

Thursday 23 August 2018

The President, **Mr Wilkinson**, took the Chair at 11 a.m. and read Prayers.

**LEAVE OF ABSENCE
Member for Huon**

Mrs HISCUTT (Montgomery - Leader of the Government in the Legislative Council) (by leave) - Mr President, I move -

That the honourable member for Huon, Mr Armstrong, be granted leave of absence from the service of the Council for this day's sitting.

Motion agreed to.

**METRO TASMANIA AMENDMENT BILL 2018 (No. 14)
THREATENED SPECIES PROTECTION AMENDMENT BILL 2018 (No. 8)**

Third Reading

Bills read the third time.

SUSPENSION OF SITTING

Mrs HISCUTT (Montgomery - Leader of the Government in the Legislative Council) - Mr President, I move -

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

This is for a further briefing on the Police Offences Amendment (Prohibited Insignia) Bill 2018

Motion agreed to.

Sitting suspended from 11.05 a.m. to 12.47 p.m.

NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT AMENDMENT BILL 2018 (No. 7)

Second Reading

[12.47 p.m.]

Mrs HISCUTT (Montgomery - Leader of the Government in the Legislative Council - 2R) - Mr President, I move -

That the bill be now read the second time.

The purpose of the Natural Resource Management Amendment Bill 2018 is to amend the Natural Resource Management Act 2002 to improve and strengthen Tasmania's natural resource management arrangements and ensure that our natural resources are managed effectively and efficiently.

The amendments contained in this bill in no way compromise the management of our natural resources. Rather, they serve to streamline the process and are in line with the Government's policy to reduce administrative costs as well as the number of boards and councils in the state.

The most significant amendment in this bill is to remove the roles and functions of the Tasmanian Natural Resource Management Council from the act, and instead create the ability for a special purpose committee to be formed on an as-needs basis.

This is not a new initiative. Section 9 of the Nature Conservation Act 2002, for example, has provisions for special advisory committees. In both cases - that is, the Nature Conservation Act and the bill before you - the minister may establish such committees on a needs basis and appoint the members to advise on matters relating to the administration of these acts.

Mr President, the general functions and powers of the Tasmanian Natural Resource Management Council are to advise the minister, as set out in section 7 of the Natural Resource Management Act 2002. The council has many minor roles and functions scattered throughout the legislation. The council has also, in the past, fulfilled an oversight function by identifying priorities, and implementing and administering national and state programs relating to natural resource management.

The 2015 NRM Review undertaken by the department found that the council's role had diminished over the years. During the review process, many stakeholders questioned the usefulness of the council's current role, and the majority recognised the need to change the council and its functions to achieve more robust and targeted outcomes.

Under the proposed amendment, the roles and functions of the council will be removed. Nevertheless, it is important that the minister continue to receive specialist advice on emerging and topical natural resource management issues from a broad range of stakeholders.

In removing the council, the minister has the ability to form a special purpose committee as required. This enables the minister to bring together issue-specific experts on a case-by-case basis rather than relying on a council with more general expertise.

The act currently requires that the minister review the Natural Resource Management Act every four to seven years to ensure the arrangements are operating as intended. Thirteen years have passed since the act commenced, and the natural resource management - NRM - bodies have demonstrated a clear ability to perform their roles and functions, and they continue to do an outstanding job. The department's 2015 review was the second to find that NRM bodies are operating as intended.

Mr President, in light of the excellent performance of the natural resource management bodies, the bill extends the statutory time frame for reviewing the act from every seven to every 10 years. Further, a minor amendment to the act will remove the statutory requirement for accreditation criteria. These criteria are currently used by the council to assess draft regional strategies and provide advice on which natural resource management strategies should be accredited. While the

accreditation criteria are approved by the minister, they are primarily an evaluation tool used by the council to inform its advice on natural resource management strategies and advice.

The provisions for accreditation criteria are also outdated and refer to a national ministerial council that no longer exists. Removing the requirement for accreditation criteria does not in any way alter the Government's capacity to assess and accredit draft regional strategies in accordance with the act.

Mr President, extensive consultation was undertaken by the department during the course of the review, including face-to-face meetings with key stakeholder groups. The three NRM regional bodies were also provided with a consultation draft of the bill. There was strong support for all the changes contained in this bill.

These amendments are not onerous, and as noted earlier, serve to streamline the natural resource management capabilities of the three NRM regional bodies.

Mr President, I commend the bill to the House.

[12.53 p.m.]

Mr VALENTINE (Hobart) - Mr President, I have some concerns about this matter, which may be allayed if I can get some information as a result of my questions. As far as natural resource management groups are concerned, I recall that when I was mayor of Hobart, the Southern Tasmanian Councils Authority provided resources to set up a NRM southern group; the same occurred in the north and the north-west. At the time no body existed with the resources to enable communication with the various groups interested in the content or the role the NRM group was to deal with. I remember this well. That group hived off and became its own body some two or three years' later - I may be wrong about the exact time - but eventually it became a standalone group. The three bodies communicated through the council that is now being discontinued.

This concerns me a little because these groups shared information and knew what was going on in each other's region. There was a certain degree of consultation between the groups through the council. My concern is that if this council is taken away, the minister may be given the power to call all the shots in these things.

Governments change and ministers change all the time. I am concerned that over time we might get some fragmentation if the three NRM bodies operate only in their own spheres and lose the capacity to be on the same page when dealing with matters that come before them.

The third paragraph in the second reading speech says -

The most significant amendment in this bill is to remove the roles and functions of the Tasmanian Natural Resource Management Council from the act, and instead create the ability for a special purpose committee to be formed on an as-needs basis.

I expect that the as-needs basis is at the behest of the minister and that it will be the minister's office calling the shots on advice from the department. I am concerned that will tend to fragment the way natural resource management is handled across the state.

The second reading speech goes on -

The 2015 NRM Review undertaken by the department found that the council's role had diminished over the years.

It interests me to know what caused that decline. Is it because the minister's office has not called on the council's expertise as much? Do we have any understanding about why that decline has occurred?

The second reading speech continues -

During the review process, many stakeholders questioned the usefulness of the council's current role ...

Can we have an understanding of which stakeholders are saying that the council is no longer useful? I would like to have that fleshed out a bit. It goes on to say -

... and the majority recognised the need to change the council and its functions to achieve more robust and targeted outcomes.

Are these stakeholders the groups themselves or are they external to the groups? I do not want to jump at shadows. It might well be that all the groups said 'Let us get rid of this'.

Mr Gaffney - You have raised a good point about how they measured whether its role has been diminished. Have there been annual reports from the council to the minister and to the groups?

Mr VALENTINE - I thank the member for Mersey for that. The second reading speech continues -

Under the proposed amendment, the roles and functions of the council will be removed. Nevertheless, it is important that the minister continue to receive specialist advice on emerging and topical natural resource management issues from a broad range of stakeholders.

When I read that, I immediately thought, 'Is this simply code for "the minister decides who they want to hear from"'? Is it sidelining the natural resource management groups that still exist? That concerns me.

Let us take something from today's newspaper about deer shooting in parks. These NRM groups might have quite a significant say about whether they see resources being mismanaged in some way as a result of such things being allowed in parks.

There is an opportunity for ministers of any colour. I am not only talking about the current Government. This is legislation going forward.

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

QUESTIONS

Tasmania Police Special Operations Group - Full-Time Capability

**Mr DEAN question to LEADER of the GOVERNMENT in the LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL,
Mrs HISCUTT**

[2.33 p.m.]

My question relates to the Tasmania Police Special Operations Group, the Soggies.

The budget provided for a full-time operational Special Operations Group. Will the Leader please advise -

- (1) How many members of the Special Operations Group will become full-time?
- (2) When is it planned that this will occur?
- (3) Where will the team be domiciled?
- (4) Will additional police be recruited to backfill these positions or will these backfilled positions be a part of the additional police the Government identified in the budget who will be recruited into the service?

ANSWER

Mr President, I thank the member for Windermere for his questions.

(1) to (4)

Prior to the 2018 state election, the Government stated a re-elected Hodgman Liberal government would re-establish a full-time core Special Operations Group - SOG - capability for enhanced rapid response to terrorism incidents and other emergencies and to support high-risk police operations. At the same time, a commitment was made to continue the upward trajectory of new police recruitments with at least 125 more police officers to be employed over the term of government. This includes the SOG capability commitment.

Provision has been made in the 2018-19 Budget and across the forward Estimates to increase the sworn establishment to 1358 FTEs over the term of the Government.

Implementation has commenced, with the induction of 20 trainees to the first recruit course on May 2018. A further recruit course will commence in September this year, with a further two intakes projected for early and mid-2019 and three intakes in 2020-21. The Government committed to tasking Tasmania Police to undertake a project to identify future long-term service delivery requirements and assess the change in the operating environment based on environmental scanning and workforce planning analysis. This capability review was a pre-election commitment and has commenced. The project is sponsored by the Commissioner of Police and reporting to a steering committee chaired by the Deputy Commissioner of Police.

The project team has completed initial face-to-face consultations with frontline police officers and district management groups, including officers attached to a special response and counterterrorism team. It is currently undertaking desktop research, including analysis of police information systems and data population. This work will inform the evidence-based

decision with respect to how many members of the Special Operations Group will become full-time, including the deployment model and resourcing. Work is expected to be completed by mid-2019.

NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT AMENDMENT BILL 2018 (No. 7)

Second Reading

Resumed from above.

[2.36 p.m.]

Mr VALENTINE (Hobart) - Mr President, the second reading speech continues -

Under the proposed amendment, the roles and functions of the council will be removed. Nevertheless, it is important that the minister continue to receive specialist advice on emerging and topical natural resource management issues from a broad range of stakeholders.

I query whether this is just an opportunity to go to whoever they want to. It is clear it is not only this Government, but any, and whichever minister rather than one more closely connected to NRM. This concerns me. I want to clarify whether, in removing the council, the minister has ability to form a special purpose committee as required. It is more and more concerning that it is concentrated on an individual minister. Yes, you could say people elect governments to govern. When governments govern, they have to have proper advice. Groups like NRM, which closely monitor conditions in the environment, are probably best able to give advice. This bill seems to give the minister overt control.

The second reading speech reads -

This enables the minister to bring together issue-specific experts on a case-by-case basis rather than relying on a council with more general expertise.

A natural resource management council would certainly be able to have experts provide information to the council and the council then advise the minister. Although experts, they may not take the broader picture into account, depending on their expertise. I am concerned it is moving to more and more ministerial power and sidelining a group.

The second reading speech continues -

Further, a minor amendment to the act will remove the statutory requirement for accreditation criteria. These criteria are currently used by the council to assess draft regional strategies and provide advice on which natural resource management strategies should be accredited

Again, is this an opportunity for the minister to weaken criteria to fit a certain government program more easily rather than government programs not being constrained? That is a concern I have with this bill. Answers might come back about what the bodies themselves feel and how they have lobbied to get this change. I do not know whether it was given to them for consideration. I do not know what the circumstance was. Maybe the Leader could advise me a little more.

The second reading speech states -

Removing the requirement for accreditation criteria does not in any way alter the Government's capacity to assess and accredit draft regional strategies in accordance with the act.

That statement is concerning. To my mind it means those criteria can become more ad hoc and less limiting on government programs. I am not just talking about this Government. I am talking about governments in the future of any colour.

Near the end of the second reading speech, it reads -

The three NRM regional bodies were also provided with a consultation draft of the bill. There was strong support for all the changes contained in this bill.

I would be interested to learn how many negatives there were during the consultation and whether the groups themselves felt at all apprehensive about this legislation. I am really keen to find out some detail about that.

While the amendments are not onerous, we are told in the second reading speech that they -

... serve to streamline the natural resource management capabilities of the three NRM regional bodies.

Again, that is a little fragmented with fewer opportunities for them to collaborate. That is interesting.

Another question: consultation with local government. Was there any consultation with local government? Can the Leader please let me know what the consultation with local government was?

If there is fragmentation, the regional bodies may ultimately become a little dispirited because they see that their work is not yielding good results. They might even drop away. I am concerned that this possible fragmentation, if I can put it that way, might lead to dropping away. Quite a significant opportunity to communicate with each of the regions would be undermined.

I have been asked to adjourn for the purposes of the briefing, so I move -

That the debate stand adjourned.

Motion agreed to.

SUSPENSION OF SITTING

Mrs HISCUTT (Montgomery - Leader of the Government in the Legislative Council) -
Mr President, I move -

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

This for the purpose of a briefing on the Natural Resource Management Amendment Bill 2018.

Motion agreed to.

Sitting suspended from 2.43 p.m. to 3.03 p.m.

NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT AMENDMENT BILL 2018 (No. 7)

Second Reading

Resumed from above.

[3.03 p.m.]

Mr VALENTINE (Hobart) - Mr President, I have finished my speech and I will wait for answers to my questions to be read into *Hansard*. I thank the Leader for the briefing on this legislation.

[3.04 p.m.]

Mr DEAN (Windermere) - Mr President, I looked at this bill and contacted NRM North to discuss it with them. As we have been told, they are very happy with it. This amendment bill is contemporising the legislation; the changes under this bill will streamline the legislation and will get the terminology right, so NRM North is content with it and has no concerns at all.

The member for Rosevears is not here, but we have often said that NRM North ought to have some responsibility for the Tamar River. Currently, if you look at the Tamar River and its tributaries, from memory, about 15 organisations have some say in or control over the river in one way or another. During a committee inquiry we held on this, people kept asking, 'If this happened, who would be the responsible organisation?' I said, 'If you can tell us that, we will also know.' It came from a number of areas for which NRM North ought to have some responsibility in that regard. There needs to be an overarching body that has responsibility, and NRM North would be that body, with the proper resourcing and the other things that need to go with it.

[3.05 p.m.]

Ms RATTRAY (McIntyre) - Mr President, I support this bill. The briefing always adds another layer of information, and I note that in her reply the Leader will give some extra information about stakeholder groups and some of the other areas touched on by the member for Hobart. That will be useful because we seem to be having more and more briefings and an extensive amount of information does not always get back into the Chamber to be put on the public record. If the Leader can continue to do that after a briefing, that is important - then the message is clear, but it also adds to the information provided with the second reading speeches.

When I first read the second reading speech for this bill, I wrote down 'sensible approach'. I also circled the part about the review of the act to be changed from every seven years to 10 years. It does not look like it was very easy to meet the seven-year requirement, from all accounts, but that is reasonable. Even though 10 years seems like a long time, we certainly know how quickly those years go by. It is a lot of work to do a full-blown review on anything, so in this case extending that review period to 10 years is reasonable.

For the three natural resource management bodies across the state, securing funding and having certainty is a continual challenge - those things always seem to be concerns. You have to have the

right application for the right project to be able to sustain your resources. In various areas I am connected with we have lost significant expertise and resources because of a lack of funding. Because that they get predominantly federal funding, they always seem to have their hands out to the federal government for those funds.

I am not sure how we get a permanent funding stream in place. If the Government can negotiate for a longer term funding agreement with the feds, that would be really useful. The NRM groups do a lot of good work and they have a lot of expertise on the ground, but if they are never sure about where next year's funding is coming from, people will take the opportunity take up other positions, and then that knowledge and expertise is potentially lost in that area.

Some very good work is undertaken by our three regional NRM groups. I support the bill.

[3.09 p.m.]

Mrs HISCUTT (Montgomery - Leader of the Government in the Legislative Council) - Mr President, first, some history of NRM regional organisations: Tasmania's three NRM organisations were established in response to a Commonwealth government policy to have such bodies in each of 56 identified regions for the purpose of delivering Commonwealth funding. Many organisations, such as the Cradle Coast Authority and the Southern Tasmanian Councils Authority, assisted in this process.

We talked about the decline of the role of the NRM council. Much of the work required by the council related to the establishment of the NRM system in Tasmania, including the establishment of the regional organisations and their governance structure and the development of the NRM framework.

Once these things were in place, there was less for the council to do, with successive governments often seeking advice from the regional organisations themselves on matters of NRM priorities and project implementation. As a result, the council itself felt it was not required for NRM to be effectively delivered in Tasmania. It formally requested that the Department of Primary Industries, Parks, Water and Environment - DPIPWE - take responsibility for assessing regional NRM strategies and advising the minister of their compliance with the act's requirements and concerns about the fragmentation of NRM.

Tasmania's three regional NRM organisations operate in a national context, with the three Tasmanian CEOs working together. Staff in the organisations also work closely to develop a cross-regional approach to many NRM issues, including flood and bushfire recovery, management of threatened species and protection of high conservation values from threats such as weeds.

The NRM council's role as a conduit for the communication between regions has diminished as the regions have become established and developed closer working relationships. DPIPWE continues to work closely with the regional NRM organisations to provide support to their organisations, strategic planning and administration.

Consultation and support: during the 2015 review, public comment was open for six weeks, from 22 July 2015 to 31 August 2015. The department invited comments from key stakeholders and met representatives from the federal department, which was then the Department of the Environment; Landcare Tasmania; Cradle Coast NRM, NRM North and NRM South; Tasmanian Conservation Trust; and the Tasmanian Farmers and Graziers Association. Twelve submissions were received. Submissions noted the NRM council had played an important role in establishing

the NRM system in Tasmania, but that the role appeared to have diminished significantly. There were no objections to the proposed amendments. The Tasmanian Natural Resource Management Council and regional committees also provided valuable assistance during the consultation period. A final consultation was undertaken in May 2017. All stakeholders - NRM North, NRM South, Cradle Coast NRM, Landcare Tasmania, Tasmanian Conservation Trust, and the federal Department of Environment and Energy - provided comments and supported the amendments. The Tasmanian Farmers and Graziers Association was contacted but had no comment to make on the bill.

The role of NRM bodies and rivers: the member for Windermere asked a question regarding the potential leadership role of NRM bodies in managing the rivers and I note DIIPWE continues to work with NRM bodies to identify roles they can play in the catchment management.

Local government consultation: the Local Government Association of Tasmania and individual local governments were invited to comment on the bill. LGAT and the Huon Valley Council expressed support for the bill.

Accreditation criteria: the previous criteria were established by the Commonwealth government, but the Commonwealth no longer supports this approach and therefore the established criteria are now redundant.

The member for McIntyre touched on funding. Yes, her feedback has been taken on board. The Tasmanian Government supports the roles and functions of these organisations and has committed to increasing funding to facilitate their work. The Government has committed \$4.2 million over four years to enable NRM North, NRM south and Cradle Coast NRM to support regional delivery of natural resource management. Currently each organisation is funded by the state Government at \$250 000 per annum. This will increase by an additional \$100 000 to \$350 000 per annum. Landcare Tasmania will receive a doubling of their base funding, to \$967 000 over four years. Currently Landcare Tasmania receives \$120 000 state Government funding per annum. This will increase to \$240 000 per annum.

Additionally, in 2018-19 the Government will establish a new \$2 million Landcare action grants program over four years to co-invest with farmers, Landcare and other community organisations in practical on-ground work for sustainable agriculture river care. This includes \$200 000 for the DairyTas cows out of creeks project. DIIPWE is currently consulting with stakeholders with regard to development of the program.

The Government is also establishing the new role of Tasmanian weed advocate, who will work with DIIPWE to identify strategic on-ground priorities to tackle weeds across land tenures. The weed advocate will also coordinate a new weed action fund. It is a \$5 million program over five years to tackle weeds impacting on valuable agricultural environmental assets. The department is currently developing the program in consultation with stakeholders. DIIPWE officers are actively working with federal officials and the three regional NRM organisations to ensure Tasmania retains the capacity to deliver national environment and agriculture priorities across all regions.

Mr President, I commend the bill to the House.

NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT AMENDMENT BILL 2018 (No. 7)

In Committee

Clauses 1 to 9 agreed to.

Clause 10 -

Part 3, Division 2 inserted

Mr DEAN - My query stems from my contribution to the second reading debate. I take the position of the committee that looked at the river some time ago when the honourable Don Wing was here. Either Mr Wing or the member for Waverley chaired that meeting; I am not quite sure now.

The report recommended the NRM ought to be the overriding body of the Tamar River, its issues, its problems and the tributaries. The recommendation was -

The Minister by order may establish one or more special advisory committees for the purpose of advising the Minister on ...

(c) Such matters arising in relation to the performance of the functions of the regional committee under the Act as specified in the order.

Could that occur if the minister set up a special advisory committee? Would it be safe? Could the recommendations be picked up from the select committee? Could the minister set this advisory committee up to look at that and determine the functions of NRM North? Am I right out of my depth and have it wrong? Could there be an explanation of how that would work?

Mrs HISCUTT - There is absolutely no reason why that could not be picked up. If the project were put forward and it was deemed to be necessary and worthy, a select committee would be formed and would look into it.

Mr DEAN - In this instance, if that report were resurrected and all the dust wiped off it - and it is covered in dust now - and resubmitted with special reference made to the recommendations, could the minister could look at it with a view to, if they saw fit, setting up a committee to consider and look at that?

Mrs HISCUTT - I cannot guarantee that, but if you were to dust it off and resubmit it through the proper channels, there is no reason the department and the minister would not look at it. If they deemed something happen, then, yes, they would form a select committee.

Mr DEAN - Thank you.

Clause 10 agreed to.

Clause 11 to 15 agreed to.

Clause 16 -

Section 18 amended (Priorities for natural resource management)

Ms RATTRAY - In my contribution to the second reading debate I raised a question about the sustainability of the three regional natural resource management groups around the state. Is it

possible that the minister could take some initiative and speak to the federal government about firming up ongoing funding for the groups? I thought that might be an appropriate place where the minister could do that. It is seeking advice from the council, but we are now substituting the minister with regard to the priority of the natural resource management. I am just interested. I take on board that the Honourable Leader noted my comments in her summing up.

Mrs HISCUTT - There is constant lobbying for money for the state for one thing or another. That is one of things we constantly lobby for, so the answer is yes. I cannot answer whether we receive it, but it is something that we lobby for all the time.

Ms RATTRAY - I am not surprised at the answer because all states look for whatever contribution they can receive from outside their own state's finances to support things. Can I expect that the local area groups and the regional groups would be putting their expectations and requests for funding to the minister? How will that work, given the minister has this direct involvement now in the priorities for natural resource management? Will the minister gather each region's submission, look at it and go to the federal government to ask for contributions? I am not playing with this; I am just interested in how that might work, given that the ministers have to drill down into the natural resource management groups' priorities.

Mrs HISCUTT -The Commonwealth directly sets the priorities, which makes it more difficult for us to get money from the Commonwealth. The groups will determine their priorities across the state. When they see a need, they will come forward with their wish list of projects they see as most important for their area. If their project is deemed worthy of moving to the next stage, a committee will be formed to assess it, and it will go on from there.

Ms RATTRAY - Are the committees being established as special advisory committees? Are these the ones that will look at what they believe are priorities, or is another committee involved in this part of natural resource management priorities?

Mrs HISCUTT - A special committee, not this advisory committee, will be formed to assess -

Ms Rattray - From within the minister's office or within the department?

Mrs HISCUTT - Within the department, but this is separate from this bill.

Mr VALENTINE - I am concerned that by taking out 'Minister, after seeking advice from the Council, is to', and leaving it as 'Minister is to', and taking out 'Council and regional committees' and substituting 'relevant committees', the area within which the NRM group works - its terms of reference, I suppose - when the minister sets up special committees or relevant committees, is he or she constrained to set up committees within the terms of reference of the NRM, or can this be a committee set up as long as it has something to do with the natural environment? Where is the constraint in how the minister may set up a committee? It will not be the council advising the minister.

Mrs HISCUTT - This committee will be formed after the minister is made aware of or advised that there is a particular issue within agriculture or within the natural environment that needs to be looked at. The minister will know that. He will then say, 'I need some advice on that' and then the committee will be formed to go out and look at the issues and report back to the minister.

Clauses 17 to 20 agreed to and bill taken through the remainder of the Committee stage.

MOTION
Additional Recurrent Services Expenditure 2017-18
Section 19 Return - March Quarter 2018

[3.32 p.m.]

Mrs HISCUTT (Montgomery - Leader of the Government in the Legislative Council - Motion) -Mr President, I move -

That the Council approve, in accordance with subsection 11(7) of the Public Account Act 1986, additional Recurrent Services expenditure in 2017-18 for the purposes detailed in Section 19 Return for the March quarter 2018.

Mr President, this motion relates to the Section 19 Return for the March quarter 2018. It seeks parliamentary endorsement of additional expenditure that has previously been approved in accordance with the requirements of the Public Account Act of 1986. While the act provides the Treasurer with the power to approve additional expenditure during the course of a financial year, it also provides for parliament to subsequently approve this expenditure.

This requirement is stated in subsection 11(7) of the Public Account Act. The Section 19 Return for the March quarter 2018 includes six requests for additional funds totalling \$1 240 000. Approval for this expenditure has been given under section 11(2) of the Public Account Act.

These requests for additional funds relate to the following items -

- \$200 000 to assist with works required to address health and building standard compliance issues with the Macquarie Heads campground and to expand the camp site to accommodate short-term camping by tourists.
- \$250 000 to fund rural relief, outreach services and financial counselling to primary producers in areas affected by dry conditions; dry seasonal conditions are currently affecting a number of Tasmanian agricultural communities, including the Coal Valley, Central Highlands, Southern Midlands, Tasman Peninsula, part of the Channel and the east coast.
- \$350 000 provided to the Welcome and Montagu districts representing a one-off payment of \$150 000 for environmental studies into river management and flood mitigation in the Welcome and Montagu river districts and a further \$200 000 to enable required river works as identified by the environmental studies to be undertaken in both districts.
- \$110 000 to enable the continuation of the Street Team late night safety project in Hobart providing support and assistance to vulnerable people and to run a trial in Launceston. This project is to be delivered by the Salvation Army.
- \$250 000 to provide a partial grant payment to the Central Coast Council towards the \$450 000 cost for a shared cycleway to improve safety crossing at the Bass Highway at Leith.
- \$80 000 to provide funding towards hosting round 4 of the Australian Rally Championship held in Launceston in July 2018.

Mr President, as I previously stated, this motion seeks the parliament's approval of additional recurrent expenditure approved under the provisions of the Public Account Act for the quarter ended 31 March 2018.

[3.35 p.m.]

Ms RATTRAY (McIntyre) - Mr President, I have a couple of questions about these requests for additional funding.

I googled the Macquarie Heads Camping Ground because I had no idea where it was and it is 316 kilometres -

Ms Forrest - Too far away from your area to know about.

Ms RATTRAY - It is 316 kilometres from here, but I do not know where it is -

Ms Forrest - It is out at Macquarie Harbour, near Hells Gates.

Ms RATTRAY - Oh, up in your patch - completely out of my patch. Were all these funding items for one-off things not provided for in the Budget somewhere? If the Street Team project being delivered by the Salvation Army is an ongoing program, why was that \$110 000 for its continuation not budgeted for in the Budget? Also the \$250 000 partial grant payment to the Central Coast Council towards the shared cycleway to improve safety? If that is a grant and it was promised last year and it was in this year's Budget, why is it outside the normal budgetary process?

I understand the Australian Rally Championship is held every year. If that is the case, surely you would have had a bit of notice you were going to provide \$80 000-worth of funding for it, rather than make an additional request for funds?

I am looking for some clarity around why these items did not fit in the normal budget process.

Mrs Hiscutt - While you are on your feet, was it Macquarie Heads?

Ms RATTRAY - All of them, really. There are not that many. It is quite a nice change from the list we often receive.

Ms Forrest - We still have another one to come this year.

Ms RATTRAY - Yes, but that is a small list compared to what we have seen in the past.

[3:39 p.m.]

Ms FORREST (Murchison) - Mr President, picking up from the member for McIntyre's comments, sometimes we do not even get a list this time of year for the March quarter, or it is often quite small. We get the big one coming up - everything happens on 30 June. We will see what happens again this time.

I will be surprised if we actually get a big report at the end of June just gone. We had a sizeable supplementary appropriation bill just recently, and I would have thought much of this would have been picked up in that.

To speak in broader terms to the motion, we know it is to approve payments that have already been made, but it is important we note and comment on that. I will take members to the Public Account Act - The Leader cited section 11(7) of the Public Account Act. That section says it has to be approved by the parliament after it has been done -

All expenditure under this section in any financial year shall, before the close of the following financial year, be submitted to Parliament for its approval.

That is what we are doing. As the member for McIntyre alluded to, this section is written with regard to the Treasurer's Reserve. If you read section 11(2) of the Public Account Act, it says -

Subject to this section, the Treasurer may, in any financial year, by order, issue and apply from the Consolidated Fund an amount not exceeding in total -

(a) an amount of \$10 000 000.

It goes on and talks about other Commonwealth moneys coming in. This is the point the member for McIntyre made. Section 11(2) ends -

... for expenditure, the need for which could not, in the opinion of the Treasurer, reasonably have foreseen and which is essential for efficient financial administration.

I think the question the member for McIntyre asked is: why were these RAFs required to facilitate the efficient financial administration? I am sure the Leader will have answers for most of these questions from her advisors. I note that my electorate does rather well in this lot in terms of additional expenditure.

I also note the Leader states in the end of her contribution to this motion that this motion seeks parliament's approval of additional recurrent expenditure. I have asked this in the past and I would like some feedback from the Leader on this: how is it considered recurrent expenditure rather than capital works? When you look at the first one in Macquarie Heads, particularly - and there is another one further down -

To address health and building standard compliance issues with the Macquarie Heads campground.

I would have thought that was capital. It may be considered maintenance, I am not sure. I am interested in why that is not Works and Services funding as opposed to recurrent expenditure.

The other one that would fit that bill, in my mind, is the \$250 000 to provide a partial grant payment to the Central Coast Council. Maybe because it is a grant? I would like the Leader to clarify those points. That was for the construction of a shared cycleway, which again is capital works but it is by way of a grant.

It is not a huge amount of money in the big scheme of things. These requests for additional funding obviously have good reasons and the money has been well spent in these areas, but it is important to clarify those matters and why they were not identified in the budget process.

This was before the supplementary appropriation bill. You look at the dates the payments were made. I think they were all on Australia Day. Treasury working on a public holiday - that is good. It was before the election, before the supplementary appropriation bill was considered. They relate to the period before that.

I do not think we were ever going to vote against this motion, but it would be good to have information provided in the report and in the speech about what they were for. There was a time when we did not have a speech on this ahead of time. I commend the Government for doing that.

[3.44 p.m.]

Mr DEAN (Windermere) - Mr President, I want to raise two issues. Under the Tasmanian Health Service, extra funding is sought to enable the continuation of the Street Team late night safety project in Hobart. I notice that is also with a view to expanding it to Launceston. I support that, but it would seem there is already funding for it in the Budget and this additional amount is sought to keep it going and to extend it to Launceston. Is that the real reason for it? It is a program run by the Salvation Army and normally they do things pretty well. I would like to understand some more about that.

The bike safety program across the Bass Highway, as raised by the member for Murchison, would fall into either the member for Montgomery's or the member Mersey's area. This is in the area where a fatal crash occurred. It is an extremely dangerous area which I move through regularly, so it is good to see funding there. I am not sure whether it is a recently announced project, but this is only a part of what the cost would be, as I understand it. It would be helpful to know what the project is going to be. I am not sure how you will get a safer movement across this road. Coming out of Leith Road, cyclists going south or towards Devonport have to cross about four different lanes to get there. The other way it is two lanes going towards Ulverstone et cetera. It is very dicey for cyclists to get across that section of road. As a cyclist I have an interest in this.

[3.46 p.m.]

Mrs HISCUTT (Montgomery - Leader of the Government in the Legislative Council) - Mr President, in response to the member for McIntyre, these issues all arose outside the normal budget process so they were unable to be considered at that time. While these issues may have existed, no decision had been made about any government assistance, or no support may have been sought.

In response to the member for Murchison, the payments for the Macquarie Heads Camping Ground and for the cycleway are being made to the relevant councils and are not expenditure on government assets. They are therefore considered to be recurrent in nature.

In response to the member for Windermere's query about the Street Team project, we will need to seek clarification on whether funding has been provided previously for that one. The Treasurer has also asked me to deliver to this House these following comments. In the House of Assembly a number of questions were asked about the Section 19 Return and the Treasurer undertook to provide answers to those questions and for me to read them into *Hansard*. This will also help members.

Macquarie Heads Camping Ground: Ms O'Connor, member for Denison, asked whether there were any plans to expand the Macquarie Heads campground. The Treasurer advised that the West Coast Council manages the camping ground under lease from the Crown for camping, picnic and public recreation purposes. The Government is working with the West Coast Council to improve the management and amenity of the site, including additional short-term camping options. The

grant of \$200 000 was provided by the Government to the West Coast Council on 9 May 2018 to assist with redevelopment on crown land. Once the works are completed, the area will be suitable for motorhomes, caravans and tent-based camping.

With regards to the Bass Highway cycleway improvements at Leith, the member for Denison, Mr Bacon, asked for details on the design of the cycleway and whether there had been any community consultation. I am advised that the \$250 000 request for additional funding for the Leith cycleway was a grant to Central Coast Council as a condition of their pathway project. The approved purpose of the grant deed is to assist the council to construct and extend the pedestrian and cycle pathway between Blackburn Drive at Turners Beach and Allport Street at Leith, which will specifically include a redecking of the former Forth River rail bridge to a useable pathway and takes cyclists and pedestrians totally off the road. It is council responsibly to manage and design the consultation process for the project.

The Treasurer advised that the Department of State Growth contacted the council's general manager for comment and design work, and that council project processes have been completed. Members should note the council recently met with the Minister for Infrastructure and TasRail to discuss the ownership and ongoing responsibility of the Forth River rail bridge. They are expecting a letter of comfort following the meeting.

The Welcome and Montagu rivers work: Mr Bacon raised the issue that farmers had been paying fees into a drainage trust which had transitioned to Tasmania Irrigation, and asked what the process was for this transition. The Treasurer advised that both the Welcome River Riverworks District and Montagu Catchment River Improvement District are managed by TI as the responsible entity under the Water Management Act 1999. TI inherited these entities in 2011 when the previous government merged the former Rivers and Water Supply Commission and Tasmanian Irrigation Schemes Pty. Ltd to form Tasmania Irrigation.

Mr Bacon raised the issue farmers were concerned that no works had been carried out using these fees and asked where has the money gone and why is more being requested. The Treasurer advised that traditionally the Rivers and Water Supply Commission undertook works on both the Welcome and Montagu rivers, including clearing of debris and obstructions.

TI, like the Rivers and Water Supply Commission before it, had charged landholders annual rates for the management of each scheme. The balance of funds originally transferred to and subsequently retained by TI were not of the scale to support the scope of river works programs required and proposed by the landholders. TI and DPIPWE have been working with landholders from both the Welcome River Riverworks District and the Montagu Catchment River Improvement District to address specific issues in each scheme since 2014.

In January this year, \$350 000 was committed by the Government to provide for flood mitigation and river works programs in both schemes. The funding has been allocated equally to each scheme, noting each scheme has unique river issues and arrangements. The aim is to support an expanded program of river works in each scheme than would otherwise be possible to address the immediate river issues and to also set aside schemes and administration into a more sustainable basis.

Motion agreed to.

MOTION
Tasmanian National Parks and Reserves - Integrated Management

[3.53 p.m.]

Mr FINCH (Rosevears) - Mr President, I move -

- (1) That the Legislative Council acknowledges and notes -
 - (a) the importance of management of Tasmania's national parks and reserves for the future of the state's tourism industry and its image abroad; and
 - (b) that there might be benefits in a form of integrated management of parks and reserves with some natural features on private property or access to reserves through private property.
- (2) And further acknowledges and notes that -
 - (a) more work has to be done, with appropriate public and tourism industry input in planning future development in heritage areas and reserves; and
 - (b) it is vitally important that all planning for the future of heritage areas, reserves, and private land with natural tourism potential takes into account potential for walks of various distances, including day walks.

The Tasmanian Parks and Wildlife Service is now responsible for managing more than half Tasmania's landmass, including 19 national parks, the 1 584 000 hectare Tasmania Wilderness World Heritage Area, the Macquarie Island World Heritage Area and about 8000 reserves and other crown land, so members will agree it is a massive task.

Some believe we need a new and comprehensive far-reaching plan. During the budget Estimates, the Premier, who is the Minister for Parks, spoke at length about their management. I quote from the *Hansard* report of his speech -

I just note some of the major commitments in the budget which go to investing in our precious parks and reserve assets. I do note in passing also, alongside heritage, which is one of the great drivers of visitation, so too are our 13 national parks where visitation has increased by 6 per cent in the last year to one and a half million visits. More visits than ever before.

So we need to acknowledge and recognise the fact and celebrate the fact that people want to access our national parks but also make sure we're investing in them to protect them. To future proof them, and to provide the infrastructure people need to enjoy them more and to look at new opportunities to achieve a commercial return that investment through commercial activity, but also recreational opportunities for Tasmanians, particularly those, as we've described, of older years.

So the budget commits additional funding to protecting these assets, boosting our rangers and frontline staff, investing in infrastructure to maintain and improve

our parks and reserves, invest in new iconic experiences, such as the Cradle Mountain development, also to develop that next multi-day hut based walk that we've spoken about already today. A new initiative in the budget that will provide seniors card holders with free access to our national parks for a year and then at a discounted rate, will provide an incentive for wonderful older Tasmanians to visit those areas.

There's \$16 million in funding over four years to improve visitor infrastructure across the state. A number of iconic areas and experiences and assets that include Maria Island, the Overland Track, east-coast camping, the Tasman National Park gateway at Cockle Creek and Ben Lomond. There is a longer list than that, but they are some of the key features of that additional \$16 million commitment towards improving the infrastructure at those places which are being frequently visited. A billion dollars' worth of assets are managed by the Parks and Wildlife Service, which do service the needs of visitors, but the budget explicitly points to the fact that these are assets, valued especially by Tasmanians, and the 200 or so businesses that operate in our parks and reserves as well, so we do need to future proof them. We need to treat them with the greatest of respect and care, and this budget does a lot more in that regard than any one previously.

That is what the Premier, as the Minister for Parks, said during the budget Estimates. I put his words into the *Hansard* in the context of this motion to make sure people get that information, which is fulsome and comprehensive, about what Tasmanian Parks and Wildlife Service deals with in respect of Tasmania, and what he as Minister for Parks is responsible for.

I quote Luke Martin from the Tourism Industry Council Tasmania -

The issue with our Parks is a lack of investment over decades that is now being rudely exposed in places like Cradle and Freycinet especially, but also Mt Field and the Nut. The infrastructure at our major Parks is terribly inadequate to manage the visitor numbers they experience. That's been a failure of public policy in the State for a generation. I use the analogy in the context of hospitals and schools, parks have been the pimple on the backside of government priorities forever.

...

Yes, we need to consider new opportunities and experiences but our pressing priority is to deal with the backlog of infrastructure challenges at our major parks now.

I thank Luke Martin for that contribution. I also want to thank Tourism Industry Council Tasmania for an invitation to a forum to be held in the near future, the 2018 Parks 21 Forum, which I will be attending. The Tourism Industry Council invites the CBS licensed operators and all tourism operators working in and around Tasmania's World Heritage areas, national parks, crown lands and kunanyi, to the parks forum and the second annual tourism and environment luncheon. I believe, Mr President, that you will be hosting the luncheon. Have you found out about that to date? I want to make sure you had it in your diary.

The 2018 Parks 21 Forum, which I am very much looking forward to, will be hosted by the Tasmanian Parks and Wildlife Service, and is really a must-do industry event for all tourism

operators working in and around Tasmania's conservation areas and crown lands. This year's forum is to be in the Premier's reception rooms. He will open the forum and PWS general manager Jason Jacob will talk about parks projects and infrastructure investment and answer any questions about licensing compliance and access.

They are right on the subject. They are dealing with what I am presenting here today, and my concerns. I imagine and hope the Premier and the Parks and Wildlife Service will want the input that will come from this motion, and also from the forum that will be held soon.

My motion mentioned there might be benefits in a form of integrated management of parks and reserves with some natural features on private property, or access to reserves on private property. There are many examples. The list is almost endless. For example, in the foothills of Mount Barrow, only 40 minutes from Launceston, there is the quite spectacular Barrow Falls reserve, which very few people know about. The easiest access to see the waterfall is through private land. Enabling easier access to the falls would be an additional visitor draw in the north-east of the state, as would be the development of walking tracks higher up on Mount Barrow.

I am sure the member for McIntyre would agree that there is massive potential to develop walking tracks and other infrastructure in the north-east. The very successful mountain biking tracks amply demonstrate that.

Ms Rattray - There is not much walking going on on them.

Mr FINCH - No, that is right, but plenty of riding, plenty of fun. Plenty of visitors are coming to the state. Plenty of Tasmanians are taking advantage of these sorts of developments. Of course, as with that mountain biking opportunity, it will need careful planning, and certainly not in isolation.

I have spoken to a number of experienced people on this subject. One suggested that a state unit could be developed specifically to achieve short walk upgrades outside national parks involving volunteers, history, interpretation and community consultation. This could involve the establishment of a statewide inquiry to identify potential areas of interest and ways to facilitate development.

Luke Martin, whom I quoted earlier, mentioned the Freycinet Peninsula as an area of particular concern. At certain times of the year, it is under particular visitor pressure. The walker counter data for December 2016 shows 223 000 each-way visitors on the Wineglass Bay track. If that is the case, considerable planning for the future would seem to be urgent.

Ms Armitage - I note it is predicted that the number could increase to as many as 330 000 visitors by 2020.

Mr FINCH - You can see there needs to be care and concern. I know that a draft Freycinet Peninsula master plan is presently under consideration. However, some people have concerns about its adequacy.

Ms Armitage - And sewerage.

Mr FINCH - They are some of the points I will make during this presentation. I will quote the scope of works from the master plan -

To develop a high quality environmentally economically and socially sustainable Freycinet visitor experience for the next 20 years.

However, critics say the draft plan does not go beyond 2027. The draft plan was supposed to be delivered for community consultation by the end of October 2017; however, it was not delivered until June this year, eight months late.

One critic of the plan, Mr Alvaro Ascui, says -

Despite being more than 8 months in the writing, the plan reads like a rough internal working document; an embarrassment that should never have been published. The document clearly meets the standards of the authors, but does not come anywhere near the standard the public expects from a government publication. Not even a spell check, the most automatic and low-skill of tasks has been applied to the document.

Clearly, Mr Ascui is not happy. His criticism of the draft plan runs to 19 pages. I thought I would table that, but I think if members look at the Freycinet Peninsula master plan summary, or workings, they would find those 19 pages.

I have canvassed the views of a number of people with knowledge of our national parks, some of them veteran bushwalkers who have done just about every walk in Tasmania. They generally agree there is plenty of evidence of degradation of trails in national parks and the World Heritage Area in the form of major erosion, water contamination of alpine lakes and tarns due to substandard toilet facilities and overuse.

This has only just come in to me today from Debra Scott of the Launceston Walking Club. I appreciate very much the effort they have put in and I will read the comments made by the executive of the Launceston Walking Club into *Hansard* -

- Yes, there should certainly be more public consultation on development in Parks (although I think the mechanisms for comment are there, I'm just not sure much heed is being paid to the submissions)
- Yes, I can see a lot of merit in improving access to a select number of spectacular day walks. Last time I was up Quamby Bluff in November it was crawling with people, and not your 'hard core' bushwalkers - a whole range of people who were obviously having a great experience up there.
- A few locations that spring to mind in the north as being easily accessible from population centres (for locals and tourists) would be Mt Arthur, Ben Nevis, Black Bluff (the latter already quite well signposted).
- There are the obvious considerations of making it easier to access potentially hazardous areas, but at the end of the day they will still be big mountains which require a lot of effort to climb, and with appropriate signage and trail design I think the access could be facilitated without putting people at risk. Many fit, interested people wouldn't know how to find Mt Arthur, let alone Ben Nevis.

- Better management of a number of ex-forest reserve facilities (and their access roads/bridges) would also facilitate recreation in some fantastic (non-wilderness) areas.
- I agree that there should be an integrated management of parks and reserves, particularly with respect to walking tracks and MTB trails.
- I'm unconvinced that we actually need more tracks and trails at this point in time; rather we need to better resource existing infrastructure such as the tracks that Kate has referred to - the condition of tracks, their external and internal signposting and general promotion often needs improving. There's no point in developing more tracks and trails that simply contribute to a greater maintenance problem in the long-term.
- With the downsizing and restructuring of Forestry Tasmania (now Sustainable Timber Tasmania) many tracks and reserve facilities are being left to non-government groups to maintain (eg bushwalking clubs, Wildcare Branches, community groups).
- Some iconic PWS-managed walking tracks such as Frenchmans Cap Track, Walls of Jerusalem Track, Lake Judd Track to Mt Sarah Jane, Western Arthurs access (Huon Campground to Moraine A), Arthur Plains Track, Farmhouse Creek Track to Federation Peak, Huon Track to Cracroft Crossing (Yoyo Track), Lake Rhona Track and Mt Oakleigh Track are becoming dependent on funding them from non-State government sources for maintenance - hard to believe, but all of these have been recently submitted to the Wildcare Board for funding from external private donors.
- The North East Highlands Traverse, if properly upgraded and promoted, would make another excellent multi-day trip that could help to reduce demand for the Overland Track.
- The proposed Legislative Council motion says a lot about management and planning but nothing about resourcing and therefore seems to me to be quite lacking. What is also really needed is a long-term commitment to sustainable resourcing.

Thanks to Debra Scott from the Launceston Walking Club. A lot of what I am on about here is probably encompassed in that last observation - that we need to make sure that resourcing needs to go with the upgrade, to maintain what we have now.

A number of other issues need careful scrutiny, Mr President. These include the level of budgetary restrictions that have been imposed on Parks and Wildlife and the impact this has had on staffing levels and the quality of service they are able to provide, and the conditions of the infrastructure - tracks, huts and signage - within our parks. There are benefits of establishing a separate entity within Parks and Wildlife to attract and cater for a burgeoning tourist market of travellers seeking a more active experience. This can include both independent and guided walking tours of Tasmania. This may involve establishing additional tracks at selected locations.

There is interest among private landowners seeking to supplement their income by establishing private trails over their land. This sort of arrangement exists in New Zealand. Parks and Wildlife

could provide guidelines as to the requirements, such as infrastructure, insurance and so on. It is worth exploring. Perhaps the structure of the Parks and Wildlife Service needs looking at. The Parks and Wildlife Service was split into two separate divisions: the Resource Management and Conservation Division has responsibility for the natural and cultural resources and the Parks and Wildlife Service covers Tasmania's parks, reserves and World Heritage Areas. Is this split still appropriate?

Some of you with long memories, or even short memories, might know that the Parks and Wildlife Service separated from the Department of Primary Industries, Water and Environment following the 2002 state elections, becoming part of the Department of Tourism, Parks, Heritage and Arts while the Resource Management and Conservation Division remained part of DPIPWE. In April 2006 the department incorporated the Environment Division of the Department of Primary Industries, Water and Environment. This led to a renaming of the department, which became the Department of Tourism, Arts and the Environment, DTAE. Is all of this appropriate, Mr President?

As I said at the beginning, managing more than half Tasmania's landmass is a massive task. It must be appropriately funded, properly planned for and carried out in the best possible way. If we do not plan well into the future with the best possible information, we risk killing the goose that lays the golden tourism egg. I will be interested to hear what other members have to say on this subject.

[4.13 p.m.]

Mr VALENTINE (Hobart) - Mr President, I thank the member for bringing this forward for debate and discussion. It is quite interesting. I hear a lot of what he has to say in respect to the way our special places are used and indeed promoted, and how tourists to this fine island of ours can gain value from those special places. He accurately brings out the particular issue of the funding of Parks and Wildlife Service being able to cope with such an enormous amount of pressure being placed on certain parts of our state. I agree with you wholeheartedly in that regard.

It was not always been the case that Tasmania was promoted as the place to come to experience the wonderful environment we have. In fact, it was actively fought against in past years. Now the world wants to know about us, and the world wants to come here.

There is a tension about how we look after those special places and the amount of revenue coming into the state as a result of the huge number of visitors we are getting. Whether they are coming here to see MONA or coming here to walk the Overland Track, they are still spending time in our restaurants, hotels and backpacking locations. That is putting money into our community. I urge the Government to understand the full benefit of actually making sure those places are looked after properly and that the Parks and Wildlife Service is funded effectively to be able to manage the influx.

I want to quote a letter to the *Mercury* of 22 August 2018. I want to read this letter into *Hansard*, because it shows some of the feeling about maintaining our special areas, but how they are maintained is equally important. It is written by Graham McLean from Glenfern -

I write to share my concerns about the track upgrades in our national parks and reserves, particularly the Cape Hauy and Cape Raoul tracks on the Tasman Peninsula, the Wineglass Bay/Lookout, the Fleurieu Peninsula/Hazards Beach tracks at Freycinet National Park and the Organ Pipes track on kunyoni/Mt Wellington. Many of my walking colleagues share my concerns

about the 'upgrades' to these day walk tracks. Whilst applauding the extremely high standard of workmanship on all these tracks, I'm concerned the essential wildness has been obliterated (or sanitised/homogenised/gentrified) to the detriment of the character of these areas.

Some of the tracks were, in places, rough and awkward to negotiate, however they represented the essence of Tasmania and were unique in their unmanicured naturalness and as far as I can find out, there have been no serious accidents resulting.

A sad loss on the Cape Raoul track results from the re-routing of the track which now mostly bypasses the cloud forest on the flanks of Mt Raoul - a real shame because this forest, coupled with the three other vegetation communities, made it unique for a coastal walk.

It's easy to find well-manicured walking tracks all over the world, many similar and uninspiring. Few I've walked match Tasmania's unique character and that's a real shame, in that we are destroying the essence that makes Tasmania unique.

That is only one letter. You might say one person, so why should we be concerned? However this is a concern is shared by other people. People are concerned our tracks and trails are being upgraded to the extent they lose the special nature of the place.

While I encourage PWS to be properly funded to be able to cope with the pressures on it, balance is needed. Yes, huge numbers on a track and it will not long before it is a quagmire. We have to put in better tracks, but do we put in a sandstone highway as opposed to some other form of less impact track?

I congratulate the member for Rosevears for bringing this motion forward. We need to think about this and to make sure we do not kill the goose that lays the golden egg. We do not want to become like anywhere else in the world. We are a special place. We have much to offer in Tasmania and many experiences for people, from farm experiences right through to wilderness and extreme sporting that attract people to this state. We have the opportunity to do that in a lot of ways, but let us make sure we do it in a sustainable way rather than reducing the people's overall experience.

[4.20 p.m.]

Ms RATTRAY (McIntyre) - Mr President, I add my support to the member's motion. I thank him for putting the motion on the Notice Paper and allowing me to go back to the *Hansard* from the Estimates process. He read out the initial response from the minister, being the Premier, and outlined his thoughts on the Parks and Wildlife Service.

I also went to the budget papers and took out the appropriation. Division 9, Primary Industries, Parks, Water and Environment on page 277 shows there is \$33.333 million in this year's Budget for parks' management and a capital investment program of \$32.465 million. That is a large capital works investment program in comparison to last financial year's and the forward Estimates for 2019-20, which has \$15 million. In 2020-21 it is \$13.5 million and it increases again in 2021-22 to \$21 million. Obviously, the Government sees this as an important area but the question is: is it enough when we are talking about half the landmass of Tasmania?

As highlighted by the previous speakers, we have these wonderful natural assets. Now we have to make sure we maintain them and do not overuse them because then they will not be as special and unique as what they have become to visitors to our state. Whether that is enough, most people say now that it is not enough - there is always that comment going around communities. We just do not have enough people on the ground anymore to look after the wonderful areas that have come under the Parks and Wildlife management area.

We need to go back and look at what is being put forward in the Capital Works, and I have done that. It talks about the increase in funding for improved statewide visitor infrastructure, a national parks maintenance boost and the Cradle Mountain visitor experience, partially offset by the ceasing of the June 2016 flood and parks infrastructure funding. There was obviously a need for some funding after the floods that impacted on those areas. Also, that significant increase, the \$32 million, included the additional funding for stage 3 of the Three Capes Track. I have not been on the Three Capes Track. There was some talk about doing the Three Capes Track -

Mr Finch - It's being solidified as we speak.

Ms RATTRAY - That would be interesting. I will probably need to get a different pair of shoes if I am going on that. I will not take my normal walking shoes, I expect.

From my perspective, that would be worth having a look at. We have heard a lot about the Three Capes Track and followed the stages with interest. They were in the notes that went with the budget papers. I am very keen to see how that unfolds in the future.

The member for Rosevears talked about the opportunities that are coming with the bike tracks around the state. Obviously, he does not do a lot of walking on mountain bike tracks; I can assure you I have seen that firsthand. I walked the Blue Derby track when it first opened. Before the bike brigade used it, we were allowed to take a small walk, Mr President. You could get about 300 to 400 metres with a little bit of undulating track but once you got past that, it is really 'go'. It is up, it is down, it is round - it is everything. You certainly would not be doing too much walking. With the number of mountain bike riders using the track, even in the winter when it is not closed for serious weather events, there is no way you could walk on the track. You would be run over by a bike. You just cannot use them as walking tracks; it is not possible.

Mr Finch - I wasn't suggesting that. I was suggesting there were many other opportunities there for specific walking tracks in the area. The views and the countryside are quite magnificent.

Ms RATTRAY - Absolutely, I agree. That has fuelled the interest of people coming into the area. Perhaps if you are coming with your family and you are not a mountain bike rider, you might choose to walk a track close by. Obviously, there are other opportunities that go with that mountain bike experience if you are not a full-blown mountain bike rider, as would be my case. I am aware of the opportunities but I have concern around some of the ongoing management.

The member read some of what the Minister for Parks contributed at Estimates. We talked about the unproductive rogue plantations that sit amongst our parks now. They are of concern. I suggested to the minister on that day that there is a very good example at Scamander called the Skyline project, where the rogue plantations have been removed and replanted with the native species of the area. Obviously, money goes with a project like that; it was well supported in the past. Unfortunately, I have been unable to generate enough support from the Government to assist in having another one of those projects start up around the state. I suggested that there might be an

opportunity on the west coast, to take out some plantations that have been unproductive and replant with native vegetation. I also suggested that there is an opportunity on Flinders Island, where a plantation has been harvested and not been replanted. There would be also an opportunity to put it back to its native form; giving protection for biodiversity around the state.

I will keep working on this; I think the project has merit. I would like to see a government acknowledge the work that has happened at the Skyline project at Scamander, which some of my honourable colleagues have seen firsthand, which has been undertaken by Todd Dudley and his team. That is one of the initiatives that I want to keep onto. The other issue I want to mention is the significant issue of the feral cat population, ever-expanding in our communities, but considerably in our parks. Because there is no one around, it is easy to dump your cat.

Mr Valentine - They do great damage.

Ms RATTRAY - They do great damage. I put a number of questions to Jason Jacobi at Estimates regarding what we are doing with feral cats and how to manage them in our parks. I will quote from Mr Jacobi when I asked about trapping and what was going on -

Yes, trapping of feral animals is regularly undertaken in each of our field centres and bases across all parks and reserves. Cat trapping has not been a primary focus for us to date but it is certainly emerging as an issue. The information we have, based on some UTAS research, is that cats have not become a major problem for us in terms of threats to native animals, but we are certainly keeping a close eye on numbers and populations.

I challenge that because this is not what I have been hearing, particularly in and around Meander Valley. I had representation from a gentleman using cat traps in the area who is trying to get the feral cat problem under control. Last night at the dinner hosted by the minister, Mr Ferguson - the Science meets Parliament dinner some members attended - I sat next to a zoologist, Professor Barry Brook, and talked to him about the feral cat population and he said it is too late. UTAS research indicated to Mr Jacobi cats were not a major problem in terms of threats to native animals, and yet Professor Brook was very clear that we had missed the boat. There is no way to pull back the population unless there is the sterilisation part at the front end. To stop them you have to sterilise them, before they get out into the wild, because they are just breeding and breeding.

We had quite a conversation and I asked about the cat traps, or putting a bounty on cats. He kept shaking his head. From all accounts, he is a very smart gentleman. He said we have missed the mark. I was very disappointed that appears to be the view of someone in his position. I am of the same mind as the member for Windermere - it is never too late to put in a conservation effort.

Mr PRESIDENT - And you are saying that would help the tourism?

Ms RATTRAY - I am saying that if our parks are not full of feral cats, it will help tourism. If I were a tourist, I would not want to go to an area overrun with feral cats.

Mr Dean - We do not want tourists in our parks getting toxoplasmosis.

Ms RATTRAY - We certainly do not. It comes back to the amount of funding allocated to caring and showcasing our parks. The amount of dollars needed - and I know there is a pull on the

state's budget from every which way. I understand that completely. I have been around here long enough now to know that you cannot have everything that you want.

Mr Valentine - It's the base product for tourism, isn't it?

Ms RATTRAY - Yes, but when we are talking about this unique and special aspect of tourist operations in Tasmania, we need to have a strong approach to making sure they are as pristine and as welcoming as possible.

Mr Valentine - As long as the things that get put in place don't actually impact on other users.

Ms RATTRAY - I heard what the member said about the number of people using the Overland Track and the like.

Mr Valentine - Or helicopters taking people from point A to point B when somebody is trying to enjoy a quiet environment - that sort of stuff.

Ms RATTRAY - There are many facets to this. It is always interesting to have an opportunity to speak to motions that members put forward. I thought, given the member made such a good job of his delivery, that I needed to find another aspect to talk about. I support the motion.

[4.36 p.m.]

Mrs HISCUTT (Montgomery - Leader of the Government in the Legislative Council) - Mr President, the Government is committed to protecting our natural assets - they are the envy of the world. From our pristine Wilderness World Heritage Area to the historic heritage values of Highfield House, our Tasmanian reserve system is world-class. Every year our national parks attract more than 1.3 million visitors, and these numbers are continuing to increase. They also support 200 nature-based tourism operators.

The Government's goal is to ensure our natural assets are protected, and that the experience matches the expectations of visitors and locals alike as we continue to push towards our goal of becoming the environmental tourism capital of the world.

These things are not mutually exclusive; they happen in balance. That is why the Government is strengthening investment in the management of our parks and reserves. This investment is designed to provide the infrastructure that will benefit our regional economies, protect our most precious assets and provide opportunities to engage with our natural areas - not just for now but for generations to come.

Over the next four years, the Government will invest over \$56 million at Cradle Mountain, supplemented by another \$30 million in investment by the Commonwealth government. We are well on track to commencing works at the gateway to deliver on the master plan vision for this site.

An additional \$16 million of funding will be invested towards taking our national parks to the next level with a wide range of improvements planned all across the state's national parks and reserves.

By October this year, 15 new positions will have been recruited in the Parks and Wildlife Service to respond to the growth of visitation. New rangers will be appointed to Mount Field, Lake St Clair, Queenstown, Arthur River, Deloraine, Launceston, St Helens and Bruny Island, and several other positions will support the planning of our parks and compliance.

In recent weeks this Government advertised for 20 seasonal firefighters to ensure our planned burn and fuel reduction programs continue to protect life and property, and deliver positive conservation outcomes.

Mr Valentine -You were talking about planning and that it will help in planning things. Can you give us some understanding as to when the tourism master plan might be delivered?

Mrs HISCUTT - I shall follow up on that.

We are working closely with our partners and neighbours to achieve these goals. The Parks and Wildlife Service has developed the Working on Country program with Tasmanian Aboriginal people around the state; works closely with neighbours to combat weeds, pests and the threat of bushfire; and plans for our tourism ventures alongside local tourism and community associations. Many existing walking and mountain biking tracks exist on private land under agreements with landholders. The success and revival of towns like Derby and Maydena is due to collaboration between the Government, councils and the tourism industry to establish trails on public land and to develop new tourism products such as the Blue Derby Pods accommodation and the Maydena Bike Park. The Tasmanian Land Conservancy also holds substantial parcels of land throughout Tasmania in freehold title. These lands are not only managed and protected for their natural and cultural values, but also for ecotourism. The Tasmanian Land Conservancy facilitates public access through their property to national parks and reserves and supports ecotourism ventures where appropriate.

This is a great example of private land delivering tourism and recreational use outside the national parks estate. The Parks and Wildlife Service provides extensive walking opportunities within the parks and reserves around the state, from the 60 Great Short Walks to award-winning multi-day walks like the Three Capes Track, Overland Track and South Coast Track.

As part of planning for the new multi-day experience in Tasmania, the Parks and Wildlife Service is open to new and innovative ideas and investigations into possible locations and criteria for a new walk have already begun. A public submissions program to gather ideas for the new tourism experience will be opening in the coming months. All Tasmanians will be invited to submit their ideas on what our new multi-day walk should look like, and where it should be located.

While protected and reserved land is the main focus of the experience, submissions may propose short sections on private land, and subject to landholder agreement, these could be considered. Following a detailed assessment of feasibility, the Parks and Wildlife Service will commence work on developing a new tourism experience that rivals others throughout the world. Tasmania is leading the world in nature-based tourism.

We are already the envy of other states, but we need to remain at the forefront of planning and design to ensure we stay true to our brand and deliver on our promises. The Government is committed to the development of a tourism master plan for the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area. This plan will provide a clear strategy of how and where we invest in sensitive and appropriate tourism, in one of the most incredible and treasured places in the world.

The Hodgman Liberal Government will be engaging with the community, our commercial operators and those passionate about the Tasmanian wilderness to prepare a master plan that presents and protects the extraordinary natural and cultural values of the park for future generations.

Mr Valentine - Do we know when this is to be delivered?

Mrs HISCUTT - I will have some more information for you shortly.

Mr Valentine - Thank you. My reason for asking is obviously there are projects on foot at the moment being pushed forward, and without the master plan it seems a bit back-to-front.

Mrs HISCUTT - I will finish delivering this and then obtain the information for you.

Mr Valentine - Thank you. I appreciate that.

Mrs HISCUTT - Just a follow up. The Freycinet master plan the member for Rosevears talked about is no longer on the website because consultation has closed and submissions are now being considered. The structure change - the PWS recently had a restructure to provide better capacity and respond to increasing demand. That includes two new roles of director of tourism and visitor experiences and director of operations, parks services. PWS works closely and in collaboration with the Natural and Cultural Heritage Division under the umbrella of DPIPWE as well as key stakeholders such as Tourism Industry Council.

The member for Hobart also mentioned the letter dated 22 August from Graham McLean. Upgrades to the Cape Raoul track have delivered on the Three Capes product and removed significant erosion issues on the existing trail. PWS maintains a range of tracks to ensure the experience people seek is always available. We do not want all our tracks to be highways, and we work to keep many trails natural. The priority through this is to make sure the tracks safeguard the environment and they are safe.

I will just see if I can find some more information.

Mr Valentine - Thank you. I appreciate that.

Mrs HISCUTT - The Government will meet obligations to deliver to the Tourism Master Plan for the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage area by the end of 2019. They will meet those obligations and current projects are assessed by an expert independent panel, consistent with the TWWHA management plan.

[4.45 p.m.]

Mr FINCH (Rosevears) - Mr President, I thank members very much for their contributions. I also thank Mr Jason Jacobi, who came to the Chamber today to hear the presentation. It is good these discussions take place so that we can put on record the things we learn from our constituents who bring issues to us or discuss things with us.

Ms Rattray - Or a dinner last night.

Mr FINCH - Or a dinner last night. We can then investigate in our community how they are feeling about things; to make sure that things are on track.

Mr Dean - The Minister for Tourism made an interesting speech yesterday in the other place about tourism, the Cataract Gorge tours and the Blue Tier Bike trail, and what they're doing for tourism and bringing tourism into the park. It would be interesting for members to have a look at it. It was an interesting answer to a question on this very subject.

Mr FINCH - That was a parliamentary presentation yesterday, was it?

Mr Dean - Yes.

Mr FINCH - How blessed are we to have the Premier as the Minister for Tourism and now as the Minister for Parks? I think it is a great combination. The last time we had that was when Jim Bacon was premier, minister for tourism and minister for parks. We saw some really enlightening links made between those two areas of development for Tasmania. This is entirely appropriate; it is a good development. Mr Hodgman, as Premier, gives such gravitas to the tourism industry. They are so proud to have him as their minister. He was there in person at the hospitality awards on Monday night. He also made a video presentation to the gathering and then a personal presentation. It was very well received. That gives a lot of confidence to people in the tourism industry. It was a great move for him to appoint himself to that job - a very wise decision. Now they have Parks as well.

Mr Dean - And Heritage as well in his area.

Mr FINCH - Those areas that are so synonymous with Tasmania, particularly as we flourish in this day and age. The member queried the UNESCO World Heritage Committee, raising its concerns. You did not mention UNESCO, but I know it had raised concerns about Tasmania's wilderness areas being rezoned for tourism developments. It was urging a tourism master plan that I think it requested in 2015 to be presented.

It is encouraging that some of these areas are being explored and developments are taking place, and that they are being scrutinised. I will cite a couple of instances. One is in my electorate where there was an opportunity for horse riding expansion to occur in that area. It was investigated thoroughly and it was found that it could be achieved. That business was able to expand. The other one that I have talked about recently, and people who follow me on Twitter and Facebook will see that I am very encouraging of the redevelopment of Bernacchi Lodge.

Ms Forrest - Does anyone do that?

Mr FINCH - No. I am sowing a seed just in case anybody has nothing else to do in their spare time.

They renamed the Bernacchi Lodge the Thousand Lakes Lodge. As I have mentioned here before, Marcos Ambrose and colleagues have redeveloped the lodge.

Ms Rattray - It is going gangbusters.

Mr FINCH - 'Gangbusters' is the word. It is a fantastic response to that opportunity to get into Tasmania's wilderness - the gateway into that Central Highlands area - and it is being taken up. Just imagine - that could have been demolished and eliminated from that wilderness area, and then there would not be an opportunity for people from around the world to go to that location and experience a unique wilderness area.

Mr Valentine - But not arriving by Formula One or anything like that.

Mr FINCH - No, the other one that will be an interesting debate for me to be involved in, if it gets to that stage, will be the cable car to the top of kunanyi/Mount Wellington. I grew up at Fern

Tree so the mountain was my playground as a child. Often, just for fun, we would go up the Zig Zag Track to the Springs Hotel - we would go to the lolly shop there - and then up we would go up the track to the Pinnacle to look at what must be one of the most spectacular views in the world.

Ms Rattray - And you didn't only buy lollies, did you?

Mr FINCH - I do not know what the member is referring to.

You want to share that view with tourists. Tourists are going to stay another day to experience that, but then you have to balance that against the thoughts of people who want that to be untouched, and that is difficult to defend. You have a road that slices right up through the middle, you have big towers on top, you have buildings on top, so it is hard to say it is a pristine environment. However, the voice of the people must be listened to. People are getting emotional about that opportunity that is being sought. That will be an interesting debate. I will be conflicted, so it will be interesting to see how those facts unfold for me.

On a one-by-one basis, as each project comes forward, let them be considered and let them stand alone as to whether it is a good idea, whether it is enhancing our tourism opportunities, and whether it does affect the conservation that we should be considering in our wilderness areas.

Managing more than half Tasmania's landmass, including those most sensitive environments, is a massive task for the Parks and Wildlife Service and for Tasmania. As the Premier says, it is a billion dollars' worth of assets. The Premier obviously recognises the challenge facing the Parks and Wildlife Service.

There are two factors that I would like to highlight: is the Tasmanian Parks and Wildlife Service being adequately funded? When you cite what is in the Budget and we talk about this \$16 million extra over four years, it sounds like a lot of money, but is it adequate? That is a question we need to keep asking. Is it doing the best possible job of preserving our national parks and planning for their future? These questions need to be asked constantly, and that is why I am pleased to be going to that forum where these questions will be discussed.

Ms Rattray - You will probably be a guest speaker, with all this knowledge.

Mr FINCH - No, I will leave it to Mr Jacobi to do that. These questions need answers and we probably need to ask questions, too. The opportunity will be there at that gathering. Luke Martin of Tourism Industry Council Tasmania, which is hosting the forum, said there had been a lack of investment over decades that is now being rudely exposed in places like Cradle Mountain and Freycinet. He says the infrastructure of our major parks is terribly inadequate to manage the visitor numbers they are experiencing.

There might be benefits in the form of the integrated management of parks and reserves with some natural features on either property or access to reserves on private property. The Leader highlighted some of the opportunities that exist, and perhaps exploring more opportunities that might come into the purview of the Government or the Parks and Wildlife Service. There are many examples; the list is almost endless of things that people can see and do in Tasmania.

I have canvassed a number of people with experience of our national parks and reserves. They agree that a number of problems need urgent scrutiny, but they also talk about numerous areas that could become attractions with the right planning and infrastructure.

Mr Dean - Before you sit down, yesterday the Premier referred to a massive upgrade at Cradle Mountain area with joint support from the Commonwealth. Obviously considerable work is going to happen there. We are suffering too much tourism, but that is a great thing, isn't it?

Mr FINCH – Yes, the danger is that we can love it to death. It is time to take a new look at things, but we need to be constantly looking at this issue. We should not take it for granted, and we should always put it under the microscope, scrutinising what is going on to make sure we get the best possible result. I thank members for supporting this motion and for taking an interest.

Mr President, I move the motion standing in my name -

Motion agreed to.

WATER AND SEWERAGE CORPORATION AMENDMENT (CROWN INVOLVEMENT FACILITATION) BILL 2018 (No. 24)

First Reading

Bill received from the House of Assembly and read for the first time.

ADJOURNMENT

[4.59 p.m.]

Mrs HISCUTT (Montgomery - Leader of the Government in the Legislative Council) -
Mr President, I move -

That at its rising the Council do adjourn until 11 a.m. on Tuesday 28 August 2018.

Motion agreed to.

The Council adjourned at 4.59 p.m.