we are doing better every day. It is so encouraging. I know that Tasmanians, young and old, are very pleased with that result to be 100 per cent.

Of course we have the trifecta; the affordable, the reliable, the clean electricity, which the rest of the nation and the rest of the world wants. We have big plans to continue to be a world leader in this space and deliver even further. We made those commitments back at the 2018 election with the former premier and myself at Lake Gordon. I remember the day. It was

a pretty windy day, but it was a special day to be able to make that commitment and to deliver on that commitment in fact, two years early, November last year, in advance of the 2022 deadline. In December 2020 we also released the Tasmanian Renewable Energy Action Plan, our plan to transform Tasmania from being Australia's renewable energy powerhouse into a world-leading provider of affordable, reliable, clean energy. Underpinning that plan we have legislated the Tasmanian Renewable Energy Target, or TRET, to double our renewable energy generation to 200 per cent of our current needs by 2040. This is unmatched globally. We cannot find any other jurisdiction that is anywhere near that. We are clearly leading the world. We have legislated that. I thank both Houses of parliament for their strong support for the Government's leadership and legislation in that regard.

We have what the rest of the world wants and needs - low-cost, reliable, clean electricity. This is helping to keep the lights on and the prices down. We will do a whole lot more. We welcome the recently signed memorandum of understanding, the Bilateral Energy and Emissions Reduction Agreement between the state and the Commonwealth, signed by the Premier and the Prime Minister in December regarding our plans for Marinus Link and Battery of the Nation. I am excited that Lake Cethana has been identified as the preferred pumped hydro site. We are progressing work to better harness our existing power stations, in particular, Tarraleah. Tarraleah is in the Central Highlands and it has massive potential. We are talking \$600 million to \$700 million-worth of potential for a new power station at Tarraleah with plans to double our energy output there from 110 megawatts to 220 megawatts. This is not just good for Tasmania, it will be good for the nation. It will deliver jobs if we can secure that project. That is the potential. We are working hard to make that happen. We have listened to the national market expert, the Australian Energy Market Organisation, and it has confirmed in its 2020 integrated system plan that deep storage solutions are needed, that Marinus Link is needed. It is part of its plans for the future and that is encouraging.

It is strategic national infrastructure, one of three critical transmission infrastructure investments for which the federal government is locking in its support. I thank Angus Taylor, I thank the Prime Minister, Scott Morrison, and the federal government for their support, together with the Liberal Senate team, Gavin Pearce, Bridget Archer, not just in the energy space and for progressing our plans but across all my portfolios and for the state more generally, especially with respect to water. I will talk more about that in a minute. Water is liquid gold. We acknowledge that the global supply and use of energy is dramatically shifting. The world is looking for cleaner renewable forms of energy and we are on the right side of history.

I encourage the Opposition to support these projects rather than their relentless negativity, their relentless criticism and their relentless knocking. It becomes debilitating and disappointing when they cannot get on board these job-creating long-term visionary projects that will deliver for Tasmania. We will deliver thousands of jobs, billions in investment, improved energy security, and downward pressure on electricity prices.

I wanted to refer to renewable hydrogen in Tasmania. It is Tasmania's super power. Tasmania can produce reliable, cost-effective, large-scale emissions-free hydrogen. It is green hydrogen and renewable hydrogen. It is going to give us an unparalleled advantage over other states and other jurisdictions in the world, including using coal-fired energy to produce hydrogen. The centrepiece is backed by the Tasmanian Renewable Hydrogen Action Plan. Our state has the biggest support package of any state or territory in Australia, \$50 million, and it sends a message that we are serious. We have not just expressions of interest but serious players in the marketplace. Woodside Energy signed an MOU with the Premier a month or

two ago and is seeking to secure federal government funding support, based at Bell Bay. Fortescue Metals, big plans. Origin Energy, big plans. Abel Energy has special plans to be established at Bell Bay. In addition to that, Grange Resources on the north-west coast, Tasmania's largest mining company, announced very good results today - a big increase in income and profits. Congratulations to Ben Maynard and the team at Grange Resources for the results. They are part of the plans for renewable hydrogen in their project and feasibility study on the north-west coast at Port Latta. Tasmania is well placed to progress that.

We have shown our commitment to not just those major projects but also easing the cost of living. Power prices dropped by 1.38 per cent last July. There are nearly seven years of downward pressure on electricity prices. Regulated power prices have only increased around 2.2 per cent in nominal terms compared to the seven years on Labor's watch. What happened there? There was a 65 per cent increase. In real terms that is a reduction. Regulated residential prices have decreased by 12 per cent on our watch. For small businesses, prices decreased by 19 per cent in real terms. The \$45 million electricity concession scheme is regarded as one of the most generous in the nation. That is because we support those who are doing it tough, support those in need. We focus on maintaining that downward pressure on the cost of living.

Aurora Energy has invested \$5 million to assist customers with bill relief, waiving fees, charges, and a range of other support measures. Over the past 12 months Aurora has provided about 2200 customers with financial support through the COVID-19 customer support fund. It is currently supporting about 6000 customers on its nation-leading Your Energy Support program, the YES program. I have talked to members of the Aurora Energy team. They do a great job and the YES program is really effective. The success of the YES program is demonstrated by the fact that 97 per cent of customers participating in the YES program are meeting their usage costs compared to the national average of just 53 per cent. There is over \$3.7 million left of that fund so for anyone struggling with their bills, I urge them to contact Aurora Energy as soon as possible so their situation can be properly assessed.

While it is clear that COVID-19 has had an impact on Tasmanian energy bills, it is clear that we are recovering. Since December 2020 Aurora has seen a decrease of approximately 24 per cent in the number of residential customers on payment plans, excluding those YES customers. With a strong focus on our most vulnerable Tasmanians we have committed \$1 million over four years to the Energy Saver Loan and Subsidy Program providing low-income families with access to funds to invest in energy-saving appliances for their home. We are certainly leading in so many respects.

As the Premier highlighted in his speech, Tasmania is a leader in climate change action and we will continue to be. We have the lowest per capita emissions of all states and territories and are one of the lowest emitters of carbon dioxide on the planet. We have already achieved our net zero target by 2050 four years in a row.

There is much to be said about agriculture and water. I will not have time to outline all the wonderful and special initiatives. To the farmers, fishers, and foresters who work hard every day to produce premium goods renowned the world over, thank you for your service and your contribution to the Tasmanian people and community. We produce 4.5 times what we consume in Tasmania. We are proud of our premium products. During the pandemic we have been able to deliver for Tasmania, Australia and the globe with our exports up thanks to our

trade action plan. I thank the Deputy Premier for his leadership in ensuring that we diversify and grow our exports around the globe.

We have set out our five-year agrifood plan. We are working in partnership with our farmers and agribusinesses to achieve those important targets. The four key ingredients to our success in agriculture: we have a cool climate, fertile soil, access to reliable water - water is liquid gold - and we are delivering in spades there - and enterprising farmers and agribusinesses are the four key ingredients to success and we will back them in at every stage under this Gutwein Liberal Government.

We have much to say about our processed food value which is around \$4.86 billion. With regard to the farm gate value, we are on track to get to that \$10 billion by 2050. We have a big aspiration, but why not? We are on target and going well. We will work hard with our rural stakeholders to do that. The Rural Confidence Survey says that farmers' confidence has risen to a 15-month high, resulting from the high commodity prices and good seasonal conditions. I believe the leadership of our Government in Tasmania has something to do with that.

The confidence does not mean that there has not been challenges. There have been many challenges and that is why we have worked with the stakeholders to deliver the \$1.9 million Agricultural Workforce Resilience Package. We want to get the fruit picked, the vegetables harvested and off to market, and those grapes crushed and wine made and off to market. That is our objective and we have been delivering on that, thanks to the support with the workforce that has been so important.

We have provided more funding support for Safe Farming Tasmania to help make that a success. The agri-food growth plan is working. We are delivering and I will soon be releasing the Rural Water Use Strategy which will guide our future water management arrangements to ensure an integrated, fair and efficient regulation of our fresh water resources and deliver a sustainable water resource into the future. The wise use of water will be at the forefront.

We cannot be prouder of being able to back in Tasmania's water assets. We have 12 per cent of Australia's rainfall and 27 per cent of Australia's water in storage in agricultural land. Eight per cent of our agricultural land is delivering more than 50 per cent of our agricultural production because it has access to reliable water. A total 16 of the last 19 major water infrastructure projects in Australia have been built in Tasmania thanks to the leadership of successive governments and especially under this Government.

We are working hard with our partners in agriculture, the fruit industry and the wine industry. Look at the pivots when you drive around Tasmania, those green circles. When you see that you think jobs because it delivers increased opportunity in agricultural products and benefits. You have the polytunnels with fruit including strawberries, raspberries, blackberries and blueberries - the works.

We are doubling the number of cows milked and we had record milk production last year and are hoping for another record this year. We are securing vegetable contracts and they are all employing additional staff and it is positive. We have delivered a record irrigation outcome for Tasmanian farmers, but there is more to do. We have five irrigation projects under way under tranche 3 - the Don, Wesley Vale, Sassafra, Northern Midlands, Fingal and Tamar, and we have big plans to go further than that. I could probably speak under water with marbles in my mouth about water but I won't because I do not have time today.

I will touch on seafood. We are backing in the fishers in Tasmania, the wild catch, the rock lobster fishers. They have had a tough time and today I am proud to say that there is going to be less paperwork and more fishing, thanks to our digital reforms in the fishing space, streamlining the process and cutting red tape. It was tough last year and that is why we announced the \$5.5 million seafood industry package and why last week we provided further fee relief for the wild fisheries of more than \$660 000, particularly for the rock lobster fishers but also the wild catch fishers. Thanks to the support of the Tasmanian Seafood Industry Council, the Rock Lobster Association and support across the board.

I want to touch on border controls and Biosecurity Tasmania. Yesterday I visited the Hobart Airport to say thank you to Biosecurity Tasmania and all the employees for their work and service to support and keep Tasmanians safe. That was a special visit and I appreciated that opportunity. I caught up with not just members of Biosecurity Tasmania but also Ruby, the detector dog. We doubled the number of detector dogs thanks to Jeremy Rockliff when he was Minister for Primary Industries and Water. Those detector dogs are doing the job to keep Tasmanians safe. I put my thanks and acknowledgment on the record.

In terms of recreational fishing, we have big plans for both recreational sea fishing and also inland fishing. We have amongst the best opportunities in Australia and we will be delivering on that with a draft recreational fishing strategy not far away. Forestry is delivering big time and in terms of those productive industries in the forestry space, thank you for your effort and your work. We support you.

Time expired.

[4.56 p.m.]

Ms HADDAD (Clark) - Mr Deputy Speaker, I will start my contribution today by reflecting on what a different landscape we find ourselves in when compared to where we were this time last year when we were looking at the Premier's Address replies in parliament in 2020. It has been a bit of an exercise in reflection considering my thoughts for today's contribution to look back and recall where we were 12 short months ago.

Twelve months ago we were at the very beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic. All Tasmanians, and I dare say even those of us who work here in parliament, were understandably very worried. We looked overseas at what was happening in Europe, Asia and elsewhere where the virus was already far more progressed and wondered if that was in store for us too. It felt like there were more unknowns than there were knowns about the pandemic. We saw shocking images, particularly coming out of Europe and the United States, of makeshift morgues, of countless dead and infected each and every day. It really did feel like there were more unknowns about what was waiting for us as the pandemic unfolded here in Australia and in Tasmania.

I was very encouraged to see early on that truly collaborative working environment emerging in the Tasmanian parliament where all members of parliament worked productively together across political divides to recognise that something as serious as a global pandemic really is above politics. We needed to put away the regular workings of the parliament in terms of the way we sometimes do business in quite a combative and adversarial style to deal collaboratively with the unfolding emergency situation.

Labor called for and of course supported many of the serious actions and decisions that had to be taken at the time by the Government to keep the state safe. Things like shutting the borders was an extraordinary but absolutely necessary step that had to be taken to keep Tasmanians safe. It was the kind of step that not one of us could possibly have predicted would be a decision this Government would have to make just a few months earlier.

Closing schools and putting limitations on the operations of businesses and community groups were things that Labor worked constructively with the Government, other parties and crossbenchers on to make sure that those decisions were supported and that the right things were done to keep Tasmanians safe, understanding that those decisions were incredibly difficult to make but also incredibly burdensome and heartbreaking on Tasmania's population.

On that note, I recognise and pay respect to the 13 Tasmanians who lost their lives, and recognise the grief and loss of their families and loved ones. I also recognise the pain and loss suffered by many Tasmanians who are living here but also Tasmanians who are living on the mainland and overseas who were unable to travel during the pandemic because of travel restrictions and their own personal circumstances, perhaps even their own personal health conditions. It meant that they missed things like the birth of family members and, tragically, the death of loved ones and being able to spend time with loved ones who ultimately lost their lives not necessarily to COVID-19.

These restrictions had to be put in place for a long time. Those were tragedies and sacrifices that Tasmanians, other Australians and people around the globe made in order to keep Tasmania as safe as we could be during those early days of the pandemic. They were very daunting times for Tasmanians, Australians and for people all around the world.

The pandemic continues to rage on in parts of Europe and the United States in ways that we are not seeing in Australia, certainly not in Tasmania. We have seen second waves happen in Victoria and South Australia. It has been hard for us to watch our friends and families going through those second waves elsewhere in Australia. We have been very fortunate that the strong collaboration shown at the beginning of the pandemic led to decisions being made that meant Tasmania so far has not been subject to a second wave.

People internationally, I am told, are often in a sense of disbelief when they hear how low case numbers are in Australia. I heard of one person talking to a friend in the United States who explained that at one point there were fewer cases in New Zealand than there were in the White House. That person found that very hard to believe. I was texting some of my cousins in Lebanon recently and I told them we had gone 300 days at that time in Tasmania with no cases. They were surprised and shocked but also very encouraged by the success of our management of the pandemic.

That has been in no small part due to the Labor Party supporting those hard decisions. I have been proud to be part of Rebecca White's team who listened to our community, to represent the needs of our community constructively, to press for much of that change and to support those hard decisions.

The pandemic is not yet at an end. Obviously there are still restrictions in place across Tasmania and Australia. The risk is still there and that is why it is necessary for restrictions to

stay in place. The recovery has only just begun. There is still a long road to go in Australia's recovery, economically and socially, from the pandemic.

It is really vital that as we come out of the COVID-19 pandemic we start to think about what we want our future to look like and that we do all we can to not necessarily return to the old normal. The old normal was not good for many Tasmanians. Pre-COVID-19 we were in the grips of a housing crisis, which has significantly worsened during COVID-19. The health system was under enormous pressure before the COVID-19 pandemic, with wait lists among the highest they have ever been. We knew that people were waiting unacceptably long times for elective surgery. We knew that the ambulance service was under increasing pressure to service the community with an emergency response. We knew that the workforce in the health system was under enormous pressure prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. That pressure in the acute health services sector has been significantly impacted and has worsened during COVID-19.

We need to do all that we can, not only to continue to pay our respects to the people working in the public health system who managed that crisis along with other emergency services, but also to make sure that the supports are there for the acute health workforce who are still grappling with a health system that is under incredible pressure.

Added to the health crisis, we know that prior to the COVID-19 pandemic Tasmanians were already struggling to find work and to get the skills and training they needed to get a job. That jobs market has worsened during COVID-19. People are struggling to get a job. Our priority as we come out of the pandemic has to be employment. When people are in safe, secure and reliable jobs, that allows them a dignified life. When people are in a job that pays them well enough to support their family, to put food on the table and a roof over their head and not have to cobble together many short-term or casual jobs, or insecure jobs without security and conditions, then our communities prosper. That is when people can excel in their lives.

In Tasmania, right now, there are 14 job seekers for every job vacancy. That is a pretty daunting figure. It does not mean 14 applications for each vacant job. There are sometimes hundreds of applications for one position. Some people are under enormous and increasing competition to get into jobs. It is the kind of competition that we have not seen in a very long time in a developed country like Australia.

Even for people who are in work it is not necessarily easy either. Under-employment rates are very high in Tasmania, higher than national averages. This means people are counted in the statistics as working because they are not technically unemployed but they are what is called under-employed. This means they are putting together multiple jobs, or they might be in one job but with too few hours, or they might be working across a number of jobs which together still provide them with too few hours to pay their bills, pay their rent or mortgage, pay for their food, and their school fees and their health needs, and the basic costs of living and supporting their families. Tasmanian wages are nearly \$12 000 below the national average wage and our cost of living is rising very fast.

Labor's plan for jobs is that we would create 35 000 across all regions in Tasmania and across every sector of the workforce. We would do that by putting in place policies that would create jobs and the support to make sure that people can get the right training that they need and the right support that they need to get a foot in the door. We will increase skills and training

opportunities for Tasmanians, including increasing the number of apprenticeships and training places and making TAFE fees free across a range of sectors that are crying out for skilled workers; things like aged and disability care, hospitality, tourism and construction.

We will also create incentives for adult apprentices to be able to change careers, with a \$30 000 apprenticeship guarantee for older workers that will provide 500 apprenticeships for workers over 35, including workers like Emma Monk who featured in an article in *The Advocate* that I read recently. She lives in Devonport. She said that she has been obsessed with cars since she was a teenager. She was offered an automotive apprenticeship when she was 15 and first heading out into the workforce but for various reasons she was not able to take up that opportunity as her first job experience at 15. She has been working for nearly two decades in other industries, but always had that longing to get into the automotive industry, one she had since she was really young, with her love for cars.

Eventually, in 2017, she headed back to study and completed a Certificate I and Certificate II at TAFE in automotive studies. Now 36, she hit another brick wall. She applied for more than three dozen apprenticeships; she had a handful of interviews, but no apprenticeship or job in the industry. She said it was a real challenge turning up to interviews at 36, being the oldest by far, and nearly everyone else was pretty much just out of school. It would feel demoralising to apply for than more 30 apprenticeships with no success, despite having the training and the capacity, but also a bucketload of enthusiasm and determination to work in that industry and do that job.

It is stories like Emma's that have inspired Labor's second chance career program, which would provide adult career changes and apprenticeships, and for people like Emma a chance to do their dream job and change careers.

I wonder if workers are a true priority for this Government because in the last few weeks we have seen incredible meanness and cruelty - on a level I have not seen before - wielded towards Tasmanian workers, in particular frontline workers. We talked about it in question time today.

We have seen that the Government is going into battle with firefighters working in the Tasmanian Parks and Wildlife Service, who are owed between \$1000 and \$1500 each in backpay. It is just 13 workers, and a total backpay bill of about \$20 000 between them. But the Government does not want to pay, so they challenged it in the Tasmanian Industrial Commission and lost. In other words, the Industrial Commission said 'No, you have to pay that backpay to those workers.'

Instead of doing the right thing, accepting that loss in the Industrial Commission and paying the workers, they appealed it in the Supreme Court, and they lost again.

Now we have the Industrial Commission and the Supreme Court telling the Government it is wrong on this decision: pay the backpay, pay those workers. Again, instead of taking that loss and doing the right thing, the Government is now appealing to the Full Bench of the Supreme Court for a further legal avenue they can take in this state, over a bill of \$20 000 in backpay to firefighters who work in the Parks service and keep our national parks safe each summer.

I am not entirely sure what the legal fees would be to fight something like that all the way through the Industrial Commission, through the Supreme Court, and back in the Supreme Court to the Full Bench, but I would hazard a guess it is probably more than \$20 000. That is why I say it is mean-spiritedness in the extreme that they would rather fight those workers for a few thousand dollars in backpay, throwing at that fight thousands of dollars in legal fees, rather than do the right thing and pay those workers correctly.

Let us not forget that these are frontline workers - firefighters who are working in our Parks service to keep our national parks safe during our peak summer seasons. Believe it or not, the summer season they are arguing about is paid for, so the summer in which that backpay should have been paid was actually the summer of 2019-20, which was one of the worst fire seasons in the country's history - so it really is mean-spirited in the extreme that they are fighting every step of the way, rather than paying 13 workers their backpay entitlements. They are penny-pinching.

It does not stop with firefighters. They are also penny-pinching when it comes to security guards working in hotels providing quarantine to travellers returning to Tasmania. These people are doing an undoubtedly important job, but they are usually employed under casual working conditions.

Casual working conditions mean, of course, that many of the people doing these jobs were also working in other jobs - security elsewhere, driving jobs, hospitality, working in lots of other casualised industries and stringing together several jobs to make ends meet.

It is precisely these kinds of casualised working conditions that we know led to the second waves of COVID-19 in Victoria and South Australia. It has been shown, through investigations into those second waves, that quarantine workers working across multiple job sites were part of the things that led to those second waves.

Labor called on the Government last year to pay quarantine hotel security workers a full-time wage so they could do that important job that needs to be done to keep those quarantine hotels running, but they could earn enough money that they did not have to work casually across multiple jobs, potentially putting themselves and others at risk. Thankfully, on 6 December last year, the Premier committed to that, and we welcomed that announcement.

Now we discover that despite making that commitment on 6 December, those workers have not yet been paid those entitlements. The Premier told us that a deed to make the payment was signed on 25 January - nearly two months after his announcement that he would be paying those workers a full-time wage - but here we are in mid-March, and payments have still not been made to those workers.

In question time today, the Premier said that backpay will be paid, and will be backpaid to 8 January, not 6 December when the announcement was made. I am not sure why that is. It should be paid back to 6 December. Hopefully they will not fight that one through the courts like they have for the firefighters. Yes, that backpay needs to be paid, but the point of those incentive payments was to assist people back in December and January from having to work across multiple sites.

If people were not earning those extra wages in December and January when the risk was at a higher level than it is now, it defeats the purpose of having made that commitment back then to keep Tasmanians safe.

We have also seen recently that the Government has decided to stop paying a \$0.46c per kilometre travel allowance to paramedics. That does seem like a head-scratchingly cruel decision when the health system is already in crisis, and people are literally dying waiting for an ambulance.

We have seen 50 Hydro workers sacked with no notice very recently, and with no consultation with unions representing those workers - and who knows what the new TAFE announcements will mean for jobs? It is unclear, at this early stage, whether turning TAFE into a GBE will mean job cuts. Because there has been no consultation with unions and others in the TAFE sector around those decisions, it is hard to say.

Housing is another area where Tasmanians are being squeezed and pressured every day. There is no doubt we are in a housing crisis. We were in one before COVID-19, and the pandemic has made it worse. Just a few decades ago our house prices were below national averages, but now Hobart is the least affordable city in the country, and our median house prices are the third highest in the country, which is really quite shocking. Our cost of living is so high, and people who are renting are in extreme housing stress because Tasmanian wages do not match that inflated cost of living that has happened so quickly.

Housing stress is generally considered to be when you are paying 30 per cent or more of your income in rent or housing costs, but we are hearing that some renters are now paying upwards of 90 per cent of their income in rent, which is totally unaffordable and completely unsustainable. This is leading to increased homelessness and sleeping rough.

Homelessness is more visible now than it has ever been before. There have always been Tasmanians sleeping rough, couch surfing, sleeping in shelters or in other insecure accommodation, but it has never been as visible as it is now - increased numbers of people sleeping in the street, in tents pitched at the side of the road and in shelters, and the shelters are having to turn people away every day.

A few months ago I visited the Hobart Night Space and the day space to speak directly with people who were staying there and using those services. Many told me they had been homeless on and off for many years, but others were newly homeless and seeking support for the first time.

One man told me he was happy because he had recently been re-added to the housing waitlist, which we know is very long. He had been removed from it because of a debt he owed to Housing Tasmania from a previous tenancy. He told me he was not eligible to be re-added to the waitlist until he paid down at least 80 per cent of the debt owed.

I asked him what had he done to pay that debt, and he said that he got a loan from a payday lender. That shocked me because while he was relieved and felt really positive that he had been re-added to the wait list, and indeed it is good that he is being added to the waitlist and will hopefully be housed, he has done that by putting himself in a really precarious financial situation by taking out a loan from a payday lender. He was not sure how much interest he was

paying on the loan. I did ask him and he was not sure but I know that some payday lenders charge up to as much as 200 per cent interest.

It is shocking in and of itself that payday lenders operate in Tasmania and that is something I think really needs to be addressed, but the thing that shocked me in this conversation with this man was that I was left with this feeling I could not shake that it was an example of government policy keeping that payday lender in business. Without the loan, he could not be re-added to the housing waitlist so he felt he had no option other than to put himself in extreme financial hardship for the chance of a house. We know that the housing waitlist is long and growing and he may be waiting quite some time, but he was just one example of somebody I spoke to who was accessing services at the night space who I really felt for. The idea of having to put yourself in such financial hardship as going to a payday lender to pay down a government debt to be re-added to the housing waitlist is a situation that is really not enviable at all.

Now may be a good time to talk a little about the work of a new volunteer charity organisation I have been involved with. It is called Short of a Sheet, a small grassroots organisation that sprang up during the pandemic and is being run up by a small, dedicated group of volunteers who have all had periods of homelessness in their lives. They take donations and provide them directly to people who are sleeping rough or couch surfing or staying in shelters. My office has become a collection point and so have a few other Hobart businesses. They saw a gap in the systems of supports that currently exist for people who are sleeping rough or who are homeless so have taken it upon themselves and worked hard to fill that gap by providing material aid such as clothing, shoes, bedding, non-perishable foods and toiletries directly to people who need them. They are looking for new volunteers and also looking for a place to call home themselves. They need some warehouse space, so if anybody knows of somewhere or is available to volunteer, or wants to donate good quality used clothing, bedding or shoes, get in touch with me or with Short of a Sheet directly on Facebook.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I realise that I do not have much time left so I am going to skip over some of what I was about to say and keep it for an adjournment contribution at a later time.

I will conclude my contribution today by expressing my concern for the Morrison Government's decision to abolish the Family Court and amalgamate it into the Federal Circuit Court. It was a long-rumoured threat that the federal government had made that they were going to be looking at removing the Family Court from the system of federal courts and amalgamate it into the Federal Court. It risks doing serious damage to some of the most vulnerable people in our community. The Family Court and the Federal Circuit Court are already chronically underfunded and overburdened. The decision to collapse them into one jurisdiction will not do anything to address that underfunding and that overburdened condition that those courts are already working under.

But more worryingly, getting rid of the Family Court runs a very serious risk of undermining decades of specialist work done to protect vulnerable families and people, sometimes at the most stressful time of their lives. The Family Court systems deals with divorce and custody issues. Nobody goes through divorce or negotiating custody issues easily. It is often the most stressful and worrying time in a family's life. The Family Court, no doubt, has its own issues of underfunding and problems in terms of the volume of work under which they find themselves but losing a layer of courts which can work exclusively and specifically with families who are sometimes going through the hardest times of their lives - cases are

increasingly involving family violence and child abuse issues where specialist skills and attention are a vital component of the court system - can only be a retrograde step and can only work to put people at greater risk at a time when they need the greatest protection.

The Family Court has been around since 1975 when it was started by Gough Whitlam and it is a Labor legacy that I think we have a lot to be thankful for. Abolition of the Family Court will not only trash this legacy but also present very real risks to women and children in particular. I believe the federal government needs to listen to the hundreds of people including lawyers across the country who oppose this radically misconceived plan and reconsider the plan to abolish the Family Court and amalgamate it into the Federal Circuit Court and retain a standalone family court system in Australia.

[5.26 p.m.]

Mr TUCKER (Lyons) - Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise today to speak in strong support of the Premier's Address. A little over two years ago I was elected to this House and in the first year I witnessed 12 months of the most successful economic growth that Tasmania has enjoyed for generations. We went from being in recession in 2012-13 under Labor and the Greens to rebuilding the Tasmanian economy from a basket case to the most successful and confident jurisdiction in Australia. It was blue skies into the distance. What could go wrong, Mr Deputy Speaker? Then came the second 12-month period when the COVID-19 pandemic struck and it was simply unprecedented. We were quite literally in uncharted waters with no rule book and no end in sight as 25 000 Tasmanians lost their jobs, businesses closed and hundreds of thousands of people died around the world.

About a month before the pandemic struck, Peter Gutwein became Tasmania's forty-sixth premier and everybody I talked to in the community said he was fortuitously the right man at the right time to take on this enormous challenge. The Premier achieved this with quite a simple and honest approach. He fronted a publicly broadcast media conference every day for months and simply levelled with Tasmanians about the current situations and the challenges we all faced together - the cold, hard facts of what we faced. He was blunt and honest. Tasmanians respected that. The Premier promised to keep Tasmanians safe; he delivered. The Premier promised to protect Tasmanians from interstate hotspots if they could threaten Tasmania; he delivered. The Premier promised an infrastructure and jobs package to help Tasmanians recover jobs and confidence; he delivered. The Premier promised to lead a compassionate government and he delivered the most generous economic and social support package in the country.

In the past two years I have driven more than 140 000 kilometres around the massive Lyons electorate and I have spoken to thousands of regional Tasmanians. In many ways today, March 2021 represents a crossroads in Tasmania's history and a future as we emerge from a pandemic and enter an election year. I can visualise this crossroads quite clearly. I look down one sidetrack and see an overgrown, weed-stricken road that weaves down through the scrub to a gate and on that gate it says, 'Stop. Tasmania is closed for business. Forestry is closed. Mining is closed. Agriculture is closed'. It says, 'No jobs here but illegitimate glow worms are welcome'.

I can see why not many people have taken to using this track because it is a dead-end black tunnel. The other track on the left is in total disrepair. Pot holes and ruts everywhere caused by leadership squabbles, thought bubbles and no alternative budget. This track could easily be renamed 'Memory Lane' because it was lined with sacked nurses, sacked police

officers, disused hospital beds ripped out of wards, and despondent regional communities trying to save 21 schools from closure. At the end of Memory Lane is a sign that reads 'Labor-Greens government 2010-14'. The track then goes off on a cliff named 'Recession'.

I return to the crossroads and look straight ahead. There is a fantastic highway leading to the horizon which has clearly been upgraded to a national standard. The first sign I see is 'Welcome to Highway One State of the State. Safe driving and beware of jobs and opportunities ahead dawn to dusk and dusk to dawn'. The Highway One State of the State is very busy indeed; trucks, campervans, buses everywhere. There is an optimism in the air. There is a sense of purpose and direction. I look to one side and I see paddocks full of sheep, cattle, irrigated crops and happy farmers. We know that Tasmania's primary industries have been a shining light through the pandemic. Our healthy, clean produce is even more sought after and our farmers have never been more confident. The Government has set an ambitious goal of growing the value of Tasmanian agriculture to \$10 billion by 2050. We are on target.

On the other side of the road I see schools being built, new police stations, new ambulance stations, new family and affordable houses, and new hospitals. I then pass a port and I see a renewable hydrogen plant being built to produce the world's cleanest fuel on the back of a state that is powered by 100 per cent renewable energy. What a great story to tell our children and grandkids in the future. You live in a state that is the world leader in renewables and pioneered the world's cleanest fuel. To think that within a decade most of the trucks, buses and even ships like the *Spirit of Tasmania* ferries will be powered by clean hydrogen. It is a remarkable vision.

As I said earlier, I have driven more than 140 000 kilometres around Lyons in the past two years and the confidence and team spirit in Tasmania is heartening after a tough year. From Sheffield to Perth, Longford, the Midlands and the great east coast there are jobs and opportunities everywhere. Places like New Norfolk are booming. There are 900 house blocks coming onto the market. Just over a week ago I dropped into Ashgrove Cheese at Elizabeth Town and caught up with Richard and Paul Bennett. What a great family and what a great business. Ashgrove employs more than 100 people and recently won five national awards in Sydney. They are building a new \$2.5 million shop and tourism centre, which opens in a few weeks.

There it is again, those words 'opportunity' and 'jobs'. People seem to realise what a great state we have in Tassie. It is fantastic to see former Tasmanians and their families returning to the state after they were forced out by the Labor-Greens recession.

While we are building record levels of affordable housing there is still a land shortage which is limiting supply and elevating home prices and rents. I thoroughly endorse the plan to give landowners a \$10 000 headworks holiday to encourage the release of 60 000 more housing lots that are currently on 5000 hectares of privately owned and undeveloped land.

PESRAC recommended a broader housing policy framework that looks at a full array of housing market issues across both the public and private sectors, to drive practical actions and deliver more sustainable housing market outcomes across Tasmania for all Tasmanians. This work will be commissioned immediately while we continue to take targeted actions to boost supply, support home ownership and put downward pressure on rents. We must build more houses even though Tasmania is building houses at a rate not seen in nearly a decade.

HomeBuilder has delivered with 1763 applications already conditionally approved by the State Revenue Office. In total in the 12 months to January there were 3538 new dwellings approved, the most approved in a quarter of a century. Landowners who wish to activate residential-zoned land that is not currently being developed will benefit from the \$10 million headworks holiday for new residential subdivisions. This includes up to \$5000 per residential lot for power and up to \$5000 per residential lot for water and sewerage infrastructure. We also know that Tasmanians are seeking different types of housing yet current planning settings do not cater well for infill development in our cities and towns, where services and transport are already developed.

To address this need we will finalise an apartment code to establish appropriate permitted and discretionary assessment pathways for medium-density residential development to provide certainty, consistency and transparency for developers, councils and the community to get these developments going sooner. The code will make it easier, faster and simpler to build infill medium density apartments to meet demand near existing transport routes and services.

Complementing this we are also providing a no-permit-required pathway for landowners to construct ancillary dwellings like granny flats on their properties. To help meet demand for rental properties, the first 250 new ancillary dwellings that are made available for long-term rental of more than two years will receive a \$10 000 payment. These changes will make it easier, faster and simpler to build and meet demand and put downward pressure on rents in Tasmania. In terms of social housing we have added 1138 more long-term homes and supported accommodation places for applicants on the social housing register since coming to Government, with a further 764 social houses currently being contracted.

The Premier's Address sets the blueprint for the next six years and beyond. It is Tasmania's roadmap to recovery, prosperity and inclusion. It is supported by a decade-long pipeline of infrastructure. A feature of the past year has been the ability of the Premier and his leadership team to adjust and pivot to each challenge and stay the journey on a record \$5 billion infrastructure spend to underpin the economy and jobs. The economy always sounds like a dry topic but I believe Tasmanians get the economic argument. If the economy is strong there are more people in work and there is more money to invest in health, housing and education which will underpin our future.

A few examples of this in Lyons are the \$40 million in the Budget for the new Brighton High School, \$4.5 million to complete the New Norfolk police station, and \$24.4 million on regional health facilities. I noticed the other day that work has already started on the new \$5 million Longford police station. If we continue to keep our kids at school longer, give them better skills and training they will be better placed to grasp these jobs and opportunities of the future.

Tasmania's unemployment rate is now the lowest in the country. There are more people employed now than pre-pandemic. Unlike the prophets of doom opposite, Tasmania can see that our plan is working. People are sick and tired of Labor talking down the economy when the facts show that 22 000 more Tasmanians have been employed since we came to Government. We are leading the nation in many areas. Pleasingly, business investment grew 8.2 per cent in the latest quarter. To help reactivate some stalled commercial construction projects, a \$30 million building and construction support loan scheme will be established which was a recommendation of the PESRAC Committee. We appreciate that not everyone is out of the woods, especially those reliant on overseas travel, and those businesses will need our

ongoing support, but the overwhelming sentiment is that Tasmania is the safest place on Earth at the moment and life is fairly normal.

To support Tasmania's world-class tourism industry a \$4 million support package will be used to support critical regional visitor attractions and businesses. There will also be assistance to travel agents and an aggressive winter campaign by Tourism Tasmania to make the most of cheaper air and sea travel.

The Government has also listened to Tasmanians concerned about the cost of living pressure and calls to modernise our land tax system, which has been impacted by surge in the property market. While, as a share of total state revenue, land tax in Tasmania is the lowest with Western Australia of all the states, there remains a need to adjust our land tax thresholds and the Premier announced that we will reset the land tax thresholds to reflect today's strong property market. We will double the land value at which land tax becomes payable from \$25 000 to \$50 000 and we will increase the maximum land value threshold by \$50 000 from \$350 000 to \$400 000. These changes will save around 70 000 Tasmanians up to \$613 in their land tax bill. It will also mean an additional 4100 landowners will now pay no land tax in the year, putting downward pressure on the need for rental increases to be passed on. To assist landlords with land tax liabilities, we will also halve the premium rate of interest charged on unpaid tax from 8 per cent to 4 per cent and we will allow for land tax bills over \$500 to be paid by three instalments over the year.

The past 12 months have also been particularly tough on our children and teaching staff who have adapted to shut-down schooling from home and then returning from COVID-19 limitations. The Government, under Education minister Jeremy Rockliff, has made boosting staff a priority, with an additional 269 full-time equivalent teachers and 250 full-time teacher assistants since we entered government.

The pandemic has also impacted on many people in ways never imagined and there is a clear challenge in the mental health area. While we are rolling out a \$120 million plan for new facilities, additional staff and more support for the community sector, we know there is more to do. Over the next few years we will deliver significant reform arising from the Tasmanian Mental Health Reform Program and reform agenda for the alcohol and other drugs sector in Tasmania.

In last year's budget we invested \$4 million to commence phase 1 of implementing the Government response to the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) review report and recommendations. Late last year we also released Tasmania's strengthened mental health plan, Rethink 2020, which represents a shared approach to mental health services, planning and delivery in Tasmania. However there is more to do and we will invest a further \$41.2 million over four years to fully fund phases 1 and 2 of the Government's response to the CAMHS review. The review recommended large-scale changes in the way the CAMHS operates, including in its structure, practice and culture to better support our children and adolescents, with particular emphasis on those most vulnerable and in need of support.

We have also prioritised mental health and wellbeing in our schools, delivering an extra 80 full-time equivalent professional support staff, including school psychologists, social workers, nurses, and speech and language pathologists to support children and young people impacted by trauma. We now have support and wellbeing teams established in every school. We will further strengthen the supports already in place by upskilling all school health nurses

with the latest youth medical health first aid training, with school nurses given the opportunity to undertake the specialised training later this year. We will also fund the wellbeing lead teacher and principal in every government school in Tasmania to undertake online professional learning focused on student mental health and trauma-informed approaches.

Tasmanians deserve a health system they can be proud of. Since coming to government we have grown our Health budget to \$9.8 billion, a 70 per cent increase since the last Labor-Greens budget, with 1500 additional full-time equivalent staff, over 800 new nurses, 230 more doctors, 170 more allied health professionals, and over 170 more full-time equivalent staff at Ambulance Tasmania. Pressure needs to be relieved from our emergency departments so that those most at risk can get the care they need when they need it. That is why we will make it even easier for Tasmanians to access medical care close to their home by working with the primary health sector with a \$3 million support and encouragement program for primary health services and local GPs to provide after-hours services for their local communities.

This will complement other initiatives, including the community rapid response and secondary triage and, subject to consultation with the primary care sector, we intend to have these incentives in place by the end of June this year. We will build on our 50 per cent increase in Ambulance Tasmania staff recruited since 2014, recruiting two new paramedic crews with an additional 12 full-time equivalents each and new vehicles to support increased access to ambulance services in the greater Hobart and Launceston areas.

We also know that oral health waiting lists have increased over the last 12 months and as a result of COVID-19 due to the inability of practitioners to conduct appointments and a reduced availability of dental students from interstate due to lockdowns and border closures. To support more Tasmanians to get the care they need sooner, we will be providing a funding injection of \$5 million in addition to this financial year's \$1 million boost which will deliver 20 000 additional dental appointments for public patients across emergency, general care and denture clinics.

We often talk about jobs and tradies and I fully support the move to turbo-charge TasTAFE and make it an independent government business with the autonomy and workforce flexibility to deliver the training and skills our booming economy needs. PESRAC identified the need for our training provider, TasTAFE, to meet the needs of a generation of young people and an influx of jobseekers who need to quickly upskill and reskill to move across sectors as we recover from the structural impacts of COVID-19.

Our construction sector has a pipeline of work in front of it that cannot be met by our existing workforce and our plan is to deliver more apprentices and trainees and home-grown Tasmanian tradies. PESRAC points strongly to the critical role of skills in building recovery and TasTAFE's central role is this. However, they are of the view that TasTAFE must be given the autonomy and workforce flexibility to continuously align its training offering with our evolving workforce needs.

We have worked hard to improve the outcomes from TasTAFE and great steps have been made but without further change and intervention, the single largest risk we face in terms of our recovery is the ability of our major training provider to train enough people quickly. The consultation by PESRAC tells us there was overwhelming support for improving and investing

in TasTAFE as the public provider and creating the operational flexibility TasTAFE needs to match the needs of business.

Across our business and industry sectors which are creating employment pathways and providing jobs for Tasmanians, the message was loud and clear. We need a public skills and training provider that is fit for purpose, that is industry specific and that offers training specific to the outcomes required, a provider that looks and operates more like the businesses it serves. That is why we agree with PESRAC's recommendation that TasTAFE must have the autonomy and the workforce flexibility it needs to continuously align its training offering with evolving workforce needs, and the financial capacity and the flexibility to invest in and manage infrastructure best suited to deliver contemporary training. Under this model of TasTAFE, the public will have a clear view of its charter, aligning into government priorities to address industry and business needs as they emerge.

It is time to take action and build a bolder, better TasTAFE with a smart approach to delivering hands-on training through courses that best equip Tasmanians to gain a job, removing material barriers, and enabling greater participation and skills training in the workforce.

I am delighted that a key recommendation of PESRAC - to establish a local jobs network - will be adopted. It is one thing to create jobs, but it is an equally tough challenge to match the right people to these jobs. I have seen the success of the Sorell jobs hub.

The Premier's announcement in this area includes establishing a job-ready fund of \$2 million to help jobseekers gain essential tools they need to get a job, such as a white card licence, working with vulnerable people checks, boots, protective clothing, equipment or a toolbox, and expanding our Area Connect service to get more people to work, training or education where no easy transport options exist.

We will invest \$3.2 million and expand the current transport services to 16 local government areas, up from six, and fund a \$400 000 workers connect portal, providing Tasmanian businesses and jobseekers with information about local jobs, as well as programs and available support services.

We will deliver a regional job show - an events program with \$200 000 available to showcase local employment and industry opportunities, in partnership with regional job hubs and community groups. We will expand our successful job-matching service with an additional \$2.4 million to place more jobseekers with local employment vacancies, and introduce a Tasmanian employer bonus, incentivising employers to take on long-term, unemployed jobseekers.

In coordination with federal government programs, we will invest \$6.5 million over two years to help employers take on jobseekers who have experience and skills but need a fair go, with a \$6500 incentive to those employers.

One of the fastest growing industries in Tasmania are the aged care and disability support sectors, and the skills pipeline for these sectors was disproportionately affected during COVID-19. We will invest \$3 million to fund an additional 600 training places in Certificate III in Individual Support, which is a crucial qualification staff need to work in these sectors.

The successful SKILL UP initiative will also be extended for a further 12 months, with a \$1 million investment to continue to provide free training for those hardest hit by COVID-19, delivering more new entrants into the job market by upskilling jobseekers or those wanting to retrain in key areas.

To safeguard our disadvantaged youth from the ongoing fallout of COVID-19, we will invest \$850 000 in the Youth Navigators project for the next 12 months. This will see a youth employment alliance formed between the community organisations to deliver triage services specifically tailored to young people, including one-on-one guided support to enter the job market. These projects will be managed by our new jobs and participation unit in Skills Tasmania, which will also oversee the establishment of the Jobs Tasmania local networks, helping to ensure Tasmanians can access opportunities in their local communities and that they are trained and ready for work. It is often said that the best way to get people off JobSeeker is to get them a job.

The success of the Tasmanian economy will largely be measured by bringing entire communities along on the journey. We do not want anyone left behind if they want to jump on board and have a go.

On a personal note, I am heartened by the Premier's commitment to meet peak palliative care groups in the community, with a view to funding expanded palliative care services in the August Budget.

I recently met with Barb Baker from the Friends of the Northern Hospice group, who has been campaigning on this for many years. During the debate on the voluntary assisted dying bill, I expressed my concern that there also needed to be a gold medal palliative care system if VAD were going to be legislated so that Tasmanians had genuine end-of-life choices.

Madam Speaker, on behalf of the residents of Lyons I also add my sincere thanks, best wishes and admiration to our first responders - hospital staff, medical volunteers and those people in the public service who went above and beyond during the past year to keep us all safe. There is still plenty of work remaining as the vaccines roll out during the year. Please know that your dedication and professionalism is deeply appreciated by all Tasmanians.

Members - Hear, hear.

Mr TUCKER - The Premier, Peter Gutwein, has delivered his 2021 state of the state address, and proven with his words and deeds that being a compassionate government and a good economic manager are not mutually exclusive concepts. He is a premier who leads a government committed to supporting all Tasmanians. I am proud to be a member of his team and I commend his Address to the House.

[5.56 p.m.]

Ms STANDEN (Franklin) - Madam Speaker, in the short time before the House rises, I begin my response to the Premier's Address.

It is hard to believe I have been in this place for three years, and for two of those years I have been in the shadow portfolios of Housing, Climate Change, Environment and Parks, and Heritage. The last year has been an extraordinarily busy one, but we have all changed our way

of working. I have been trying to work closely with people within the housing sector and right across the community sector, working more closely than ever with my constituents, and those who are trying to support people on the ground during an extraordinarily stressful year.

I commend Tasmanians on pulling together in this difficult time throughout COVID-19 and as we move into recovery, and I thank the members of PESRAC for their work on delivering a roadmap to recovery. All PESRAC members are eminent Tasmanians who have made a wonderful contribution in various sectors before coming to that task. People like Kym Goodes, who has spent years in Health and Human Services, deeply understand the nature of inequality across Tasmania.

Even people like Leanne McLean, the Commissioner for Children and Young People, who recently put out an opinion piece talking about the impact of income supports, and the worrying risk of plunging families and children back into poverty as those income supports are withdrawn. All of those issues are at top of my mind as I contemplate the year in the rear-vision mirror and the year ahead.

In terms of housing affordability and availability, particularly in Hobart, but right across the state, it has never been more evident to me that the housing crisis that existed prior to COVID-19 is getting worse.

It is self-evident, but access to stable, safe and affordable housing is a vital first step towards personal health and wellbeing. Having a home is not just about having a roof over your head; it is essential to everything we value in life, the foundation that provides a base on which to build or to rebuild our lives.

That is why it is so concerning that this housing crisis is getting deeper and deeper. That is why Tasmanian Labor moved successfully to establish the Select Committee on Housing Affordability in the middle of 2019, which delivered a comprehensive report early in 2020, with 61 recommendations comprising a blueprint for tackling this entrenched and worrying problem.

That is why it was so disappointing when, six months later, the Minister for Housing tabled the Government's response to that report, basically brushing those 61 recommendations aside.

Madam Speaker, to state the obvious, housing does end homelessness, but despite an awareness of a deepening housing crisis, investment over the past decade has failed to arrest an escalating need, resulting in a current estimated shortfall of 11 400 social homes across Tasmania. Sadly, last year's federal budget missed the opportunity to invest further in social housing as essential infrastructure, which not only would have built homes but also created construction jobs. Prioritising homes over roads and bridges would have been a significant and welcome investment in this climate. According to outdated official statistics from the 2016 census, 130 or 8 per cent of the -

Debate adjourned.

ADJOURNMENT

Liberal Party - Allegations of Misogyny

[6.00 p.m.]

Ms O'CONNOR (Clark - Leader of the Greens) - Madam Speaker, on Monday this week the women and girls of Australia marched for justice. On the streets outside parliaments we channelled our incandescent rage over the sexism, misogyny and rape culture so entrenched in this nation's culture, so obvious in the nation's capital, so diminished, almost dismissed by men in power, by our Prime Minister. Our sadness and rage have not subsided. Our resolve to force change is like steel.

For those left wondering why Scott Morrison has been found so tragically lacking and absent for women and girls of Australia, just have a look at the culture inside his Government, indeed inside the Liberal Party. The alleged rape of Brittany Higgins by a Liberal staffer, the accusations of historical rape levelled against the nation's highest law officer, Christian Porter, the Prime Minister and men in his Cabinet who turn their backs on women in the Chamber as they rise to speak, a party that not only excuses sexism and misogyny but cultivates and nurtures it.

The latest story of misogyny out of Canberra was on the ABC online today. It sure rang some bells for me personally and for our senior adviser, Alice Giblin. I will quote from that story now:

Three women who spoke on condition of anonymity to the ABC due to fears of career repercussions say during their time in Canberra they witnessed several instances of men behaving badly and being moved to different roles to avoid scrutiny. But they allege one staff member in particular, who is currently employed by a Coalition minister, was known for repeatedly making inappropriate comments to and about women when he was employed in a previous role. 'I haven't met anyone under the age of 70 who held such terrible views about women', one of the women said.

The article does not name this Liberal ministerial office male staff member but I have joined the dots and I will. I know who this sexist pig of a man is. It is former Hodgman Government media adviser Andrew Hudgson, who was hired after he left Senator Cash's office, by former premier Will Hodgman, and who now, as I understand it, works in the office of the Assistant Treasurer and Minister for Housing, Michael Sukkar. That is who these women are referring to.

I have a personal story to tell about a vile insult Mr Hudgson directed at me which was heard by Alice Giblin during a media interview on the lawns of parliament on 1 February 2019. As he and his colleagues walked across the lawns not far from us Mr Hudgson called me a 'meth-head c-u-n-t'. Imagine, Madam Speaker, hating women so much that you would say that audibly about a woman you do not know who also happens to be an elected representative. I was doing an interview at the time and did not hear the insult, but Alice did. I believed her without question because in the decade I have worked with Alice she has always been honest with me. Alice is steadfast and true. Others who were with Mr Hudgson at the time heard it too. We know this; we have had it confirmed.

Alice made detailed notes of her recollections and reported this incident to the then Premier's office. Later that afternoon premier Hodgman's then chief of staff told Alice he had asked Mr Hudgson if the allegation was true and he had denied it. The chief of staff said, 'Well, you can see how it's a tough position. You're saying one thing and he's saying it didn't happen.' A male Liberal staffer was believed over a female Greens staffer. The then chief of staff tried to convince Alice that no more could be done because it was a 'he said, she said' scenario. We have heard that one before.

Alice was adamant and persisted to the point that the matter was subsequently referred to DPAC for investigation. In the end Alice was not believed. I received a letter from the Premier on 14 February that said:

Dear Ms O'Connor

I write further to my letter of 4 February 2019 in which I advise that I had authorised a formal investigation into your allegations against Mr Andrew Hudgson in my office. The investigator has now completed his investigation and provided his report and findings to me. I can confirm that the investigation process is founded in the principles of procedural fairness.

In conclusion he says:

With respect to the specific allegation that Mr Hudgson yelled out and directed profanities towards you, the investigator has found the allegation to be not substantiated and that Mr Hudgson did not yell out or direct profanities towards you.

The Premier concludes:

Now that an independent and appropriate investigation has been conducted and concluded, I advise that it is my intention to take no further action in relation to this letter.

So, Madam Speaker, here we are. Andrew Hudgson's story was believed and to this day we have not seen that DPAC report. He went on to work for the Morrison Government. It reminds me a bit of the Catholic Church of old, shuffling people around but keeping them on the books. Now the Canberra Press Gallery is hearing and believing women who worked with Mr Hudgson who tell a similar tale of a palpable hatred of women. It just reaffirms the truth to me of what happened on parliament's lawns two years ago.

The take-home from this is that Mr Hudgson has been protected by the Liberal Party, state and federal. He left here and went on to insult and denigrate other women in their workplaces and he is still employed today. This is the standard our current Prime Minister walks past because it becomes clearer by the day that he accepts it. The women and girls of Australia have long memories, Mr Morrison. We see you, we hear you and we believe you are a big part of the problem.

Endometriosis Awareness Month

[6.07 p.m.]

Ms O'BYRNE (Bass - Deputy Leader of the Opposition) - Madam Speaker, I rise to raise the issue of Endometriosis Awareness Month. Over the last few weeks we have talked a lot about the rights of women and the systemic nature of sexism. I do not know how many years I have been talking about it and I hope there will come a time when we will not have to, but I want to focus on other less obvious ways that this discrimination plays out in women's lives and particularly in women's health care.

Endometriosis is a common disease in which the tissue that is similar to the lining of the womb grows outside in other parts of the body. It is a chronic and debilitating condition that affects 200 million women worldwide and one in nine Australian women. It can cause chronic pelvic pain, bowel and bladder dysfunction, and pain during sex. Painful symptoms can often make it hard for women to work or to study, which has long-term socioeconomic impacts for women.

How is endometriosis treatment gendered? Unfortunately, the reality is that women with endometriosis can wait up to 10 years for a diagnosis. Why? Because it is about women and it is about periods. Normalisation of period pain means women often wait two to three years from the onset of symptoms before seeking medical help. Public awareness of endometriosis and its symptoms are low and this explains why only 38 per cent of women with suspected endometriosis present to their GP each year. Even if a woman does present to her GP with symptoms, a lack of education of GPs and general gynaecologists can result in late referrals and missed diagnosis which you can add more than two years to a woman's diagnosis journey.

The conversation covered this delay and they put it well. If a man reported to his general practitioner with severe pelvic pain he would likely be sent for tests immediately. That is because there probably is not a 'normal' underlying reason for his pain, but in cases of endometriosis pelvic pain can be confused with menstrual cramps, resulting in delays for further tests. Women are often told to take some Panadol or some other painkillers, just go for a walk, or that it is completely normal. It is not. We should not stand by when the words, 'It's just being part of being a woman' are used because it is not.

In the diagnosis and treatment of endometriosis, gender, race and socioeconomic biases come into play. If you do manage to get a diagnosis it is another form of healthcare that is more readily available only to those who can afford it. If you can afford private healthcare then you can access specialist gynaecologists quickly but wait times for that are growing. This is because to diagnose the condition, lesions need to be surgically removed and analysed by a pathologist. The surgery required is Category 3 and that surgery list is so horribly long, the wait times mean that women who can afford it tend to access private hospitals for endometrial surgery and do so more for this than for other diseases. Women who cannot afford it simply do not go and remain in pain.

Sixty-five per cent of endometriosis hospitalisations in Australia are either self-funded or funded by private health care. Even with private health care, women with endometriosis pay on average \$3670 a year in out-of-pocket expenses for tests, treatment and surgeries. Disturbingly, despite having a similar disease incidence, women of colour are less likely to be

diagnosed than Caucasians and 1.6 times less likely to be admitted to hospital for endometriosis.

There is now a national action plan for endometriosis which outlines a roadmap to overcome many of these diagnostic hurdles. The annual cost of endometriosis in Australia is \$7.4 billion. The current research investment, however, is \$14.5 million which is only 0.2 per cent of that cost.

Olivia Hicks is our Tasmanian ambassador. I want to take this time to commend her on her work to raise awareness in Tasmania. There are a few ways to get involved - wear yellow for endometriosis awareness. Due to COVID-19 the major high tea fundraisers have been put on hold, so maybe host your own high tea and donate the funds. Attend one of the Endo Enlighten events. The sites around the state are lit yellow starting this week. Perhaps we could light up the Tasmanian Parliament yellow for endo awareness.

There is a screening at the State Cinema on the 25 March for the premier of *Endo Girl*, which is written and produced by Sophia Bender. If you are one of the one in nine women in Australia impacted, do not accept living in pain as a normal thing, seek help. The rest of us must be good allies to those who live with endo. Along with the physical struggles that come with endo, the disease also impacts mental health and financial and relationship problems are also extremely common.

Only by highlighting the nature of this condition and the gendered response can we hope to raise awareness and support research. One in nine Australian women and those who care for them and respect them, deserve that.

From the Shadows Project Claremont Men's Shed

[6.12 p.m.]

Ms ARCHER (Clark - Attorney-General) - Madam Speaker, I rise to raise a couple of electorate matters as well as some portfolio matters. First, in relation to a wonderful development, From the Shadows project, in Hobart. My obvious interest in that is not only as a local member but also as Minister for the Arts and Heritage, having been involved in the Footsteps Towards Freedom bronze statues by Rowan Gillespie that are down on the waterfront just outside Macq01 Hotel.

In particular, I would like to recognise the impressive way in which this thoughtful and striking initiative connects the arts, tourism and historic heritage sectors. The From The Shadows project involves the creation and installation of four high-quality bronze statues commemorating the lives of female convicts and orphaned school children and recognises that some 15 000 convict women and free children arrived in Tasmania, then known as Van Diemens Land from 1803 to 1853. This initiative continues the story that started with the hugely successful Footsteps Towards Freedom statues at the docks on Hobart's historic waterfront, which were created by internationally renowned Irish sculpture, Rowan Gillespie, and unveiled by the Irish President and the Governor of Tasmania in 2017. It does not seem that long ago.

The Hobart waterfront statues create a powerful focal point for engaging both locals and visitors in the story of convict women and their children transported to Tasmania. The first of four statues within the From The Shadows Project - a slightly different project team - was recently installed outside the World Heritage Cascade Female Factory site in South Hobart. I was delighted to be part of the unveiling ceremony as Minister for the Arts and Heritage. In my role as Heritage minister I am responsible for the Port Arthur Historic Site Management Authority, which oversees the management of the Cascade Female Factory. The statue is modelled on Bridie, a descendent of Martha Gregory who was transported to Tasmania from England for seven years for stealing, and there is a striking resemblance. The statue has been designed to represent the struggles of convict women, particularly mothers, bringing their lives and stories out of the shadows and weaving them into Hobart's historic and heritage landscape.

I have been a long-standing and proud supporter of this initiative, and I was pleased that our Government contributed to the funding for both projects. Our built heritage is a major drawcard for visitors to the state. The new statues will also generate heritage tourism opportunities which will undoubtedly be beneficial to all our convict sites.

I acknowledge the dedication and commitment of those involved in the project. It is entirely a voluntary not-for-profit organisation which was established for the sole purpose of raising funds for the creation, installation and maintenance of these beautiful and thought-provoking statues. I urge people to have a look at either the Maq01 ones or the new one of the pregnant woman outside the Cascade Female Factory, which is a beautiful sculpture.

Congratulations to Dr Dianne Snowden AM, Bob Gordon and their committee, David Boon - different David Boon but a great name - Lorraine Davidson, Ros Escott, Jennifer Fitzpatrick, Sandra Lowe and Darryl Massie. They have made this project a real success. There are also some statues of children going in at another appropriate location.

I also congratulate the Claremont Men's Shed. A number of members for Clark and local government representatives were present at the official ribbon cutting, including me and Senator Eric Abetz. Two of us did the unveiling because of the significant state and federal funding. The project was made possible with a contribution of a \$50 000 grant which I was able to secure from the Community Infrastructure Fund back in 2017. That is how long the project took. There was \$190 000 contribution from the federal government.

It has a nice community aspect. The land on which the shed operates is a Glenorchy City Council-managed site near Claremont Girl Guides on the Claremont Green, opposite the Claremont shopping village. It is a wonderful location. Securing that location took some time. There were a few issues with finding a location. There was a temporary structure on an old service station near the bottle shop, which they out-grew in no time. It was wonderful that the Claremont Men's Shed was able to be built with not only all tiers of government being involved but many local businesses and Claremont Rotary contributing to the project.

These sheds are more than a physical location. Apart from the friendship and community service men's sheds bring, there are significant mental and physical health benefits from being involved, especially for those feeling physically or emotionally isolated.

Some of them are men's sheds, some are community sheds. It is entirely up to the local community as to what they decide to do, but it is important that men in particular have a place to go to and share their thoughts and feelings as they age. Men are probably not as good as

women at sharing their thoughts and feelings. I am thinking of an older generation. We can all identify that with some of the older gentlemen in our lives.

The Tasmanian Men's Shed Association was formed in 2009. It is the peak body representing sheds across Tasmania, recognising the importance for all Tasmanians to share, collaborate and engage with each other and their wider communities.

There are dedicated members of the Claremont Men's Shed. It is a much safer environment now. They have wonderful support. Many members will share in the benefits of the camaraderie, the mentorship and even the friendships and social outlet that the men's shed will bring that local community and many local communities around this state.

Tasmanian Community Fund

[6.19 p.m.]

Ms BUTLER (Lyons) - Madam Speaker, I rise on the adjournment to pay my respects to the Tasmanian Community Fund, which finally had the opportunity to celebrate its 21st birthday at a reception at Government House last week.

Established in 1999 from the proceeds of the sale of a community asset, the Trust Bank, the Tasmanian Community Fund is a Jim Bacon legacy and since 2000 the board has assessed more than 9250 applications for funding, bequesting more than \$487 million. The board has awarded more than \$111 million in grants to more than 3000 projects. The amount of money allocated and the number and variety of successful projects make the fund a significant resource for Tasmanian community organisations. The fund's operations are governed by the Tasmanian Community Fund Act 2005 and the fund operations were previously governed by the Trust Bank Sale Act 1999. The fund receives a reserved by law appropriation annually which is indexed to the consumer price index. In 2019-20 the appropriation was \$6.95 million. Under the act the Tasmanian Community Fund board has broad discretion to allocate funds as it sees fit, and it oversees the fund in the best interests of the community.

The Tasmanian Community Fund supports a wide range of projects and the current strategic direction of the fund is community wellbeing. Projects such as Connect42, formerly known as Chatter Matters, was funded by the Tasmanian Community Fund, bringing opportunities for building language and literacy transformation and connection as people leave prison and return to the community - connection with children, connection with others and connection with employment.

I will run through some of the other successful arts recipients the Tasmanian Community Fund has provided support to. Under the COVID-19 response round Support Connect and Rebuild, some of the successful projects to be awarded funds were the Australian Dental Health Foundation for Give a Smile, \$70 000; Life without Barriers, which was awarded nearly \$26 000 for its Garden to Gate program; Swansea Primary School, \$42 000 for the Swansea community bike and scooter pump track; Wide Angle Tasmania was awarded \$350 000 for Grit, showcasing the Tasmanian spirit on screen; and the Westerway Primary Early Learning nature play space run through Westerway Primary School was awarded \$32 266.

Under their strategic initiatives - these are the ones that are awarded \$100 000 and are funded projects from 2018 to 2020:

- Break O'Day Council received \$375 000 for a community wellbeing pilot project for the Break O'Day municipality.
- Colony 47 was provided \$500 000 for supporting youth mental health. That is an extremely important allocation of funding from the Tasmanian Community Fund because the situation with young Tasmanians with mental health problems is quite dire at the moment. It is very hard for them to access the assistance they require. That is just one example of how important the Tasmanian Community Fund is in that situation.
- The Women's Shelter Inc. also received \$235 000 for mentors in violence prevention projects.
- Diabetes Australia Tasmania was funded \$300 000 for telephone coaching to prevent diabetes in women with post-gestational diabetes.
- Jireh House was provided \$300 000 in 2018 for housing crisis support and accommodation expansion

We know that the Tasmanian Community Fund is extremely important to Tasmanians and making sure that funding is allocated fairly by a board. The Tasmanian Community Fund board has adopted a general principle that they represent the entire state so they cannot be accused of pork-barrelling, which we have seen quite a lot of at the moment from the people across the room. Two members are from southern Tasmania, one is from northern Tasmania and one member is from the north-west. Current board members are Ms Sally Drake, Mr Frank Barta, Mr Andrew McGregor, Mr Alexander McKenzie and Ms Michelle Swallow. I am pleased to hear that the Tasmanian Community Fund has incorporated an intern director program within their fund. That is a really good way to encourage people to get experience on boards and gain a good understanding of reading through all those projects which the Tasmanian Community Fund board members do regularly.

I congratulate the Tasmanian Community Fund on 21 years of supporting community.

Medical Cannabis Access Scheme

[6.25 p.m.]

Dr WOODRUFF (Franklin) - Madam Speaker, the Greens welcome the Premier's announcement yesterday of improvements to the Medical Cannabis Access Scheme in Tasmania. As a party we have been calling for meaningful access to medical cannabis for many years and we have worked with so many passionate Tasmanians on the journey to reach this goal. I want to especially acknowledge Lyn Cleaver and her son Jeremy, Dannielle Luttrell, John Reeves, Peter Fielding and many others who have shared their stories and fought tirelessly for this change.

The highly controlled Medical Cannabis Access Scheme we have had in Tasmania to date has been profoundly unjust. It has resisted the medical evidence of safety, it is focused on theoretical or small risks, and it has missed the opportunity to provide effective treatment for people who are living in daily extreme pain. Since the Medical Cannabis Access Scheme

started in 2017, scandalously only been 28 patients have been able to make it through to being considered, and just 17 of these were approved.

People struggling with chronic conditions, seizures and terminal illnesses have been forced to risk prosecution to access what is a known treatment now. GPs have needed to identify a relevant medical specialist who makes the application and that specialist has to apply on behalf of a patient to a secret panel in the Department of Health. Outrageously, there has been no transparency in that process and there is no avenue for appeal.

In 2018 state health ministers across Australia at Council of Australian Governments agreed to participate in a streamlined access system for medical cannabis within the federal Therapeutic Goods Administration. Michael Ferguson was the Health minister at the time and he chose to go against the medical evidence and against the sense and compassion that all the other states showed by refusing to allow Tasmanians to participate in the national scheme that every other Australian citizen was able to access. However, the Liberals have finally listened and it seems Tasmanians are now able to access medical cannabis through the national streamlined online application pathway administered by the TGA. GPs, it seems, will also be able to write prescriptions for medical cannabis, subject to TGA approval.

The Government needs to make sure at this point that there is a supply of quality and affordable medical cannabis products in Tasmania. We have heard of problems people have had in accessing them and in supporting local producers who want to supply a quality product to Tasmanians to use.

Madam Speaker, there is another aspect to this debate that the Liberals desperately need to address. We know cannabis prohibition has failed in Australia and around the world and countless thousands of people, including medical cannabis patients, have ended up with a criminal record simply for using a drug that causes very little harm. There has been an hysterical singling out of cannabis as a drug to criminalise and that has been entirely ideological. More and more countries around the world are realising the cost to their societies from that terribly damaging social experiment. It is well past time to legalise cannabis for personal use and that is happening worldwide - in the United States, Uruguay and Canada, and we have Mexico, Israel and Luxembourg also moving in that direction. Legalisation is the right approach.

We need a regulated market. It can provide the necessary health protections and would enable health warnings, advertising and sale restrictions. In 2017 the ACT government decriminalised personal cannabis use with some limitations. Their model was better than straight punitive prohibition but it still forces cannabis users to interact with the black market. That is why the Greens understand that we need to legalise cannabis and regulate it. The NSW Greens MP and drug law reform spokesperson Cate Faehrmann is going to bring a bill to legalise and regulate personal cannabis use in that state this year. The Tasmanian Government needs to start the conversation now about legalising and regulating the personal use of cannabis in Tasmania. It is well past time and the Greens will be backing any move by the state Government in this area fully and I am sure the vast majority of Tasmanians will be happy to see that day.

Tasmanian Truck Owners and Operators Association - Truck Run

[6.30 p.m.]

Mr SHELTON (Lyons - Minister for Local Government) - Madam Speaker, I rise this evening to pay tribute to the dedicated volunteers of the Tasmanian Truck Owners and Operators Association, the TOOAA, for the wonderful work they have done in raising \$25 000 for the Royal Flying Doctor Service through their annual truck run. Rob Bales, Ros Bonner, Julie Wise and the committee of the TOOAA organise the truck run annually and decided to name the recipient of their fundraiser for 2021 as the RFDS in Tasmania to acknowledge their sixtieth anniversary and service to Tasmania and to say thank you for their hard work and dedication to the people of Tasmania, especially those living in rural and remote areas.

This year's event was held on Sunday 14 March. The day started at the Glebe Gardens in Launceston at 10 a.m. with a procession of trucks and big rigs meeting and then driving through Launceston, Norwood and Young Town, then out through the old Midland Highway to Perth where they met up with trucks and various rigs that had travelled up from the south of the state.

More than 70 vehicles then proceeded from Perth to Longford, driving slowly down the main street, being welcomed by many families and excited children who were lining the streets. They ended their journey at the Longford Showgrounds where they parked their shiny and highly polished trucks and readied the vehicles and themselves for the gates to open to the public.

The day showcased many trucks and large vehicles from newly purchased rigs to vintage collectable trucks, vintage fire trucks, Tasmania Fire Service's new \$1.5 million snorkel vehicle which is based in Launceston, the RFDS flight simulator, the Woolnorth dental truck, and the UTAS mobile integrated learning engagement vehicle. There was also an appearance of Bob Imlat's rare 1984 W-model Kenworth truck, laden with \$700-worth of logs, which were later auctioned. Bob bought his truck brand-new in 1984 and drove it until he upgraded to a newer Kenworth four years later. He loved his first truck and was fortunate to buy it back at a repossession auction in 2005. He spent two years restoring it and for the past 15 years has used it solely for truck shows.

Entry to the show was by gold coin donation, with many families happy to hand over notes instead of coins for their payment. There was excellent support from the northern Midlands and Launceston-based businesses, resulting in over 350 prizes being donated for the ever-popular raffle. Patrons were entertained by music from DJ Sticks, setting the scene for dining from various food and beverage stalls scattered throughout the showgrounds.

Children were energised with a jumping castle and by the trucks all ready to be climbed in, on, over and under, coordinated by Rob, Ros and Julie and their volunteers from the TOOAA. A great day was had by all who attended and along with a large donation from the Tassie Hay Runners group, a huge sum of \$25 000 was donated to RFDS.

People involved in our trucking industry are some of the busiest people around but they are people who want to give back to their communities, people who want to contribute and help raise much needed funds for a valuable charity such as the RFDS. Without people such as Rob,

Ros and Julie, many community groups would struggle financially and for their hard work and commitment to give back we are most grateful.

International Women's Day - Events

[6.35 p.m.]

Ms DOW (Braddon) - Madam Speaker, it is my great pleasure to rise on the adjournment tonight and talk about some of the fabulous events that I attended across my electorate for International Women's Day last week. It was a busy week indeed and it began on Monday in the beautiful town of Strahan at the Strahan Primary School where there was an art exhibition organised by Anglicare titled 'What Women Can Do'. It was a fabulous exhibition which showcased the talents of our wonderful women on the west coast. I congratulate everybody who exhibited their work in the exhibition on that day. It was great to see so many locals interested in having a look at the works and coming along to celebrate.

It was my great pleasure to open that exhibition and it was a time to reflect on how life has changed over the years for the women of the west coast and the hardship they have endured over the years as well. They are very resilient, having endured lots of change. Many of them have lost their husbands and sons and family members to mining accidents or incidents at sea. They have endured much and I think back to the pioneering women of the west coast on the dairy farms at the line of the Abt Railway and other stories that were shared on that Monday in Strahan. There is great inspiration to be drawn from the courage and resilience of those women and it was wonderful to be part of this exhibition which showcased that and to celebrate with the local community.

I was back on the west coast again on Thursday at the Zeehan Study Hub where they held a morning tea for International Women's Day. It was a great relaxed informal event where we sat down and spoke with local women about all sorts of different things happening in the Zeehan community. It was great to get to know them a bit more on a one-to-one basis. I congratulate Nicky from the Study Hub in Zeehan for organising that event and for the Empowering Women initiatives she has undertaken over the last month on the west coast with local school girls as well. I was very pleased to work in partnership with Glow Cosmetics, who were very generous in their donation of excess stock they provided for the bags for local women to enjoy as part of this event. I thank them for that and highlight what a great series of initiatives have been undertaken on the west coast to celebrate International Women's Day over the course of the last week.

The third event I want to speak about was the Ignite women's breakfast which was held at Ulverstone on Wednesday morning. That was well attended by many members of the local community. I congratulate the great organising committee from Ignite Women Tasmania who did a fantastic job organising the event. We heard from the girls from Project O and other guest speakers and it was wonderfully catered for by La Mar Café. The morning was rounded out with a fabulous performance by Kitty Martini of *I am Woman*. It was a great event and I congratulate everyone involved.

The final event I want to mention was held on Friday of last week and that was hosted by the Burnie City Council. I acknowledge Amina Keygan who did a tremendous job as MC, and each of the women who were on the panel who shared their experiences and insights. That was another great event which was very well attended. I believe it was the most people they

have had attend that luncheon. I acknowledge that Mr Ellis was there as well and joined in the celebrations. It was a very enjoyable luncheon.

I congratulate Ignite Women, the Burnie City Council, Nicky and the team from the Study Hub in Zeehan, and Lyn and the team from Anglicare in Zeehan for getting behind these great events. There are others that took place across the coast and across the state throughout the course of last week but these were a few I had the great pleasure of attending and I acknowledge the work that went into organising them.

Belinda Hazell - Australian Awards for Excellence in Women's Leadership

[6.39 p.m.]

Mr BARNETT (Lyons - Minister for Primary Industries and Water) - Madam Speaker, tonight I rise to recognise Belinda Hazell. She has been named the Tasmanian award winner in the Australian Awards for Excellence in Women's Leadership. The awards for Excellence in Women's Leadership, run by Women and Leadership Australia, recognise the contribution of women at a state and national level to the advancement of gender equality across Australia, and recognise individual women who have improved the likelihood of other women within their field and endeavor having greater access to leadership equality.

Belinda Hazell exemplifies this. I have come to know Belinda since becoming Minister for Primary Industries and Water some years ago. She has a number of roles, including with the board of Rural Business Tasmania, to recently as president of the Tasmanian Women in Agriculture, where her leadership qualities are displayed repeatedly.

At the Tasmanian Women in Agriculture state conference in March 2018, Belinda, who was then the chair, raised her personal account of sexual harassment in the rural workplace. She has stood up for women at every stage. This resulted in Tasmanian Women in Agriculture surveying their stakeholder base to understand how prevalent sexual harassment was in the rural sector, and how Tasmanian employers address harassment in the rural sector.

It subsequently led to the Respect in the Workplace campaign, a joined initiative of Rural Business Tasmania and the Tasmanian Women in Agriculture that was funded through a Healthier, Safer and Productive Workplaces Grant provided by the WorkCover Tasmania board. I was there for the presentation. It was an excellent presentation and I congratulate Belinda and all those involved.

This is how Belinda was described by the awards, in part, at least:

Belinda's love for the land and how it is farmed has seen her become a leading advocate for the agricultural sector. She uses her positive attitude and tireless energy to enable women's voices to be heard and valued. This is demonstrated by her courage in speaking personally about sexual harassment in rural workplaces, which led to a Tasmanian campaign aimed at improving respect in rural workplaces. She believes that there are many issues impacting rural women that remain invisible until shared.

Belinda is the Emeritus Chair of the Tasmanian Women in Agriculture, an organisation that was founded in 1994 and now has 2500 women connected to its network.

Tas Women in Agriculture is just one organisation that Belinda has led that provides a platform for shared conversation. I enjoy working with Tasmanian Women in Agriculture and I congratulate Belinda.

In addition, I would like to pass on my congratulations to Graeme, Christine, Bart and Claire McCulloch from the Grenville Stud for selling their colt at the Inglis Melbourne premier sale a couple of weeks ago for a record \$550 000. I note that the Minister for Racing, Jane Howlett, has congratulated the McCulloch family on this outstanding result for the Grenville Stud, and of course the Tasmanian thoroughbred breeding industry.

The price sets a new record for a Tasmanian-bred horse sold at a yearling sale in Australia, and the price exceeds the \$500 000 attained by the Staverton breeder, Brooke Douglas, for her colt at the 27th Melbourne Premier sale, which was the highest price obtained for a yearling sale by a Tasmanian breeder. I understand the McCulloch's colt was purchased by the Hong Kong Jockey Club.

I pass on my hearty congratulations to the hardworking, passionate industry participants, the McCullochs and the members of their family and their team. It is great to see their hard work rewarded with an outstanding result.

The pure Tasmanian water, rich fertile soils and temperate climate, combined with the know-how of Tasmanian breeders, has seen a constant flow of success in recent years in the state's reputation as a nursery for future stars, and that has spread far and wide. As the Tasmanian economy has grown off the back of the state's burgeoning reputation for producing world-class food and drink and cultural events, so too does the rest of the world discover the previously well-kept secret of the high standard of the Tasmanian thoroughbred and breeding industry.

It is further demonstrated by the annual Magic Millions Tasmanian sale, with a record \$3.37 million traded on the day, and a new record average price of over \$35 000. Fantastic results. This further demonstrates that Tasmanian breeders continue to produce high-quality horses for local, interstate and overseas markets.

In conclusion, I indicate my disdain and condemnation of the Bob Brown Foundation, the militant arm of the Greens, for their further invasion of a workplace - this time at Venture Minerals on the west coast of Tasmania. I know Felix Ellis is equally upset with this news, as a member for Braddon. To the Bob Brown Foundation, and the green activists who are stopping people and their right to work - a business and its right to operate - we say enough is enough. It is to be condemned.

I am so hoping that the Labor Opposition will support our workplace protection legislation next week when it will be debated in the Legislative Council, because that is about ruling out and legislating against intrusion in the workplaces by those who want to stop people from working, to earn an honest day's living. It is not just in the forestry sector. It is not just in mining and the mineral processing sector. It is across our productive industries.

I am pleased and proud that we have all our productive industries backing this legislation. Agriculture, forestry, mining, the seafood sector, businesses large and small, are backing this Government's bill, and I am encouraging Labor to reconsider their position. I am pleased that they condemn the BBF and their protest, but they need to do more. Dr Broad was in this

parliament feigning support for the productive industries earlier today in question time, and yet said nothing. He refused to say whether he would lobby his Labor colleagues to reconsider their opposition to our workplace protection legislation.

The opportunity is there for the Labor Party to reconsider and show support for our productive industries, show support for Tasmanians' right to work. Yes, people should be free to protest, but they should not be free to intrude, to invade peoples' workplaces, and stop law-abiding Tasmanians from earning a living and feeding their family. Enough is enough.

Sorell Cricket Club - Presentation Night

[6.47 p.m.]

Ms WHITE (Lyons - Leader of the Opposition) - Madam Speaker, it is my pleasure tonight to congratulate the Sorell Cricket Club on what has been a productive season for them. I was pleased to attend the presentation event on Saturday night as patron and a sponsor of the club. It was terrific to hear how they have grown their junior program. They now have 88 juniors, and it is one of the largest junior programs in the south of the state. They have plans to grow it to 100 for next season, which will provide many more young people the opportunity to get involved with a really good sporting club that has a strong culture and does so much to nurture the pathways for those young people participating in cricket.

I also recognise the work of the committee. It has been a difficult year for them; last year, everyone was disrupted by COVID-19. They have put three teams into play in three different grades this season. They were unable to field an under-15 team, so that meant that those young players stepped up into one of the senior teams in grade 7, and did an outstanding job, so much so that one of the players, Oliver Holdsworth, was awarded the second-grade Player of the Season for the whole association. At just 16, being recognised not only in a field of your peers, but in adults, is impressive, and he has a bright future ahead of him.

I was thrilled to see on the night that Brendan Kemp, who has been a stalwart and a life member of that club, was awarded legend status for all of his efforts over many years, both on and off the field, to make sure that cricket club is as robust and supportive of cricket in that community as it can be.

They have quite a young committee. Daniel Smith, the president, spoke about that on the night, but they are well supported by some of these club stalwarts and people like Kempie, who have been there to guide and mentor these younger players who have come through and stepped up onto the committee. They are positioning that club for such a strong future, and it will play a key role in the south-east as the population grows there. It is impressive to see how they have been able to pull things together after a couple of tough years. I wanted to recognise them and I wish them all the best for the future.

I also want to recognise the work of the Woodsdale community. On Sunday I attended the Woodsdale market day, an annual event held at the Woodsdale museum. It is pulled together by a volunteer committee of community members who have been doing it for many years now. In particular, I recognise the work of president Keith Mann, but also every other member of that committee for the effort they put in to get the stalls on site, to adhere with the COVID safety plan and to arrange sponsorship - all of the different elements necessary for a

market like that to proceed. It was my pleasure to attend. My colleague for Lyons, Mr Tucker, was there as well, and he opened the market day.

Mr Barnett - Guy Barnett, but a bit later.

Ms WHITE - Guy Barnett was a little bit later. I missed you, Guy; I think Jane Howlett also attended.

Mr Barnett - Yes, she did.

Ms WHITE - It was very well supported across the political spectrum.

They do a lovely job, and each year at the opening they scare the living bejesus out of me when they fire a cannon. I took my daughter with me who last year was terrified and this year kept asking me, 'When are they going to fire the cannon, mum?'. I was only just quick enough this time to be able to grab her and put my hands around her ears because they did not give very much warning, did they, Mr Tucker? I think you just said, 'The market is open' and the signal was given straightaway and we all cowered. It is one of the highlights of the market and the signature of that event. I acknowledge the work of the committee - they do an amazing job every year.

Before I finish, I congratulate the Dodges Ferry Football Club, which held a huge fair and community event on Saturday. It was so well attended. The weather kind of held out. It got a bit colder as we progressed into the latter part of the day. I acknowledge the work of Rhiannon Woods, who put in an extraordinary amount of work to organise the event, and to all the stall holders who supported that event.

It was not just the Dodges Ferry Football Club. While the committee and Rhiannon, in particular, organised it, it was supported by Healthy Horizons, the Carlton Park Surf Life Saving Club, Okines Neighbourhood House, the local fire brigade, the primary school, the South East Suns Football Club, the South East Junior Football Club, the South East Employment Hub, the local ambulance station volunteers and paramedics as well as a number of other businesses and sponsors who enabled that day to go ahead.

It was excellent to see so many children there. It was a community event. It drew people from Dodges Ferry, Carlton, Primrose Sands, Lewisham and Sorell into that area, and really demonstrated that a footy club has a big focus on being a family footy club. That is so important. Often sports clubs can be so focused on being on the field and fundraising off the field that they do not have the time to engage in their community. The Dodges Ferry Football Club has put a really strong emphasis on doing that. I have no doubt that will boost participation in their junior ranks, leading to much greater strength in their senior team. I want to commend them for the work they have done. They will reap the rewards from that as we head into the football season. I want to wish the club all the very best, all the players the very best, and the committee the very best as the season is about to kick off.

International Women's Day

[6.54 p.m.]

Mr ELLIS (Braddon) - Madam Speaker, International Women's Day was celebrated across the north-west coast and the west coast. I was lucky enough to be one of the token

blokes at a number of events. It was heartening to see the community pull together in what has been a difficult time for a lot of women around the country, around the world and in our state. There is an amazing sense of resilience, particularly from the women of the north-west coast, west coast and King Island - the sense that by working together as a community we can forge a path together. Women and men can truly see brighter days ahead.

Some of the events I had the privilege of going to were a union rally in Hobart for International Women's Day with the Opposition Leader and many of her colleagues. Back up in my neck of the woods, I spent time in Ulverstone at an International Women's Day event organised by the wonderful mental health charity New Mornings.

New Mornings is not particularly well known in other parts of the state, but in the north-west they do incredible work with women and girls as well as men and boys. They are an enormously giving group of people.

Many people either work for New Mornings or volunteer their time to build a sense of community around people who are struggling with their mental health and to bring them on board with a community that loves and cares for them and only wants the best for them. They are driven by an enormous sense of charity, compassion, faith and a desire to make sure that no woman is left behind on the north-west coast.

I commend Bronwyn Waterhouse and the whole team at New Mornings who do fantastic work. It was a wonderfully organised event, as most events run by women are. It was fantastic to see the Ulverstone Surf Club fully packed out with some amazing gifts, catering and community spirit among a group of people who only want the best for the women of the north-west coast.

There were a couple of speakers. I give a shout-out to Alison Wishaw and Karen Motes, who spoke about grief and loss, which is one of the really significant and often not spoken about challenges that New Mornings seeks to address. Many people have mental health challenges that are not necessarily based on mental illness, but on having a really hard time. It is an experience that is very common for women later in life because statistically women outlive men. That often means that many women, at the end of their lives, find themselves alone.

For an organisation like New Mornings that has so much respect in our community but also so many lovely people who are involved with it, to be able to wrap their arms around those women and people suffering grief and loss at a particularly difficult time for our whole community, is a really wonderful thing. I commend them for the work they do.

If you are a person feeling a sense of grief, loss or mental health challenges, I encourage you to get in touch with New Mornings. They are wonderful people and they will do a fantastic job to help you.

The Burnie City Council put on a fantastic International Women's Day event. Again, I felt very outnumbered having a Y chromosome but it was wonderful to be a part of. One of the great things I have found with the International Women's Day events is how welcoming so many women are for a young fellow who can sometimes feel a little out of place. I felt their arms wrapping around me as well.

For next International Women's Day, I encourage the blokes of the north-west coast, the west coast, King Island and right around Tasmania and Australia to go along to these events, whether by yourself, with your partner or with your family, and be a part of it. At the end of the day, women hold up half the sky. A future in which women's interests are advanced is a brighter future for all of us, whether you are a young bloke like me or you are one of the widows I spoke about earlier who are getting help from New Mornings.

We can all benefit when women's interests are looked after.

The House adjourned at 7 p.m.