



PARLIAMENT OF TASMANIA

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

REPORT OF DEBATES

Wednesday 16 August 2023

REVISED EDITION

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

LEAVE OF ABSENCE

Mr Rockliff

Mr FERGUSON (Bass - Deputy Premier) - Mr Speaker, as the House would be aware, the Premier is attending National Cabinet today and will be absent from parliament. As such, I will be taking his questions for his portfolios of State Development, Trade and the Antarctic, Tourism and Hospitality and Mental Health and Wellbeing.

RECOGNITION OF VISITORS

Mr SPEAKER - Honourable members, I welcome grades 5 and 6 students from Sacred Heart Catholic School at Geeveston. Good morning.

Members - Hear, hear.

QUESTIONS

Energy for Business Expansion

Ms WHITE question to MINISTER for ENERGY and RENEWABLES, Mr BARNETT

[10.02 a.m.]

Mr Speaker, before I start, I say go Tillies; I think we will all be cheering for them tonight.

Minister, last week we discovered that after 10 years of Liberal government, Tasmania has no capacity to provide energy to businesses that want to expand or start up. We found that major industrial customers like Norske Skog are unable to proceed with new projects and the CEO of the Tasmanian Chamber of Commerce and Industry declared that Tasmania faces an energy crisis. We now understand that businesses are leaving the state because there is no power available to them. Despite your previous denials in this place just two months ago, we know that Fortescue Future Industries have advised that they will not be investing in Tasmania because they cannot access power and have made their entire Tasmanian workforce redundant. Can you confirm that Origin Energy have not renewed any of their business association memberships and will also not be making any hydrogen investments in Tasmania?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I thank the member for her question and indicate that our Government has a bold ambition for renewable energy in this state. That is why we are very pleased to have passed through the parliament, with the good support of this parliament, to indicate our plans

to go from 100 per cent fully self-sufficient in renewable energy to 200 per cent. We are very pleased with that.

The question also relates to the Renewable Hydrogen Action Plan which the Government backs in. It is a bold plan to ensure that we could be in the global marketplace by 2030, building on our affordable, reliable, clean electricity. Our plans for hydrogen have been raised here in recent weeks and I am absolutely committed to delivering on that. We continue to have ongoing engagement in a collaborative and positive way with all the key proponents. In fact yesterday I met with ABEL Energy. They have plans for a \$1.2 billion green methanol plant at Bell Bay - very positive feedback. I will not go into private discussions with any of the specific proponents but our plans are bold and we are looking forward to continuing with our good work.

Green Hydrogen

Ms WHITE question to MINISTER for ENERGY and RENEWABLES, Mr BARNETT

[10.05 a.m.]

My question is again to the minister, who I note did not deny any of the statements I just made.

Minister, in July last year you said your Government will support Tasmania to become a significant global producer and exporter of green hydrogen by 2023.

The fact is that Tasmania currently has no energy to provide to hydrogen proponents and they have now left our state. You have no plan to start producing more power except for building Marinus, which will not come online until 2030 even if the federal government bails you out. How are you possibly going to deliver your pledge to make Tasmania a significant global producer and exporter of green hydrogen by 2030? Has a decade of energy policy failures on your watch dashed Tasmania's chances of becoming a major hydrogen exporter?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I thank the member for her question. There is an assumption that the member is putting to not just this parliament but the public that she wants to grow our economy and create more jobs. This is the assumption. This is the same Labor Party that last week for an entire week remained mute when it came to Marinus Link. They could not say one thing. In fact, a political journalist in this state writing for one of our main newspapers said that they were very critical and undermined Marinus Link. That is the view. Read the views of political commentators with respect to your position on Marinus Link. You raised Marinus Link; I am responding to it.

What this state needs to grow our economy and create more jobs is more energy. More electricity, more jobs. We are about growing our economy and creating a business community. That is why the Tasmanian Chamber of Commerce and Industry backs us 100 per cent to get on with building Marinus and make it happen. They want you to support Marinus and say something positive about Marinus Link which will grow our economy, create more jobs and provide energy security. Why can you not say that? You come to the lectern, you try to lecture us and, as I said last week, it must be so uncomfortable for you sitting on that fence. It is time

for state Labor to come to the party and express its views on Marinus Link and the plans to grow energy supply.

Ms WHITE - Point of order, Mr Speaker, under Standing Order 45, relevance. I ask you to draw the minister's attention to the question which is about hydrogen.

Mr SPEAKER - On the point of order of relevance I remind the minister to be relevant to the question.

Mr BARNETT - Thank you, Mr Speaker, entirely relevant, I would suggest.

The Leader of the Opposition had another chance to express her view on Marinus Link and said nothing. We know that this growing economy of ours, thanks to our Government, requires more energy supply. We know that Labor's plan for a price cap will hinder that. You will restrict growth, you will kill investment, and you will kill competition with your plan for a price cap. That is damaging to the Tasmanian economy and you should know better.

Native Forests - Logging Practices

Dr WOODRUFF question to MINISTER for RESOURCES, Mr ELLIS

[10.08 a.m.]

The photo published across Australian media outlets of a massive centuries-old eucalypt on the back of a logging truck has caused national outrage, but this is just another day in Tasmania. It was only the accidental filming of this giant tree, over three metres across, that showed the truth to the nation. Your giant tree policy is a sham that does not even protect our largest example of Tasmania's flowering emblem, Lathamus Keep. Seeking FSC sustainability while you are logging remnants with parrot habitat is a false marketing ruse. Protesters are in the Florentine forests again today and will continue to be there. Your destruction of forest cathedrals is a global shame. When will you catch up with public sentiment, take up true sustainability and end logging in native forests?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, let me be very clear: the member over there wants to shut down Tasmania's sustainable native forest industry and we will have none of it. Our Government supports native forestry and the forest sector because it is worth \$1.2 billion to the Tasmanian economy. It is more than 5000 jobs. It gives us the capability to manage hundreds of thousands of hectares of land for fire management, road access, tourism, bee-keeping and other things like that. It is a critical part of Tasmania's future.

Dr Woodruff - What about the giant trees they have been taking out every day?

Mr SPEAKER - Order.

Mr ELLIS - It is the only industry that can provide renewable building materials. It is the only industry that will help us deliver a plastic-free future. Can Dr Woodruff tell me what other industry is providing renewable building material?

Dr Woodruff - Plantation timber.

Mr ELLIS - It is forestry, Mr Speaker. This is what the Greens do not seem to understand.

Dr Woodruff - We are talking about giant trees.

Mr SPEAKER - Order, Dr Woodruff. I am not going to put up with constant interjections. You have asked the question. You will listen to the answer in silence.

Mr ELLIS - Thank you, Mr Speaker. It is a mix of native forest and plantation that will help us deliver the things we need in that space.

Australia is a net importer of timber. Why are we a net importer of timber, despite our outstanding sustainability credentials? It is because every time Labor and the Greens get together, they want to shut down native forestry. They want to shut down an industry that is one of the most sustainable in the world.

These days, you do not even need to vote for the Greens and Labor - you just need to vote for Labor, as we have seen with Dan Andrews' catastrophic attack on regional communities in Victoria; and with Mark McGowan's catastrophic attack on regional communities in Western Australia. They sell out native forest workers every chance they get, just so they can chase Greens preferences in the cities. We are going to have none of that because we back this industry.

It has been concerning to see federal Labor walk away from commitments around having native forestry as part of bioenergy, or our National Reconstruction Fund, because they are concerned about Greens and left-wing independent preferences in that place.

In Tasmania we remain steadfast. We will keep backing our foresters, despite attacks from the Greens that frankly are anti-science and anti-jobs; that do not account for the fact that a managed forest is a forest forever; that our permanent timber production zone has been a carbon sequestration sink since 1990. That is testament to the work of our foresters. Every time the Greens complain about harvesting in regrowth forests, it is testament to the work of our foresters for generations that they continue to steward -

Dr WOODRUFF - Mr Speaker, point of order, Standing Order 45, relevance. I draw the minister's attention to public sentiment, the majority of which is against native forest logging.

Mr SPEAKER - I accept the relevance of the standing order. I remind the minister of relevance.

Mr ELLIS - I am more than happy to talk about public sentiment, Mr Speaker, because the public backs us every time. We have taken our strong support to the electorate for native forestry, and they have backed us every time. Do you know who they have not backed? The Greens. There are only two of them here. They are not even a proper political party anymore. They chucked them out after they were in government for four years with the Labor Party and they nearly destroyed the forest industry. Public sentiment says very clearly, Dr Woodruff, that they do not want any of your garbage when it comes to native forestry.

We have sensible, sustainable and practical approaches to managing giant trees in Tasmania's forests. The Premier covered this yesterday. Our giant tree policy continues to protect giant trees and to ensure their cultural heritage is recognised and respected as part of that. I mentioned before some significant work that is continuing in that space, with LiDAR detection and other important scientific advances to identify and preserve giant trees. The Greens just want to shut down forestry, and we will always back it.

Time expired.

Infrastructure Projects - Regional Tasmania

Mr YOUNG question to DEPUTY PREMIER, Mr FERGUSON

[10.13 a.m.]

Can you update the House on the Rockliff Liberal Government's delivery of infrastructure projects in regional Tasmania, and outline the future pipeline of projects we can expect to see as a result of the Government's strong economic management?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I thank my friend and colleague, Mr Young, the member for Franklin, for his question. I also wish the Matildas well tonight as we see them take to the international stage and hopefully retain their position and defeat England to progress through the finals. We will all be cheering them at 8 p.m.

Mr Speaker, I am very pleased to talk about our record. It demonstrates that we are builders, not blockers. Across government, nearly \$5 billion is budgeted to be invested across the next four years. While the Labor Party has infamously said this is not the time to be building major new significant infrastructure in Tasmania, we are building.

I am pleased to tell the House that in 2021-22 we invested \$819 million into infrastructure in cities, country towns and regions around Tasmania, which was a 99 per cent success rate. That was the year before last.

Today, I am pleased to welcome the release of the preliminary outcomes report for 2022-23, which shows material improvement in Tasmania's finances and delivery of infrastructure. That report shows that our net operating balance is estimated to have improved by \$272.5 million compared to the original forecast as a result of improved revenues. As a result of our strong financial management, where our revenue growth exceeded our expenditure growth as recognised by ratings agencies, Tasmania's net debt is far lower than expected. It is estimated to be \$1.87 billion as at 30 June 2023, which is \$1.12 billion lower than the original budget forecast.

It is amazing how good news makes Dr Broad even grumpier than normal.

We are estimated to have delivered a whopping \$953 million in total infrastructure investment, an all-time record for Tasmania. We are builders not blockers. This is a staggering \$134.2 million more than that previous record year. Our year-on-year increase is more than

one third of the total delivery under those opposite in their last full year in office. We are investing across our beautiful state and our record on roads and bridges is a prime example.

Have a look at the transformation occurring on the Great Eastern Drive, a scenic stretch of the Tasman Highway from Orford to St Helens. It is a key regional road asset and vital for our tourism industry. There is more work to come. In 2018 we committed \$30 million to that drive upgrade program and a further \$4.5 million to upgrade Binalong Bay Road. We then committed another \$25 million and leveraged a further \$100 million from the former federal Liberal government, which has been honoured by the current Labor Government. That is another \$125 million yet to flow to the Great Eastern Drive on our beautiful east coast. That is part of our plan and it is working.

Further north on the Tasman Highway, a total of \$120 million is being spent to upgrade the stretch from across The Sidling to Scottsdale, in the central north on the Illawarra Road, the northern freight road strategy. There is more than \$280 million jointly committed to upgrades on the Bass Highway.

On the west coast there is another \$43 million for more upgrades of Murchison Highway and the upgrade of Lyell Highway.

Labor left office with an unemployment rate of 7.4 per cent. It is now 3.8 per cent. Our plan is working because we are builders unlike Labor, who are blockers.

Road Safety - Sacred Heart Catholic School, Geeveston

**Mr O'BYRNE question to MINISTER for INFRASTRUCTURE and TRANSPORT,
Mr FERGUSON**

[10.18 a.m.]

Mr Speaker, I take the opportunity to ask a question on behalf of Sacred Heart Catholic School, whose students are here today.

Minister, for many years students at this school, parents, teachers and the local community have raised serious concerns with you and your Government regarding road safety. The entrance to Sacred Heart is situated on a tight bend of the Huon Highway where the current fixed speed limit is 80 kilometres per hour. It is a toxic mix of pedestrians, school kids and traffic during the school drop off and pick up times. There is no momentary reduction of speed at this entrance, a safety measure afforded to almost every other school in the state.

This is clearly a dangerous situation and I fear it is only a matter of time before someone gets hurt. I have written to you and your predecessors about this issue since 2019. I even tabled a petition a few years ago which garnered almost 300 signatures. Your Government has refused to act.

For the safety of these students and the travelling public, why will you not act?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I also welcome the students from the school to the Tasmanian Parliament today. It is great to have them present for question time this morning.

Safety is number one for the Government, not only in safety laws and treatments of our infrastructure, but we have a demonstrated commitment. Every Tasmanian from every part of our state - city, suburban or country towns - can be assured that we will always do everything we can to ensure that we protect the travelling public's safety. We have significant projects under way in the Huon community and it is all about improving not just the flow of traffic, but importantly, safety measures as well.

One thing that Mr O'Byrne in his question did not mention, which he should have, is an acknowledgement that speed limits are not set by politicians. It is a wonder that Mr O'Byrne does not say this basic fact. As much as he might like a particular speed limit to be higher or lower, it is not within my power as minister to direct a speed limit change. He knows this but he did not mention that in his question.

Mr O'Byrne - You could take action.

Mr SPEAKER - Order, member for Franklin.

Mr FERGUSON - When he says I could take action, that is not true, much as he might like that to be presented. It is a matter for the independent Commissioner of Transport to set speed limits in Tasmania. I have corresponded with the member and I will continue to correspond with him on this. I have also communicated with members long before Mr O'Byrne came along. I have also spoken with members of the community in relation to that highway and the junction and will continue to do so. I have to receive that advice from the Commissioner for Transport. Frankly, it is very misleading of you, Mr O'Byrne.

Ms O'Byrne interjecting.

Mr SPEAKER - Order, member for Franklin.

Mr FERGUSON - You did it on the East Derwent Highway as well. By the way, when you were minister you did nothing on the East Derwent Highway in relation to members of the community who have, in some cases, asked for a slower speed limit there.

This is a matter that the department has been working on, researching and has provided advice to the Commissioner of Transport. If the evidence is that the commissioner is satisfied to change the speed limit, then he or she will do that.

Mr O'Byrne, I conclude where I started. You ought to know better than to try to make something political out of road safety.

Energy Availability

Mr WINTER question to MINISTER for ENERGY and RENEWABLES, Mr BARNETT

[10.22 a.m.]

Yesterday, almost 2 per cent of Tasmania's electricity generation came from the open-cycle gas power station at Bell Bay. That is a station you told the Premier last week was not operating. In 2020 you announced that Tasmania was 100 per cent self-sufficient in renewable energy. You repeated that claim this morning. You have continued to claim it ever since. How can this be true if we are burning gas right now and businesses are having to burn coal in the Derwent Valley because you have told them no hydro power is available? Has a decade of energy policy failure put Tasmania's clean, green image at risk?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I thank the member for his question to clarify and put the record straight with respect to the undermining of our economy and the undermining of our efforts as a government to grow our renewable energy future.

Let us deal with the first part of this question regarding gas. The Leader of the Opposition last week asserted that this Government and Hydro Tasmania had been forced to run the open-cycle gas units at the Tamar Valley Power Station due to running out of power. That is completely wrong and nothing more than fearmongering from state Labor. That is what they are doing: they are trying to undermine.

Our energy position is secure. As of Monday this week Hydro Tasmania's storages were at 45.7 per cent of total energy, the highest since 2019 for this time of year. The Tamar Valley Power Station's open-cycle units run either in generation mode for commercial opportunity, or in synchronous condenser mode for system stability, not for Tasmania's energy security -

Dr Woodruff - For making money out of gas-fired power.

Mr BARNETT - which is exactly what you are assuming and implying, and you are wrong. You are being misleading and you have been caught out again. You tried it last week and you have been caught out again. It is possible that they were confused with the Tamar Valley Power Station's combined-cycle unit, which has not run since 2019. Let us be very clear with respect to that.

Mr WINTER - Point of order, Mr Speaker, Standing Order 45, relevance. The question I specifically asked was how can Tasmania be 100 per cent renewable -

Mr SPEAKER - You do not get the opportunity to re-ask the question. I will remind the minister - and as you know, that is all I can do - about relevance to the question. The issue of gas was raised and the minister went there in the first part of his answer.

Mr BARNETT - Thank you, Mr Speaker. I have answered the question with respect to gas -

Ms Finlay interjecting.

Mr BARNETT - You do not like the answer because you are into fearmongering and undermining the Tasmanian economy. You have done it for a long time. You have a track record and you do it on a consistent and regular basis. You have one plan and that is for a price cap and that will restrict supply.

Opposition members interjecting.

Mr SPEAKER - Order.

Mr BARNETT - That will restrict supply and it will kill investment, it will kill the economy and kill the jobs.

Opposition members interjecting.

Mr SPEAKER - Order. Interjections should cease.

Mr BARNETT - Our plan is to increase supply and that is why we support Marinus Link and despite all the shenanigans on the other side they have still said nothing with respect to their views on Marinus Link.

Marinus Link - Effect on Tasmanian Power Bills

Mrs ALEXANDER question to MINISTER for ENERGY and RENEWABLES, Mr BARNETT

[10.26 a.m.]

In its July 2021 Project Assessment Conclusions Report, TasNetworks said stakeholders had highlighted the importance of clarifying the question of who pays in relation to Project Marinus. The concern was raised that the current transmission pricing arrangements would recover approximately 50 per cent of the project cost from Tasmanian customers. TasNetworks commissioned the consultant's report, which showed that only 6 per cent of the benefits would stay in Tasmania. New South Wales would get 38 per cent of the benefits, Victoria 28 per cent, Queensland 20 per cent and South Australia 8 per cent of the benefits. In its submission to Marinus, TasCOSS suggested that Tasmanian customers should pay no more than 6 per cent of Marinus costs, which is a reasonable suggestion. Can you give the House an assurance that either Marinus will not increase Tasmanian power bills or that Tasmania's contribution to Marinus will be no more than 6 per cent?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I thank the member very much. I appreciate the question with respect to Marinus Link and the opportunities it presents for Tasmania. There are those in the community who are aware of the benefits for Tasmania, but state Labor remain mute. In fact, they have been accused of being critical of Marinus Link by a very senior political journalist in Tasmania. However, I appreciate the question from the Independent member for Bass.

As a government we made it very clear with the Premier just two weekends ago that we still support Marinus Link. We are very strong in our support of Marinus Link for a range of

reasons: it will grow our economy and create more jobs and it will provide more energy security. These are our objectives. We want to put downward pressure on electricity prices.

The question also made reference to electricity prices, which provides the opportunity for me to confirm that since 2014 our long-term objective has been putting downward pressure on electricity prices. We have amongst the lowest regulated prices in Australia for both residential customers and small business. We have a record targeted effort to provide support to those in need; in fact, for six out of 10 Tasmanian households. That is our policy. That is our position. We have a commitment to have amongst the lowest power prices in Australia. We are very committed to that. With respect to Marinus Link, we expect it will grow our economy, create more jobs, provide energy security and put downward pressure on electricity prices.

Marinus Link - Government's Position

Mr TUCKER question to MINISTER for ENERGY and RENEWABLES, Mr BARNETT

[10.29 a.m.]

There have been multiple occasions for reconsideration of Marinus Link and related power developments since Will Hodgman and Malcolm Turnbull began spruiking the Battery of the Nation project in April 2017. There have been joint announcements between the Morrison and Hodgman governments at Lake Cethana in 2019, the Morrison and Gutwein governments at Riverside in 2020, the Morrison and Gutwein governments again in April 2022, and the Albanese and Rockliff governments in October 2022.

How is it that three different premiers in discussions with three different prime ministers stuffed this up so badly that the Treasurer was forced to bell the cat by revealing that the lousy deal would have sent Tasmania broke?

Further, does this not provide evidence that the Government's obsession with a plan for a new Circus Maximus on the Hobart waterfront has distracted you from your most important goal of dealing with the real issues facing Tasmanians with potentially devastating results for the people of this state, as the Treasurer has pointed out?

Mr SPEAKER - The member's time has expired.

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I thank the member for Lyons for his question about Marinus Link. He has asked questions and expressed interest over a reasonable period of time since being an Independent member for Lyons.

The Government's position is clear. Labor will snigger and laugh from the other side, but they will refuse to express a position on the biggest infrastructure program Tasmania has ever been potentially involved with. It is mind boggling that state Labor will not express a view. This analysis by Ben Seeder in the *Examiner* last weekend said, referring to state Labor:

... and they attacked Marinus Link itself suggesting the project was always a white elephant.

Ms WHITE - Point of order, Mr Speaker, Standing Order 45, relevance. The minister wants to give a four-minute speech about Labor every time.

Mr SPEAKER - Order. You can take your seat. I will remind the minister, as I can only do, of the relevance to the question. It was a general question, in my view, over a period time with Marinus. I will allow the minister to continue.

Mr BARNETT - Again we have the Leader for the Opposition stand up but she can make no comment or suggestion of a policy position from state Labor. We support Marinus Link because we need more supply. I have said time and again there is a fine balance between supply and demand. We need more supply.

Why do you think the business community says, 'bring it on'? They support it 100 per cent. They want us to grow our energy supply to meet the needs of a growing economy and a growing population. That is our plan. Price caps will restrict supply. Our Government policy position is to grow supply. It is pure and simple. With respect to Marinus Link, the Premier and I made an announcement two weekends ago. We said there is a line in the sand we will not cross for the best interests for Tasmania. That is always at the front of our minds. We are putting Tasmania first: our Tasmania-first renewable energy guarantee. When Hydro does well Tasmanians will save money.

We have delivered the targeted support for Tasmanians in need, the vulnerable Tasmanians, that is ongoing. The money is now flowing to save money on those power bills. They are real, they are not fake. I am looking at Labor when I talk about fake bills.

I appreciate the question. I appreciate the concerns expressed by the independent member for Lyons. As the discussions and negotiations continue with the federal government we will have more to say once we get to a position to be able to say it.

University of Tasmania - Cost of Relocation

Ms JOHNSTON question to TREASURER, Mr FERGUSON

[10.34 a.m.]

You would be aware of extensive and ongoing community concern with the University of Tasmania's decision to relocate from Sandy Bay to the Hobart CBD. Chief among these concerns is that it could send the university broke. Some submissions to the Legislative Council UTAS inquiry claim that the university no longer has sufficient funds to complete the relocation. The previous treasurer, I believe, approved UTAS borrowings of \$350 million. Of concern is that UTAS is spending \$131 million of its depleted funds on the ex-forestry building at a time when the relocation is in limbo. If UTAS cannot pay this loan, what implications arise for the Government, noting that the Tasmanian people are the shareholders of the university?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I thank the member for Clark for her question. The Tasmanian people are not shareholders of the University of Tasmania. That is not correct. The university is an institution established by a statute. The use of those business references like shareholders is not accurate. The state, whether through the parliament, GGS, or on the total state sector, does not underwrite the activities of the university. The university is a standalone entity established by a statute of this parliament.

The role of the Treasurer is an interesting one in respect of the University of Tasmania Act in that university borrowings have to be approved by the Treasurer. That is not an underwriting, it is not a commercial relationship, it is not a financial relationship. We do on certain initiatives support university expansion and transformation. We have been very proud to do so.

I invite you, Ms Johnston, to reconsider the way you might have come to this question. There is no concern that I hold in respect of the university's finances. I made this clear at the recent Legislative Council inquiry hearing where I was quite happy to attend and provide evidence to make that point. I also made the further point that when the former treasurer, Mr Gutwein, approved borrowings, he did so on the basis of advice from his department, the Department of Treasury and Finance; the same people who advise me today.

I hold no concerns about the financial integrity of the University of Tasmania. I invite you and others to speak well of our university. It is a great university. We need to support it. It is going through reform and change as all universities in our country are. We need to speak well of our university and encourage them to continue their difficult work of reforming and changing the way that they provide high quality education and training opportunities to the Tasmanian people. It is a key enabler of our economy and the future economic prosperity of families right across the state, not just mine, but yours and, indeed, many people who in the past have not thought of themselves as university students. We need to talk up our universities, be proud of them. Scrutinise them from time to time if you feel that is important, but I would invite encouragement of their activities and scrutiny where it is absolutely required.

Tasmanian Bush Summit

**Mr WOOD question to MINISTER for PRIMARY INDUSTRIES and WATER,
Ms PALMER**

[10.37 a.m.]

I am aware that the Bush Summit has been held in Tasmania for the first time this morning. Can you please update the House on what this event means for regional and rural Tasmania?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I thank the member for Bass for the question. It was a great honour to represent our Premier this morning to speak at the first Tasmanian Bush Summit. As well as an in-house audience, this event was live-streamed nationally, which meant that all speakers had the chance to talk directly to Tasmanians, but also to talk and promote Tasmania to a

broader national audience. Hopefully, this will be the start of conversations that will resonate through offices and homes right across our country. As Primary Industries minister, I was particularly proud to speak about the agrifoods sector.

The hard work and the passion of our primary producers combined with the support of Government implementing its long-term plan continues to see Tasmania as the best place to live and to work and to raise our families. At the grass roots level, what it means is more regional and more rural jobs, thriving regional communities, more money spent in local businesses, improved infrastructure, and the development and adoption of agritech and innovation.

Last year, the Premier announced the first of many strategic regional partnerships, which is a collaboration between local governments and the state Government to focus on expanding businesses, growing industry, building more homes, having essential services and supports, the skills and training required and developing our regions in line with their needs.

I was delighted this morning to announce on behalf of the Premier a further regional partnership covering the east coast of Tasmania, extending from Orford through to St Helens. This is an area that is just so rich in opportunity. We also know that there are challenges that need to be explored. This type of progress does not happen through chance. It is as a result of long-term planning and strategic investment. I am so buoyed by young Tasmanians in rural and regional areas, particularly those who are forging futures in primary industries. The amazing work of Rural Youth Tasmania was again highlighted over the weekend with the state finals of the 2023 Woolworths Tasmanian Young Farmer of the Year. All the finalists shared an incredible passion for what they do, and a desire to see more young people working in our agricultural industry. They are changing the perception of farming and showcasing the variety of careers that are available, and the different pathways people are taking.

I congratulate the 10 finalists, especially our winner, Owen Woolley, who took out the title in his last year of being able to compete at the ripe old age of 30.

The Rockliff Liberal Government is proud to support opportunities for young people to build a future in Tasmania, and we are proud to help showcase Tasmania to the rest of the country every chance we get.

Rental Laws

**Mr BAYLEY question to MINISTER for HOUSING and CONSTRUCTION,
Mr STREET**

[10.41 a.m.]

Tasmania has some of the weakest rental laws in the country. Rents have skyrocketed in recent years, and rent hikes of hundreds of dollars a month are common. Renters have no protection against being booted out of their home for no good reason. Tasmania recorded the largest increase in homelessness in the nation. Our public housing waiting list has more than doubled in size under this Government, and is now an average of 80 weeks.

You have said that when it comes to fixing the housing crisis, no idea is going to be dismissed - but despite desperate calls from renters and social service organisations, you have

already dismissed putting controls on rent increases. National Cabinet's agenda today includes rental laws. Will Tasmania be supporting the push for national progress on this issue, and what legislative reforms will you be championing to assist renters struggling with the ever-expanding costs of having a place to call home?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I thank the member for his question. I believe it his first question -

Mr Bayley - No, not my first question. My first question to you.

Mr STREET - I try to be nice and it has already blown up in my face, Mr Speaker. It is his first question to me, anyway.

The member is right in that I have said no idea will be dismissed out of hand in dealing with the homelessness issue in Tasmania. I have also been clear that supply is the key to fixing this problem whether that is Homes Tasmania building homes, or partnerships between Homes Tasmania and community housing providers, or whether it is in partnership with the federal government - such as the discussions that are taking place today in the national Cabinet between all the first ministers and the Prime Minister.

I met with the federal housing minister, Julie Collins, earlier this week, and we both acknowledge this is a national issue that is going to require national solutions as well as work between states and the federal government. I am not sure whether rent caps are on the agenda for discussion today in the national Cabinet.

As a Government, we are not supportive of rent caps. We think it would be a distortion of the market and would have unintended consequences. As I said, I am not sure whether it is on the agenda for discussion today, but rent caps - along with better protections for renters, along with how we increase housing supply across the country - are all on the agenda.

I look forward to seeing what comes out of national Cabinet today. I made it clear to minister Collins on Monday, as she made clear to me, that we are determined to work together, as federal and state governments, on solutions that can work right across the country.

Whaleback Ridge Wind Farm

Mr WINTER question to MINISTER for ENERGY and RENEWABLES, Mr BARNETT

[10.44 a.m.]

Does your Government support the Whaleback Ridge Wind Farm proposal? If so, why, after four years, do they still not have a lease over the site, or a planning pathway towards building something? Is this another example of why Tasmania does not have enough power to grow its economy?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I thank the member for his question. I note there was zero comment with respect to Marinus Link - no surprise.

You refer to the Whaleback Ridge project. Tasmania has long been a leader in renewable energy. At the start of question time today I mentioned about going from 100 per cent to 200 per cent, then 150 per cent by 2030. This is part of our plan. It has been legislated. We want to grow supply. State Labor, with their price caps, will restrict supply. Our economy needs growing supply.

We have been working collaboratively with Whaleback Ridge. We are aware of their plans, and thank them for the opportunity to progress that. We have met with a range of proponents, including Whaleback Ridge, on many occasions. The area they are interested in covers approximately 27 000 hectares of Crown land on the west coast and north-west coast - north-west of Zeehan, if that is correct. This is an area that includes regional reserves, mineral Strategic Prospectivity Zones and mining exploration licences.

Determining whether the proposal can be progressed is, therefore, a complex matter and involves satisfying the requirements of multiple pieces of legislation. Engaging with the proponents, the government is seeking to ensure the project represents, on balance, the best use of public land when considering strategic prospectivity, renewable energy targets, and social, economic, cultural and environmental impacts.

We make no apology for undertaking a thorough approach to commercial proposals that seek to use public land. It is understood the proponents are considering pursuing declaration of assessment under our major projects process, and are seeking to progress lease negotiations. It is important to note that the proponents have not, as yet, provided the Government any detailed information on the project, nor has it yet formally lodged an application for consideration under the planning process.

The final scope and form is not yet known at any level of detail. We will continue to work with the proponents, as we do with a whole range of proponents, including the provision of detailed information that is required to progress discussions. We look forward to ongoing collaborative discussions.

With respect to energy supply and delivering more renewable energy in this state, the key question is, why does state Labor support a price cap that will restrict supply?

Whaleback Ridge Wind Farm

Mr WINTER question to MINISTER for ENERGY, Mr BARNETT

[10.48 a.m.]

Your failures over the last decade have, incredibly, left Tasmania in a position where our economy's health is being held back because there is not enough power to grow. The Premier last week conceded we urgently need more supply, and said it was his Government's priority.

Why, then, has there been no progress at Whaleback Ridge for more than four years? Why did your Government take 18 months to respond to a simple letter seeking the Government's view on whether the project would be exempt from the provisions of the Strategic Prospectivity Zones Act?

Most of all, if you do support the wind farm, as you have just claimed, can you explain why your Government has told Whaleback Ridge they cannot have a lease over the land they need, effectively killing the project?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, the member is clearly not listening to the answers I have just provided. We support more supply. State Labor opposed more supply, through their price caps - why do you do it? We want to grow the economy and create more jobs. We have a plan to increase supply.

A price cap will restrict supply. It will kill competition. It will kill investment. It will kill jobs. They are not listening on that side. I urge state Labor to review their position, and to throw their plan for a price cap out the window, because it will restrict supply.

We need more supply. That is why we have a plan for it. That is why we are getting on with it. We have passed our legislation - 100 per cent to 200 per cent.

They will not tear up their price cap policy. They do not have a position on Marinus Link. My rhetorical question is, who do we listen to? Do we listen to the Leader of Opposition? Do we listen to the would-be leader of the Opposition, the member for Franklin, Mr Winter or do we listen to the future leader for the Opposition, Mr O'Byrne? We used to say Mr Winter is coming, but now we know Mr O'Byrne is coming. O'Byrne is coming and we will know in the next couple of days. They do not like it.

Mr WINTER - Point of order, Mr Speaker, Standing Order 45, relevance. This is a really critical question for Tasmania's economy. I ask you to draw the minister's attention back to the question.

Mr SPEAKER - That is all I can do. Minister, I refer you to standing order 45, relevance.

Mr BARNETT - We do not know what the position of state Labor is. We have the leader in waiting, Mr O'Byrne, and in the next couple of days we will know whether he will have that chance. We have a plan for growing the economy, creating more jobs, bringing on energy supply. State Labor has a plan to restrict our economy.

Health Services - Rural Tasmanians

Mr YOUNG question to MINISTER for HEALTH, Mr BARNETT

[10.51 a.m.]

Can you update the House on how the Rockliff Liberal Government is delivering better health services for rural Tasmanians?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I thank the member for his question and his strong interest in rural and regional health services in Tasmania, which is a priority for our Government. We are getting on with the job. We are providing access to quality health care in rural and regional areas. It is the lifeblood of our community. I was born and raised in rural Tasmania and I am proud to be a member for Lyons which has nearly 50 per cent of the state and, of course, some of the best parts of Tasmania. I see some nodding, Mr Speaker.

We know that Tasmanians living in rural and regional areas need access to those health services, so in the past 22 days I have been in the role as Minister for Health I have so appreciated the opportunity to visit the various district hospitals at St Marys, St Helens and New Norfolk. I mention New Norfolk and I pay a tribute again to Tammy Harvey who won the federal Health Minister's Award for Nursing Trailblazers - a fantastic job. I mentioned it on the adjournment last night. Congratulations to Tammy.

On my first day on the job I went to Oatlands and Campbell Town District Hospital and then to King Island with my Cabinet colleagues and members for Braddon. It was a terrific time to listen to the rural health sector and professionals, the health workers. I admire them so much. They are professional, they are passionate and they have heart, they care, and they go beyond the call. I say a tribute and thank you to those workers all across Tasmania, especially the volunteers.

As the new Minister for Health, I am committed to working with the Australian Government to deliver primary health care across rural and regional Tasmania. It is so important that Tasmanians can get access to the GPs they need. I have already contacted federal Minister Butler and raised that issue with him and will continue to do so, but we are not just sitting idly by, we are getting on with the job and in that regard we have been proactive.

I thank the Premier and former minister for health for delivering innovative solutions, particularly with respect to our regions and encouraging more GPs to work in rural and regional areas. We have started with the trial of a single employer model called GP Registrars. It is already up and going. It encourages training in general practice and makes it more attractive to doctors when choosing their specialties. It improves recruitment and keeps GPs in their rural communities. The trial is already delivering results. The first participants of this program commenced in July this year.

We have also established the Rural Medical Workforce Centre at the Mersey Community Hospital. I really appreciated the opportunity in my first week in the role to visit the Mersey Community Hospital to see the good work and to thank the health professionals and workers and volunteers and that is supporting the recruitment and retention of permanent doctors for the region.

We continue to invest in our district hospitals and community health centres across the state and our record speaks for itself. We built the new \$12 million St Helens District Hospital - a great investment. Again, I see nodding across the table. We have completed the \$10.5 million stage 2 redevelopment of the King Island Hospital. It is so impressive. I visited and toured through there last week.

We have upgraded rural hospitals and community health centres and ambulance stations right across Tasmania and invested \$5 million for plant and equipment purchases, but at the core of services are our people. We have boosted staffing with \$3.4 million for our rural hospitals and deployed 42 new paramedics in rural and regional areas.

We are getting things done, we are getting on with the job, unlike Labor who downgraded rural hospitals and cut the health budget by \$500 million.

Recognition of Visitors

Mr SPEAKER - Honourable members, I welcome students from the new migrant class from TasTAFE. Welcome to Parliament.

Members - Hear, hear.

Hydrogen Buses - Trials

Mr WINTER question to MINISTER for INFRASTRUCTURE and TRANSPORT, Mr FERGUSON

[10.55 a.m.]

Are you aware that representatives of your department recently told a public forum that hydrogen is not the solution to decarbonising heavy vehicle transport and that electric battery vehicles are approximately 60 per cent cheaper? How much has been spent on your trial of hydrogen buses to date and are you and your department planning to spend it?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I thank Mr Winter for his question. Your audition is not going too well, I have to say. It is not going too well at all, because as you know, Mr Winter, the O'Byrnes are coming and they are coming for you and your Leader. I think the member would identify with Zsa Zsa Gabor, who said there is only one thing worse than being talked about and that is not being talked about, which is the case for Mr Winter, because Mr O'Byrne is certainly coming for Ms White at the national conference tomorrow and the next couple of days in Brisbane for the meeting of the Labor family, if I can use that term generously, at the weekend. The factions that run this outfit called the Opposition have their knives out, Mr Speaker.

Mr WINTER - Point of order, Mr Speaker.

Mr SPEAKER - Before we have a point of order on Standing Order 45, I remind the minister of relevance to the question and put his mind to the question.

Mr FERGUSON - Mr Speaker, I apologise for that diversion but it felt like the right time to say it.

We are on track to begin hydrogen production in early 2024 through our Government's partnership with the Blue Economy CRC. I hope that Mr Winter is aware of that.

In respect of our bus trials, both for battery electric in the north and for hydrogen electric in the south, I have already announced those as Transport minister together with my friend Minister Barnett in his portfolio of Energy and Renewables. Those projects have now been announced, they are being implemented and we are totally committed to them. I surprises me, Mr Winter, that you would even bring that into question because they were only announced about four weeks ago; I would have to check the exact date.

Mr Winter has tried to stretch his legs quite a few times today on undermining our energy plan and Minister Barnett has absolutely and thoroughly called him out. Labor talks about energy projects like Whaleback Ridge but they will not even get to the starting line under their policy. If their retail price cap became law, every proponent for new generation in the state would walk away. They would run away under a Labor-Greens government because that policy is designed to restrict new investment.

Mr Winter interjecting.

Mr SPEAKER - Order.

Mr FERGUSON - That is exactly the consequence of your appalling legislation. You have been thoroughly called out, Mr Winter, and you have now had to resort to a question asking me about our commitment to a process we have just announced after a procurement process.

In respect of the question, our Government is working with our state and federal counterparts on increasing the electrification opportunities of our vehicle fleet, including light and heavy vehicles. I would absolutely commend to Mr Winter that he allow those trials to take place and let us see what we can learn from them. We would like to know the best mode for Tasmania to increase its investment into the future, because if we do not do these trials, then potentially governments could make very large decisions that are the wrong decisions. We want to get good evidence for these things. Our Government is totally committed to it. Mr Winter, you have been thoroughly called out and, frankly, you are not qualified for the job.

Government Borrowings

Dr BROAD question to TREASURER, Mr FERGUSON

[10.59 a.m.]

Page 23 of today's Preliminary Outcomes Report shows you borrowed an additional \$540 million last financial year to prop up general government expenditure. What are the estimated repayments on this new debt? Is it sustainable to put more than half a billion dollars of general government spending on the credit card every year?

ANSWER

And yet you want to spend more, as the Attorney-General has just called you out.

Mr Speaker, I thank the grumpy shadow treasurer for his question. On a day where we get good news about the positive improvement in the state's Budget, Dr Broad is about as

grumpy as when we come first in the CommSec's State of the State report. You need to get out more.

In terms of our Government and the preliminary outcomes from the report that Treasury independently provided yesterday afternoon, I thought you would have been wiser to sit there and say, 'no'. That preliminary outcomes report for 2022-23 shows a significant improvement in the state's Budget position: the strongest year of infrastructure delivery in the state's history. The report shows that the net operating balance has improved by \$272.5 million relative to the original 2022-23 Budget forecast.

Mr WINTER - Point of order. It is a nice preamble on this question. The question is specifically what the repayments are going to be on this additional \$500 million of debt. I ask you to draw the Treasurer back to the question. Hopefully he can answer it.

Mr SPEAKER - I will do that. We are on a time limit. I will ask the Treasurer to continue and put his mind to the question.

Mr FERGUSON - As I said this morning, we have seen an improvement in the state's net debt. What I am trying to say is that net debt was estimated to be \$1.8 billion. A \$1.121 billion improvement. Self-evidently less borrowings than expected means less servicing of those borrowings. I am surprised that the Labor Party is going to ask me how much more we have to spend on borrowings, when our borrowings are lower. If this is 'Beconomics', this shows why this Opposition is never fit. It is still not ready to run the state with its friends the Greens. Just wasting time.

Mr WINTER - Mr Speaker, point of order, the Treasurer has just misled. He said the borrowing is lower. His report on page 23 says it is higher.

Mr SPEAKER - It is not a point of order.

Mr FERGUSON - Just imagine what the borrowings would be if we implemented Labor's policy on state wages. Mr Winter, Dr Broad and Ms White jumped onto a Labor motion in this House. Sorry, a Green motion in this House. The Greens moved a motion that demanded that the Government match inflation with wages policy. I ask that they stop the clock, Mr Speaker.

Ms WHITE - Point of order, Mr Speaker.

Mr SPEAKER - On a point of order. This is the third point of order this question.

Ms WHITE - It is because the minister has not gone anywhere near answering the questions. What are the repayments on the debt? If he does not know he should sit down.

Mr SPEAKER - I will take the point of order of relevance. In my view - I should not offer a view - but the Treasurer has been talking about borrowings. The question was about borrowings. Continue your answer please.

Mr FERGUSON - I am going to continue. Just imagine what the borrowings would be if we had adopted Labor's policy -

Ms White - What is the number?

Mr SPEAKER - Order.

Mr FERGUSON - a \$2.4 billion additional spend. There is not a single respected economist in the country who would endorse the view that you should have wages chasing inflation. That would make the RBA's job impossibly difficult and interest rates would only go up further. It again shows 'Beconomics' - the useful phrase that when you do not know how to pay for something you say, 'This policy will pay for itself.' It is beyond credibility. The Labor Party has been called out. It is a distraction from the mess that it is in. They have been attacking Mr Barnett all day. We fully expect another stunt motion in a few minutes. You are being called out and you cannot be trusted with money.

Opposition members interjecting.

Mr SPEAKER - The House will come to order before I ask the next question.

Child and Family Learning Centres

Mr WOOD question to MINISTER for EDUCATION, CHILDREN and YOUTH, Mr JAENSCH

[11.04 a.m.]

Can you update the House of the progress of the six new child and family learning centres and how the Rockliff Liberal Government is delivering the support our youngest Tasmanians and their families need to thrive?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I thank my colleague, Mr Wood, for his support of young Tasmanians and their families. The Tasmanian Government invests in a range of high-quality, evidence-based programs to support young children and their families creating the right conditions for their learning and their wellbeing. The Government has prioritised investment and reform in the early years because we know it is key to giving Tasmanian children a great start in life. Last week we announced the next steps towards the Government's goal of universal access to worthy learning in the year before kindergarten. We will have updates on the expansion of our targeted Working Together program in the coming weeks.

The Government is delivering on major commitments right across the Education portfolio and I am very pleased to update the House today on our \$28 million commitment for six new child and family learning centres across the state (CFLCs).

This major investment will bring the network of CFLCs across Tasmania to 18. The purpose of child and family learning centres is to improve the health and wellbeing, education and care of Tasmania's very young children by supporting parents and enhancing accessibility of services in the local community.

These are highly valued services designed and named by their local community with goals of improving the health and educational outcomes for children, birth to five years of age;

increasing participation in early years programs, particularly those which support the transition to schools' building community capacity by developing partnerships with parents and carers and the community and responding to child and family needs in a seamless and holistic manner.

As part of our 2021 election commitment, the Tasmanian Government has been providing free access to speech and language pathologists, social workers and school psychologists in the CFLCs since February 2022.

In July, the Premier and I had great pleasure in opening the first of the six new facilities with the mylatina Child and Family Learning Centre now providing wraparound support in a safe and welcoming space for families in Newnham, Mowbray, Invermay, Rocherlea, Mayfield and Lilydale. I can also confirm that construction of the new CFLC at West Ulverstone is nearing completion. In the coming weeks I will have the pleasure of opening the next completed CFLC at Wynyard.

In July, I visited the worksite for the new CFLC at Kingston where I met with a member of the local enabling group, Samantha, who was brimming with enthusiasm for the service and for her role in shaping it. Today I will visit the site for the new CFLC in Glenorchy which has a local enabling group comprised of service providers, educators and community members who are already highly engaged in the service's development and design.

This is a fantastic opportunity for young families in Hobart's northern suburbs to get involved in designing a service that will support them and future parents to get the best start for their children. Construction at the sixth site at Sorell, adjacent to the \$25 million redevelopment of the Sorell School, is also well underway with construction of all six projects on track for completion by late 2024.

The Government is continuing to invest in education infrastructure with a capital works program of nearly \$255 million over the forward Estimates, including more than \$105 million in 2023-24. This is what making education a priority looks like. By contrast, Labor can only bring itself to mention education as a cost it wants to cut for families, not an investment it wants to make in Tasmanian students. I will take Labor's silence on its own education policy as a glowing endorsement of ours. We will get on with delivering on our promises and investing in the future of young Tasmanians.

FORESTRY (MISCELLANEOUS AMENDMENTS) BILL 2023 (No. 19)

First Reading

Bill presented by Mr Ellis and read the first time.

MATTER OF PUBLIC IMPORTANCE

Broken Promises

[11.10 a.m.]

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

That the House take note of the following matter: broken promises.

I am very pleased to speak on this very important matter of public importance. Broken promises: we all remember them. We remember the billboard on the side of the Midlands Highway talking about a four-lane Midlands Highway that has never been delivered by this Government. We remember the underground bus mall. We remember the Cradle Mountain Cableway. We remember the money you promised to the Burnie City Council for CBD upgrades. We remember them.

Nowhere is that more evident than in my shadow portfolio area of health. I want to talk about a number of those commitments. The sad fact is that by underinvesting in infrastructure across the health system, this Government has actually made things worse. Bed-block is the worst that it has ever been. We have a severe shortage of acute and subacute beds right across the state. The Government has made numerous commitments to the additional 250 beds at the Royal Hobart Hospital, which we have seen them announce and re-announce - but still we do not have those 250 beds.

The fact is, if you do not invest in that infrastructure, the total cost of providing health services increases. You can see that through the state Budget position and this Government's inability to invest appropriately in infrastructure.

Those 250 beds were touted as being physical beds - more beds at the Royal Hobart Hospital, transforming the hospital. In fact, as we discovered during Estimates, many of them are virtual beds. Many of them are now community-based beds. They are not even provided in the acute setting. You only have to understand the pressure that is on the emergency department day in, day out, night after night, to understand how critically important those beds are - and this Government has failed to deliver them.

The next example is the Launceston General Hospital. People might get sick of me talking about the need for investment at the LGH. This Government made a clear commitment at the last state election that it would invest \$580 million in the hospital's stage-two redevelopment - but we received just \$8 million in the Budget this year. That hospital is crying out for investment. It has the worst bed-block in the country. We have only six coronary care beds for the north of the state, servicing both the north and north-west. That is nowhere near enough, given the significant issues we have with cardiac disease across the north of the state.

It means the emergency department continues to be under pressure. It means we have record ambulance ramping. We have talked a lot about that right across the state - but nowhere is it worse than at the Launceston General Hospital, and its impacts are felt right across communities. Ambulance ramping has significant impacts on communities, with ambulances being drawn away from regional areas and not being able to provide services across those communities.

We have also had a number of commitments to the Mersey Community Hospital being an elective surgery centre of excellence to which the former health minister, Michael Ferguson, committed. Do you know what, Mr Speaker? Those beds are only being built now, years on from 2015. I remember that being the time of the White Paper; yet another plan for health services that this Government launched way back then. We are still waiting for those elective surgery beds to be available, and also the upgrades to the theatres at the Mersey Community Hospital. We are still waiting for that pledge.

Then there is the issue of access to adolescent mental health beds. This Government made a strong commitment to building a purpose-built adolescent mental health unit in Tasmania, but they have dropped that. The repercussions of this are incredibly significant. We do not have dedicated mental health inpatient beds in the north-west of the state. They are very limited in the north and limited in the south. There have been many, many calls for improvements to be made to the availability of that service across the state.

These are just a handful of examples in the health portfolio: projects that have been pushed out year upon year, underfunded year upon year, which has devastating consequences for the health and wellbeing of Tasmanians.

In my own electorate of Braddon, this Government committed to a number of key projects that they simply have not delivered on. The first is the Cradle Mountain Cableway. What a debacle. This is such an important iconic project, not only for the state, but for the north-west and the regional economy across Tasmania. This Government has fumbled that project. Fumbled it. They have dropped the ball. They have not been able to secure the funding for it. They were unable to lodge a business case - it took them five years. This is a critically important project. Even the Tourism Council has recently been strongly advocating for the Government to deliver on this commitment. It is a project that has been around for years and we are still waiting.

The second project is the harness racing and dog track in the north-west that was promised at the last state election. They have not delivered that. There is nothing on the horizon and it is having a huge impact on the harness racing and greyhound industry across the north-west coast. We want to see some clear action on that project as well.

Then there is the Burnie court, which has been kicked down the road. There has been very poor consultation with the community. You have changed your position on it. To my knowledge you have not yet purchased the land for the new development. It is just another example of a commitment that has not been delivered on by this Government. Another broken promise. Another major infrastructure project that is critically required right now on the north-west coast, yet it is unclear when that project will ever be delivered.

The other one I want to put on the record is the Western Explorer, which this Government has made lots of commitments about, over numerous elections. That road has never been sealed. We committed to that in the last state election. The Government has talked a lot about, and has done a feasibility study. It has been very difficult for us to get them to release that study; we are still waiting.

My message to the House today is that this Government, after 10 years in government, has made a lot of commitments to the Tasmanian community, but they have broken a lot of those promises.

They have not delivered on major infrastructure projects. We have seen underfunding of infrastructure year upon year, and that does have human impact. It has an impact on the state's ability to provide essential services, and the Government should uphold its promises.

Time expired.

[11.17 a.m.]

Mr BARNETT (Lyons - Minister for Health) - Mr Speaker, I am very pleased to address the matters of public importance today on behalf of the Government, and may I say what an honour it is to be appointed Minister for Health - 22 days in the job now. People who know me know I have a passion for health and want to make a positive difference. I have really appreciated the opportunity to meet the healthcare workers - doctors, nurses, orderlies, cleaners, the ambos and especially the volunteers. I pay tribute to all of them, and thank them for their service.

Many of the remarks made by the shadow minister for health related to health matters, so I will start with that. Our ambition is to build better health services, deliver the healthcare services that Tasmanians deserve, and that is what I am about: providing the right care in the right place at the right time for all Tasmanians in need.

It has been very clear this morning in question time that, as a Government, we are builders. We are not blockers - we are builders. State Labor could not even advise the parliament or the public of its position on Marinus Link this morning. They have a policy position to bring in a price cap, which would restrict energy supply. That is a matter for them. They have to be accountable for that.

With respect to health, I have now had five visits to the Royal Hobart Hospital. Yesterday I was at the diabetes centre, and I am so impressed with the people and the healthcare team who are delivering the care Tasmanians need. As I say, we are builders not blockers. State Labor did not lay one brick on the Royal Hobart Hospital. Not one brick.

There is a reference to the commitment to 250 beds by 2024. Before I get to hospitals and the acute care setting, I would first like to speak very directly to primary care. Yes, there is bed block at the hospitals - four out of 10 who present to our emergency department. That is very much a concern for me, as in not urgent, and that is very much a lack of primary care, a lack of access to GPs. That is a matter I have raised with the federal minister and I would like the shadow minister to raise it with her federal colleagues in terms of the bed block.

You also have the aged care blockage at the other end. Once they get through their healthcare services at the hospital they need somewhere to go and it is very clear that there is blockage because of aged care and disability care. Again, they are responsibilities for the federal government, but you do not hear a word from state Labor when they come to the party on that.

With respect to the LGH, we have work already under way on our \$580 million LGH master plan redevelopment. It is a long-term upgrade to the LGH over the next 10 years. As a government we are building a number of significant and exciting new developments through a staged program of works, with new facilities to benefit the community and support the delivery of contemporary care. These projects are in line with the LGH master plan and they are in the Budget.

I had a tour of the LGH and I appreciated the opportunity to do that a week or so ago, including the \$10 million Wombat Ward which provides safe and contemporary facilities including a schoolroom, playroom, lounge and outdoor courtyards for patients and their families to access fresh air during the day. I was pleased to visit this ward. I know what it was like in years gone past and this is a vast improvement. I say thank you and congratulations.

The fit-out works at the paediatric outpatient area and the women's health clinic have also been completed.

It does not end there. A new 38-bed medical ward is complete; the nine negative pressure rooms at the Acute Medical Unit are complete; upgrades to the central sterilisation department are complete; the fit-out of the paediatric outpatient area is complete; the fit-out of the women's health clinic is complete; refurbishment of 39 Frankland Street is complete, home to the Anne O'Byrne Education Centre with a state-of-the-art interdisciplinary simulation laboratory and a new home for the LGH Nursing Education Unit as a hub for learning and collaboration.

There is so much going on and to suggest otherwise by state Labor is very disappointing indeed. The 39 Frankland Street property, now known as the tunapri mapali building, also provides contemporary office accommodation, a computer training room and flexible multipurpose conference and meeting rooms and is an invaluable resource to the hospital. The improvements to the emergency department and ambulance bay are also nearing completion as I saw just a week or so ago.

Despite those opposite trying to assert that we are losing momentum we are not. We continue to build. We are builders, not blockers. We have invested more than \$115 million this year in projects at the LGH. There was a suggestion from my shadow that this is not the case. It is the case; it is in the Budget papers. The work is going on. This will see us build a new purpose-built mental health precinct and expanded acute care zones, a surgical short-stay and day procedure unit, and neurology, respiratory and infusion services.

State Labor promised a helicopter service - another promise they broke. Talk about promises. It was also Labor that left the helipad off the Royal Hobart Hospital. It was not even there. We have plans for a helipad at the LGH and the North West General Hospital. I was there a week or so ago and you could see it being built. The state Budget also provides \$15 million for the construction of a new LGH helipad. It is happening. We are building, we are getting on with it, it is in the Budget and so to suggest otherwise is totally disingenuous of state Labor.

We have record spending in Health. We have employed 2300 more health workers since coming to government in 2014. Under state Labor we saw cuts to Health. They sacked a nurse a day every day for nine months. They shut an entire hospital ward, they put beds in storage and they cut elective surgery. Enough said, Mr Speaker.

[11.24 a.m.]

Dr BROAD (Braddon) - Mr speaker, today's MPI is broken promises. Where do you even start with broken promises? This Government came into power almost 10 years ago and they have broken every single commitment they have made. They came in and promised -

Ms Archer - What? It's such a silly statement.

Dr BROAD - Interjections will happen; that is okay. They promised to be good financial managers and they have been anything but. They contracted 137 000 cubic metres of sawlogs but they are not delivering it. The minister, who is just coming back, promised to deliver on a hydrogen strategy, which we see is in tatters. He talks about the state being 100 per cent renewable but we know the state is not 100 per cent renewable for two reasons. They have to start the gas-fired power station so that 2 per cent of our power is now coming from gas, not to

mention the reliance on Basslink. We have to rely on Basslink now because energy is in balance in Tasmania. If it does not rain we are in big trouble.

We have seen an energy crisis before when the state had to suddenly rely on diesel generators. What we are seeing now is that the energy situation is so bad the TCCI describes it as an energy crisis. The Government came in promising the world and they are simply not delivering. How can this state get to a point where there is an energy crisis, as described by the TCCI, and yet the minister pretends that everything is fantastic? He pretends that a Labor policy of capping power prices would be a bad thing for the state's economy and yet the last time they capped power prices was when the Granville Harbour scheme came on line, so they are doing the opposite from what the Government predicted.

What has this Government done for the economy? In Deloitte Access Economics' most recent update they estimate that the Tasmanian economy shrank in the 2022-23 year and are predicting it will shrink again this year. The ABS recently updated exports and it was really disappointing to see that Tasmania was the only state where exports declined in the last 12 months to June. In the year to June, Tasmania's exports were down 6.4 per cent. The other states were up. The Government should be concerned about that. What future do we have to look forward to with exports when we have major businesses wanting to expand, wanting to create, wanting to produce export products and yet there is no power?

Norske Skog wants to convert from a coal-fired boiler to an electric boiler, 50 megawatts. What does this Government say? No power, go find it yourself. How is that making the state more renewable? This is why the TCCI describes it as a crisis.

Under this Government we have also seen debt ballooning. The Treasurer talked about an update in the figures and pretended it was a direct result of their long-term plan for Tasmania. What actually happened was that the Government received additional revenue, most of it, \$542 million, from grants from the federal government. That has zero to do with the Government's long-term plan for Tasmania. That is simply to do with an uplift in GST thanks to the resilience of the Australian economy - nothing to do with Tasmania.

The Government talks about a stronger budget position. However, again, there was an underspend in infrastructure and unexpected GST. That is what this Government has relied on for years and years. Despite that, debt is ballooning to \$5 billion. We are in an unsustainable debt position going forward. The Government is borrowing half a billion dollars. They are spending half a billion more than they earn every year, and yet we have this Government pretending that everything is just fine.

We now see that the hydrogen strategy is in tatters. How embarrassing for any government to be spruiking Tasmania as the hydrogen capital of the country when these proponents, major businesses with serious capital to invest, come to Tasmania and are told there is no power at any cost. The other detail of course is there is no water for them either. With hydrogen you need two things: power and water. This Government is delivering neither of those things and, as a result, these businesses are turning around and leaving Tasmania. That is a huge reputational risk to our state. That is a sovereign risk because this Government cannot deliver what they promise.

Fancy getting people like Twiggy Forest and Fortescue Future Industries here in the state, going around tyre-kicking all around Bell Bay and talking about having a massive hydrogen

industry, but the only detail lacking is there is no power at any price. That is embarrassing and that sets us back.

Avebury is struggling day to day to maintain solvency. The Government promised \$3.5 million in payroll tax rebates in 2015. There was a request for additional funds only last week of another \$800 000 to guarantee jobs to get to the end of the month when it can refinance. The Government has \$800 000 available because the request for additional funds is there, it is tabled, but the Government is pushing it out until October when it may be too late. If the company gets through to October then the \$800 000 will be welcome but now is when it needs it. The Government knows this. The Government promised to help out Avebury but has delivered nothing, not a cent to protect those jobs on the west coast. If that company goes into administration, which could happen at any moment, this Government is letting the people down by not honouring its promises.

It is putting everything at risk just like the Government's power strategy has put Tasmania's growth at risk because there is no additional power. You need power to grow jobs. The state was built on hydro industrialisation. The Government has done nothing, and now it says the state cannot afford Marinus. It cannot afford big projects because the balance sheet cannot handle it. They have racked up that much debt that the state cannot handle big projects. This state is in crisis.

[11.31 a.m.]

Mr WOOD (Bass) - Mr Speaker, the Opposition talks about broken promises, but I would like to give a very brief overview of promises kept and promises delivered. In the Health portfolio since coming to Government in 2014, the Tasmanian Liberal Government has rescued, planned and completed the \$689 million Royal Hobart Hospital stage one redevelopment, including the 10-storey 315-bed K block redevelopment and \$10.5 million for the helipad on the roof.

We have employed more than 2300 additional health professionals, including 1390 FTE additional nurses, 390 FTE additional doctors, 310 FTE additional allied health professionals and 220 FTE additional paramedics and dispatch officers. In the 12 months between June 2021 and June 2022, Tasmania's registered health workforce increased by 4.5 per cent, the highest growth of all Australian jurisdictions.

We opened the North West Cancer Centre in 2016 enabling people in the north-west to access cancer treatment closer to their homes. It was the Tasmanian Liberal Government that secured the Mersey Community Hospital with a \$730 million deal with the Australian Government. Critically our Government navigated a global pandemic; something that we can be proud of on a world stage.

The COVID-19 pandemic has been challenging nationally and internationally. Cautious and responsible border restrictions and a high target for vaccination coverage in collaboration with our public health specialist meant a higher level of protection for our vulnerable population and lower hospitalisation. At the height of the pandemic our COVID-19 vaccination rates led the nation. Tasmania was the last jurisdiction in Australia to apply elective surgery restrictions and the first to lift the restrictions, a marker of the judicious navigation of the pandemic. This was because our hospitals could still safely provide elective surgery even throughout the height of the pandemic, unlike many places in Australia and around the world. Our health system has performed more than 21 300 surgeries in 2022-23,

which is more than any other year on record and around 1000 more than completed in 2021-22, an increase of five per cent.

The waiting list at the end of June 2023 was 7925, the lowest since May 2018, and a 35 per cent decrease from the peak reached in January 2021. Tasmania had the highest per capita admission rate for elective surgery of any state or territory. As of 30 June 2023, there have been 237 additional hospital beds opened in our health system since July 2018. These beds are adding a real increase in capacity to our hospital system, including supporting our Statewide Elective Surgery Four-Year Plan.

We have successfully implemented an e-referral system at all four of our major hospitals, providing GPs with a more connected and secure platform to refer patients to outpatient services. We are investing in ambulance services. Since coming to Government in 2014, we have employed an additional 220 paramedics and despatch officers in Ambulance Tasmania. We have already delivered on our election commitment to employ 48 paramedics across the state.

Recently we committed to permanently funding 97 additional positions across Ambulance Tasmania. Our investments in ambulance services infrastructure include building new stations in locations such as Campbell Town, Bridgewater, Burnie, Oatlands, Glenorchy, Bridport, Queenstown, Beaconsfield and Longford, along with the upgrades to stations in Launceston, Dodges Ferry and George Town.

For our primary practice area we are delivering for Tasmanians in need of access to GPs. A nation-leading and innovative single employer model creates a new employment model for general practitioners in training to improve recruitment and retention of GPs in Tasmania, in particular in our rural and regional areas. We have funded the \$8 million GP After Hours Support Initiative, offering support for GPs to provide after-hours services and support to their local communities.

We have partnered with the federal government to plan and open four urgent care centres right across the state. The first one was opened just recently in Bass.

Our Government has developed the Rural Medical Workforce Centre providing \$1 million to build the centre and \$3.3 million to establish and operate it.

In the allied health space, the Tasmanian Liberal Government has delivered a nation-leading \$1.125 million scholarship to provide 45 professionals the incentive to stay and practice in Tasmania. We are also partnering with UTAS to deliver an allied health expansion program to offer additional allied health degrees in Tasmania, to grow our own allied health professionals, to improve retention and recruitment of our valuable allied health professionals.

I can promise those opposite that I have a handful of pages of kept promises in health that we would be happy to share as we continue to achieve for the Tasmanian people every day.

[11.38 a.m.]

Mr BAYLEY (Clark) - Mr Speaker, I thank the member for bringing this on as a matter of public importance. There is nothing more important than integrity and credibility in government. If our government cannot be believable, if it cannot be reliable, then what are the

people of Tasmania to expect? People are making decisions based on the promises, the pledges, the commitments that this Government makes. When it fails to deliver they are left hanging.

I will make one additional point before I go into the specifics. It starts in this Chamber. Visitors coming to the Chamber - particularly school groups coming up into the public gallery - see credible, well-formed, well-articulated questions being put to members of the Government, but all they see is bickering, obfuscation, and deflection, so what are we leading those kids to believe when it comes to the integrity of this place and our ability to make constructive decisions that are going to benefit their future?

I heard the contributions of the members for Braddon and I do not want to go through or repeat any of their lists of infrastructure, health and other commitments that have been broken. I want to touch on a couple of key points on commitments in my portfolio areas and others that have been neglected and failed to be delivered.

In the Arts portfolio, for example, during COVID-19, the arts community stepped up and continued to inspire and deliver for the people of Tasmania with their creativity.

Ms Archer - And we provided \$9 million.

Mr BAYLEY - That is right, they were provided for, but they were promised ongoing support after the COVID-19 pandemic. They were told they would be looked after like small businesses and others. We feel, and they feel, that they have simply been cut adrift. Artists kept their contract with the people; they continued to be creative. Unfortunately, the Government has failed to live up to their expectations.

When it comes to even statutory requirements, for example, in the Environment portfolio there were critically important things like the promised and the statutorily-required state of the environment report. It was promised in 2014 and we are still waiting on it. The environment community is having to mount a campaign to put pressure on the Government to deliver on its own statutory obligations to deliver that report. What does that say about any promise that they make in the environmental space - things like a ban on single-use plastics and container deposit schemes? We have a government that seems content and committed to prioritising the interests of industry at the expense of the environment. We do not even have a transparent, clear and delivered state of the environment report so that people can see how their commitments are being matched up against the reality.

In the Education space, promises of increased staffing and funding for public schools consistently fall short of what is needed and literacy rates are stagnating. Pay rises for teachers are fought against tooth and nail and are an ideological battleground with unions, while inflation soars out of control.

These are some specific issues in relation to promises but I also want to touch on more motherhood statements and some of the strategies that the Government publishes and ultimately never follows through on.

I want to touch on the Tasmanian Housing Strategy. Treasurer, it is great that you are here because we commend the Housing Strategy, the commitment for Housing First and the commitment for 10 000 houses by 2032. However, we look at the Budget and we see that those commitments are completely underfunded. To deliver on those kinds of commitments we need

\$150 million a year to deliver those 10 000 houses by 2032. A total \$1.5 billion has been earmarked by Government as being required but we are seeing \$87 million in the Budget in the last year and that only goes up to \$98 million in the forward Estimates, so we are a good \$50 million-plus short to deliver on those commitments. Need I remind the House that meanwhile, real people are suffering? There is an 80-week wait for public housing and 4598 applications on the Housing Register. We really need to do better.

When it comes to tourism, the strategy is called Tourism 2030 and it makes a whole bunch of really fantastic commitments around the tourism sector, its commitment to Aboriginal people and its commitment to being champions of the environment, but we simply do not see the follow-through. Does that strategy represent a new approach to tourism from this Government and the sector or is it just more of the same? If that document simply represents more of the same then people are going to continue to be cynical about the commitments this Government makes?

As well as failed commitments and broken promises, I want to finish up on the inability to pick up on constructive, good ideas that have been put on the table across the Chamber, which is profoundly disappointing and in many ways for the Tasmania people, can be seen in a similar light to broken promises. When good ideas are being put on the table, when constructive contributions are being articulated in this place, and from a policy perspective the Government rules them out simply because of ideological or deep political reasons, that is not only short-changing Tasmanians but it is an entirely disappointing way for government to engage in this place and to take Tasmania forward.

I thank the member for bringing this on and we look forward, I hope, to an improved attitude from government towards trust, towards integrity and delivering on its commitments.

Matter noted.

POLICE OFFENCES AMENDMENT (NAZI SYMBOL AND GESTURE PROHIBITION) BILL 2023 (No. 2)

Bill returned from the Legislative Council without amendment.

HOUSING LAND SUPPLY AMENDMENT BILL 2023 (No. 17)

Second Reading

Resumed from 15 August 2023 (page 88).

[11.46 a.m.]

Ms HADDAD (Clark) - Mr Speaker, I gave a very short beginning of my contribution before the adjournment last night when we began debate on this bill and indicated that the Labor Party will be supporting the Housing Land Supply Amendment Bill 2023 as we supported the 2021 legislation and the 2019 legislation before I was in this Housing portfolio.

As the Deputy Premier outlined in his second reading contribution, and as members would recall, the purpose of this legislation was to allow the fast-tracked rezoning of

government-owned land and later government-purchased land to allow for increased delivery of social and affordable housing, which is something everyone in this place supports. We were at a crisis point in 2019 and it has only worsened since that time in terms of the housing crisis that Tasmanians are seeing.

I noted in the Deputy Premier's second reading contribution that he spoke about it being a form of inclusionary zoning through the planning scheme, ensuring that a share of new housing construction is allocated to those most in need. I note that there is another way that could be achieved which would be to make mention of social housing in the planning scheme.

The draft planning scheme and the planning schemes that operate in Tasmania do not mention social housing and that is a real shame. From what I have heard from local councillors around my electorate, and more broadly around the state as well, and also from people trying to contribute to housing supply in the social government sector and the private sector, is that part of the reason we see inconsistent approaches to approval of social housing developments around the state is that the planning scheme does not provide a non-exhaustive list or some guidance to councillors around what social benefit means. That can mean that advice from council planners differs because they have different personal opinions about whether or not increasing social housing in their municipality constitutes a social benefit or not.

In my view, increasing social and public and affordable housing is a social benefit to everyone, not just to those who end up housed in that housing but it also enriches the general community and we should all be welcoming more social and affordable housing in our city areas, urban areas and in our regional areas. The days of the broad-scale housing estates are, thankfully, diminishing. They still exist in some parts but I think all parties recognise now the importance of mixed tenure and the importance of there being social housing, government housing and affordable housing in and around privately owned and rented housing, and that that leads to better social outcomes and stronger communities.

I have heard that the fact that the planning scheme is silent on social housing is one of the reasons that there are inconsistent results around the state when it comes to councils considering applications either for social housing from social housing providers or sometimes mixed-use developments where there is going to be a proportion of social housing or community sector-managed housing alongside some private rentals, and I think that is a real shame.

Recently, I learned a term from Pattie Chugg, the CEO of Shelter Tasmania and somebody well known to members here, which is YIMBY, which I really like and embrace. It stands for 'yes in my back yard'. It is a counter to the term 'NIMBY', 'Not In My Back Yard'. We want more YIMBYs in Tasmania. We want more people who say, 'Yes, in my back yard'. We want to see an increase in social and government housing.

I admire Rose Jackson, the incoming Housing minister in New South Wales, who made it very clear in her first few weeks as minister that she expects there to be an increase in social and government housing all over New South Wales. She made a point of saying, 'Yes, it should be in the eastern suburbs of Sydney; yes, it should be in the inner western suburbs of Sydney. It should be throughout the state in regional and urban areas. If people do not agree then maybe they should look for somewhere else to live'. Rose Jackson is doing amazing things as Housing minister in New South Wales.

This commitment to the fast track housing land supply order came from a commitment in 2014 when the Government promised a fairer, faster, easier planning scheme. It has not delivered on that and not much to show for the Housing Land Supply bills that came through this parliament in 2019 and 2021. The Labor Party supported those because we support an increase in housing supply across the board. There are now 11 or 12 sites, starting with one in Rokeby in 2018, West Moonah, Devonport, Newnham and Huntingfield, which is a big one, in 2020, Warrane, Romaine, on the north-west coast, another one in Burnie, Howrah, Chigwell in my electorate of Clark, another one in Howrah and one in Ravenswood.

We welcome the fact that those sites have been identified. They have been either acquired or purchased by Homes Tasmania and they are in the stages of rezoning that land. They are at the planning stage or, for some of them, the DA stage. It is disappointing for Tasmanians to know that this was promised such a long time ago and not one family is yet housed. I dare say it is a frustration for Government too and a multi-faceted one: there are real complexities in the planning scheme.

We are extending the time frame that the Housing Land Supply legislation can operate for. That is a good thing, but there is not one house out of the ground yet. If you add up all the promises there is somewhere between 800 and 1000 dwellings out of those different sites around Tasmania that have been subject to these housing land supply orders. Not one family is yet housed, which feels like a broken promise.

I know there is a lot of work happening behind the scenes but for people who are sleeping rough, or people couch surfing with friends and family, or people who are in private rental and cannot afford the rising cost of living, it is cold comfort for them to know that there is paperwork happening and that there is planning applications being submitted to councils when the Government promised more houses. It is failing to deliver on that.

We deal with technical legislation like this quite often, but it is a shame if parliaments do that without remembering why we are here doing these things and changing laws like this one. It might look procedural, but in reality we are talking about the housing crisis. We are talking about the fundamental solution required to address the housing crisis in Tasmania, which is increasing supply. Many other things can happen around the edges but what we have is a supply crisis. We have a crisis in supply of Government-owned and managed housing, community sector-owned and managed housing, private sector rentals and homes to buy. There is simply an insufficient supply for the number of people that need a home in Tasmania.

Under this Government the housing wait-list has doubled, from about 2200 families when the Liberal Party took office in 2014 to more than 4500 families. The number of weeks people are waiting, on average, has risen from around 21 weeks in 2014, which is still too long, to 80 weeks. As any member here who speaks to their constituents and advocates for their needs would know, that is an average. There are many thousands of Tasmanians who have been waiting much longer than that. Those are the people we seek to represent here, people who are not receiving the services that they need, deserve, and should be receiving.

The 2021 census figures show that Tasmania has had a 45 per cent increase in people experiencing homelessness compared to the previous census in 2016. That was a 45 per cent increase, the fastest growing rate of homelessness in the country. That is a shameful statistic and one we should all be very worried about.

There are 50 per cent more children who are homeless in the 2021 census compared to the 2016 census. That is a sign that there is a crisis in our housing system and people cannot find an affordable place to live. There are increasing numbers of people who do not qualify for social or government housing but cannot afford the high private rental costs of private rents in Tasmania. Rents have increased 50 per cent in Tasmania over the last five years. As people would know sale prices have also increased enormously.

The Government's attitude is that if they cannot afford private rent then they can go on the social housing wait-list. A huge number of people do not qualify for social housing. Sometimes these are families with one and even two incomes, but it is not enough to make ends meet with the rising cost of living, power prices, grocery prices and rent. Costs of education, costs of insurances; all these things are up. The result is that there is a growing cohort of Tasmanians who cannot afford private rents and do not qualify for social or government housing.

These issues should motivate all of us: they definitely motivate me and the Labor Party. We are going to support this legislation, but it is imperative on the Government to act as swiftly as it can to ensure that those sites all around Tasmania could be housing many of those 4500 families who are still waiting on the social housing wait-list.

We need to see faster action on those sites because it is not acceptable to Tasmanians that this promise was made in 2014. Legislation began in 2019, it was improved upon in 2021 and here we are halfway through 2023 and we are not only seeing rising rates of homelessness, rising rates of cost-of-living pressures affecting Tasmanian families, but we are also not seeing any homes out of the ground on those housing land supply sites.

There are so many people relying on this Government to do better on housing. That number is growing every week. I acknowledge the Government's commitment to deliver 10 000 social and government homes in 10 years. We welcome that promise, but they are behind on their own commitments and they need to act a lot faster.

Time expired.

MOTION

Select Committee for an Inquiry into the Office of Racing Integrity - Motion Negatived

Ms JOHNSTON (Clark) - Mr Deputy Speaker, I move -

That:

- (1) A Select Committee be appointed, with power to send for persons and papers and records, to inquire into and report upon -
 - (a) the effectiveness and appropriateness of the Office of Racing Integrity, including its:
 - (i) powers and functions;

- (ii) complaint processes and the conduct of investigations;
 - (iii) regulatory compliance matters;
 - (iv) communication and relationships with stakeholders including Tasracing, industry participants, and the Minister for Racing;
 - (b) the appropriateness and workability of the Monteith recommendations; and
 - (c) any other matters incidental thereto.
- (2) The Members to serve on the Committee shall be five, being -
- (a) the Mover;
 - (b) one from the Government, nominated by the Leader of the House;
 - (c) one from the Opposition, nominated by the Leader of the Opposition;
 - (d) one from the Tasmanian Greens, nominated by the Leader of the Tasmanian Greens; and
 - (e) one Independent Member, nominated by the Mover.
- (3) The Committee shall report by 28 February 2024.

Mr Deputy Speaker, at the outset I acknowledge that within the Chamber there are a range of philosophical views about racing. We are a broad church. There are those, like me, who find racing abhorrent and believe it is cruel. There are others who love racing and champion it. No matter whether it turns your stomach, or you are its biggest champion, one thing I am sure we can all agree on is that there must be integrity within racing.

Participants want it because it ensures a fair and level playing field for those involved. Punters want it so they can have confidence that it is a fair race when they place their bets. Animal welfare advocates want it because that is the way high standards of animal welfare can be achieved. Its importance is something that we can all surely agree on.

There can be no question that the Tasmanian racing industry is currently in tatters; it is broken on all accounts. Deplorable animal welfare, allegations of live baiting and race fixing, bullying, poor employment practices, favouritism and discrimination, and blatant disregard for racing regulations: all these matters have been brought to light by people within the industry and animal welfare advocates. Tasmanians are losing what little faith they had in racing and it is all three codes.

The common denominator in these failings is the Office of Racing Integrity (ORI). It has come to this under their watch. Let me quote from the ORI website:

The Office of Racing Integrity is responsible for maintaining the probity and integrity of thoroughbred, harness and greyhound racing in Tasmania.

There it is, in black and white. It is the probity and integrity of racing that is in tatters. ORI has failed in its remit.

The parliament has a responsibility to sort out this mess by appointing this committee to get to the bottom of the ORI disaster. It is our duty to Tasmanians, to the industry, and to the animals in it. We cannot keep believing that ORI is a viable regulator. That is the minister's approach but it is not sustainable, and simply not believable - and it is frustrating all who are involved or interested in the industry.

Examples of ORI's derogation of the rules of racing are not hard to find. ORI has known for over a year that leading thoroughbred trainer, Scott Brunton, has been in financial difficulties, apparently in breach of the racing rules and his training licence conditions. Last week, we saw action in the federal court to wind up Brunton's stables over a reported tax debt of approximately \$1 million. Mr Brunton, in response, then sent out a letter on Saturday to his owners, apparently saying he had changed the name of the trainer to his partner's name and that he would continue to train the horses himself - business as usual.

Can this be right? A flagrant disregard for the racing rules - all, apparently, waved through by ORI, or ignored by ORI. We know ORI knew of his financial circumstances. He has been pleading he cannot replace the arsenic-ridden fence posts that his horses keep licking because he cannot afford it. Nor can he afford the fines. ORI knew of his financial circumstances, yet did nothing. They allowed him to continue, and allowed the situation to get worse. ORI is either too blind, too weak, too scared or simply unwilling to perform the functions of a competent regulator.

The rules are very clear: a trainer needs to be a fit and proper person to hold a licence, which includes having the financial capacity to run the stables and, arguably, replace the fence posts. Mr Brunton has not been in that position for a number of months, yet here we are again, another ORI failure.

We have seen it in other racing codes, too. A suspended trainer simply transfers the licence to a family member or associate and continues to be the effective trainer, all under the nose and watchful eyes of ORI. For instance, Susan Gittus, who pleaded guilty to racing a greyhound with a banned substance and was subsequently suspended, simply transferred her licence to her husband's name and continued on. This is a massive loophole that ORI should have closed ages ago, but clearly did not. They allowed it to continue.

We need this motion to succeed so the committee can get to work and find what is going on with the regulations, or lack of them, within the racing industry.

Let us look at another example, greyhound racing, which has an abysmally poor record of animal welfare practices. In February last year, the media reported that lead greyhound trainer, Anthony Bullock, had not held a kennel licence for approximately 10 years. It is not

uncommon for Mr Bullock to have 90-plus dogs on his property. This is a serious breach of the Dog Control Act.

Since 2020, the guidelines for holding a greyhound training licence have clearly stated that the applicant must meet all local government and state government permits and regulations. Again, ORI has turned a blind eye to the flagrant breach of licence requirements by renewing and allowing Mr Bullock to continue to train and race dogs. Is it ORI's view that he is too big to be allowed to fall over? Is that why they gave him such an enormous grace period? He only obtained a kennel licence in May this year, some 15 months later.

Again, ORI has failed to step up to the plate and enforce the minimum standards when it comes to the cages that Mr Bullock keeps his dogs in. By Mr Bullock's own documented admission, his cages are below the minimum standard, yet ORI said it is acceptable because those kennels or cages were established years ago, prior to planning permits.

It is beyond belief that ORI is not willing to enforce the standards. It is not a fair playing field. If a new trainer came along and had to apply for council permits, building permits and apply for a new licence, they would be required to comply with the new standards - but because Mr Bullock is so large in the industry, so important to providing dogs in races, ORI allows him to flagrantly breach the rules, to ignore them for years on end so he can continue.

We are all aware of allegations of team driving, race fixing and animal welfare concerns in the harness racing industry and the subsequent management of those issues by ORI. Notably, action on this was only taken after the media took an interest. ORI had sat idle while people within the industry had been pleading with their regulator to take action.

We are still waiting for the Murrihy report; a further extension was only granted yesterday, to an unspecified date. Interestingly, however, it is the terms of reference relating to race fixing that has required the extension of time, but not the terms of reference relating to ORI's role.

Given that we know this issue has been raised by participants for some time, directly with ORI, and there appears to have been some substance to those issues, ORI is inextricably linked to the investigation, I assume. However, we will have to see what Mr Murrihy has uncovered. I believe it will be grave.

We learn of these failings largely from people within the industry, inside the racing industry. They are whistleblowers who are sick and tired of the lack of integrity within ORI and Tasracing. They say it is not a fair playing field for owners, trainers and participants alike. Some people, they say, appear to be favoured, and some disadvantaged. Indeed, RTI documents obtained by the ABC reveal an inappropriate closeness in relation between ORI and some industry participants. People are frightened to speak up, because ORI simply cannot adhere to due and fair process.

Alarming, I know of a number of instances where complainants have had their identities and details of their allegations disclosed by ORI to the person involved in the complaint. I have had personal experience with this. This is a deplorable situation - beneath contempt - that ORI would hang whistleblowers out to dry. They have done that repeatedly, over and over again. Once might be a mistake, twice looks like incompetence. Successive racing ministers have persistently called for racing people to come forward if they see or know

of wrongdoing. Honestly, who would come forward when the regulator is likely to broadcast your identity to the world?

I reiterate, for the benefit of those who say they want and support a strong racing industry, that many of the concerns with the functioning of ORI come from within the industry itself. My office has been inundated with people from within the industry who have pleaded with me to call out the wrongdoing and ORI's inaction. Even though they know that I would like nothing more than to shut down the industry, they are desperately seeking someone to be their voice. They feel that the only way to get some credibility and integrity back into the industry is to call out ORI and get a regulator with some teeth.

I know Mr Winter, the shadow minister for racing, has spoken about this previously in the Chamber. He has had conversations with industry participants who are equally frustrated by ORI and the way they are enabling the industry to be tarnished.

In anticipation that someone in this Chamber might not support the establishment of this committee because they believe there are already inquiries under way - the Murrihy investigation and the Legislative Council's short inquiry into ORI - I say that the Murrihy inquiry is limited in its terms of reference to only consider harness racing and specifically the matters raised by the ABC and ORI's role with that. It does not cover all three codes. The committee, if established, would.

While the Legislative Council inquiry does cover all three codes and looks specifically at ORI, it is limited by time and who it is hearing from. It has called the minister, the department, ORI and Tasracing but has not called for public submissions. The voice of industry participants, whistleblowers, stakeholders and animal welfare advocates is not there.

These are the voices that need to be heard and need a forum to be heard in. The establishment of this committee would provide that forum and that opportunity. There is a chance to have these matters aired and dealt with. The industry and community are unsatisfied with the limited inquiry under way. They are only telling a fraction of the story. Until there is a comprehensive inquiry, the angst, mistrust and loss of confidence in ORI will only continue. Both the Murrihy and Legislative Council short inquiry will be useful as a starting point but there is so much more that must be heard.

I will be brief because I want members to have the opportunity to make a contribution. Regulations are needed to allow fair play and protect the animals from cruelty in the racing industry but they are of no use if they are not enforced. Worse still, when they are blatantly ignored or not enforced then it eats away at any confidence or social licence the industry might have.

We must have an effective regulator, one which will vigorously and transparently uphold the rules of racing. That is what we need but in ORI that is not what we are getting. This parliament needs to deal with this urgently by appointing an empowerings committee. It has important work to do. It is a circuit breaker that is needed, otherwise we will continue to see more allegations coming to air via the media, via this Chamber and the whole industry will be tarnished. No one will have confidence in it and we will lose something.

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

[12.13 p.m.]

Mr ELLIS (Braddon - Minister for Racing) - Mr Deputy Speaker, I said yesterday that the Rockliff Liberal Government is a proud supporter of the Tasmanian racing community and the thousands of people who are part of it. It is a way of life for our state. It is a community supported by proud and passionate Tasmanians. It is loved by families around the state in every corner, including yours and mine, with many intergenerational links that go back decades. I have noted a number of times that this community supports hundreds of jobs in regional areas.

The Tasmanian Government has acknowledged racing's challenges. We do not walk past these. We have taken strong action to protect the integrity of the racing community and to strengthen animal welfare outcomes. This is because we take these matters seriously. We want a strong racing community in Tasmania with a strong integrity framework response. We have put in place processes and the work to help deliver just this.

Before I lay out the work that the Government has already been progressing with racing and where we are going, I note the Legislative Council's Government Administration Committee B short inquiry, which is under way. The Government has taken the work of this committee very seriously, cooperating and appearing before the inquiry in recent weeks to provide evidence and respond to their questions. It is worth having a look at the terms of reference to note:

- (1) To review and report on the functions of the Office of Racing Integrity, including the regulation of the state's racing codes, including how the rules of racing are effectively enforced and investigated, monitoring the conduct of race meetings state-wide;
- (2) Progress on implementing the recommendation as covered by the review of the Racing Regulation Act 2004. Securing the integrity of the Tasmanian racing industry; and
- (3) Any other matter incidental thereto.

It would be hard to argue this is not a comprehensive set of terms. The Government looks forward to the outcomes of this work which will no doubt provide considered and valuable insights.

It is interesting to look at these terms of reference alongside the terms of the proposed select committee we are discussing today:

- (a) the effectiveness and the appropriateness of the Office of Racing Integrity including its powers and functions, complaint processes and the conduct of investigations, regulatory compliance matters, communication, relationship with stakeholders including Tasracing, industry participants and the Minister for Racing;
- (b) the appropriateness of the Monteith recommendations; and
- (c) any other matters incidental thereto.

These terms appear to go over remarkably similar ground. It is clear that there is significant overlap with pre-existing work under way through the other place plus other reviews which I will speak about in a moment.

I will now talk about the Monteith review instigated by this Government to drive a stronger integrity response for Tasmanian racing. We thank Mr Monteith once again for his work as an internationally respected racing expert.

The review received 31 written submissions engaging with 50 stakeholders as part of the consultation progress. This is comprehensive work to engage the racing community and those who participate in it to ensure as many considerations are taken into account as possible. The review has laid out the path for the establishment of the first Tasmanian racing integrity commissioner, which will have the powers it needs to set integrity and animal welfare standards supported by an office that must include staff with experience in animal welfare policy and regulation.

The commissioner will also provide an annual report to the Minister for Racing on the performance of their functions and the exercise of their powers, ensuring effectiveness and accountability as part of their roles. As part of our response to the Monteith review the Government also committed to enabling a greater role for the RSPCA in animal welfare and delivered new funding to support this work. In April, the former minister announced resourcing for the RSPCA to access an investigation management system for their animal welfare officers. This system aligned with the Office of Racing Integrity and Biosecurity Tasmania ensuring more consistency in information management.

The resourcing also supported work to modernise the MOU between the RSPCA and other relevant animal welfare regulators in Tasmania. Funds were allocated to analyse lifetime traceability options for greyhounds as well as adoption processes and linkages to local government. On Monday, minister Palmer confirmed more funding for another welfare inspector for the RSPCA, bringing the total number to six for 2023-24. This is important work that will drive better outcomes for Tasmanian racing. While the Murrihy review report that will be delivered on 31 August will be an interim report, recommendations and findings will be handed down against the majority of the terms of reference.

Some of the terms of reference in that report which will be handed to Government in less than 20 days time include to review the adequacy of The Office of Racing Integrity's management of allegations of industry participants such as drivers, stable hands and trainers and a casual steward in 2022 concerning team racing and/or race fixing and any other matters in the ABC media report of 26 March 2023 as the investigator sees fit. It will make any relevant recommendations and review the adequacy of complaints management by the Office of Racing Integrity relating to allegations of team driving and/or race fixing in the harness racing industry in the past three years.

I make the point again that this is work that is under way right now and would appear to overlap with the work that would potentially be undertaken by the proposed select committee. This is critically important work that will drive the next phase of the Government's response to ensure integrity in the racing community. We are looking forward to Mr Murrihy's interim report which will be delivered to government by 31 August, and we will consider that report closely before releasing it with a formal interim response in September.

Animal welfare work is also ongoing. Other work to deliver animal welfare improvements in Tasmania included last year's changes to the Animal Welfare Act 1993. Our amendment to the act expanded the powers of authorised officers and strengthened provisions for the enforcement and prosecution of offences. Tasracing has also taken a leadership role in animal welfare in racing and has already begun progressing more than 40 recommendations in response to the Tasracing Animal Welfare Review by Dr David Sykes, which was completed last year.

Pleasingly, in terms of results, there is much to celebrate for animal welfare in the Tasmanian community. There is more animal rehoming taking place in racing under this Government than at any other time. There have been strong investments in the Greyhound Adoption Program and I am advised that Tasracing supports privately run greyhound rehoming agencies in multiple ways. This includes funding the desexing of all greyhounds retired from racing in Tasmania and currently incorporates the funding of dental work for all greyhounds retired from racing. These combined schemes are estimated to save private greyhound rehoming on average a minimum of \$500 per greyhound rehomed. To ensure full transparency regarding animal welfare, Tasracing is providing information in their annual report on things like retirement and rehoming statistics.

We are not necessarily opposed to this motion and will not stand in the way if that is the will of the House. I reiterate the Government's commitment that we want Tasmanian racing to remain strong. The Tasmanian racing community deserves to have confidence in the Government and welfare efforts in doing what they love, and the overwhelming majority of the community wants the highest standards of integrity upheld and positive animal welfare outcomes in the industry.

We believe we are on track to achieve these goals with a new integrity commissioner to come on line in the future and progress to be made by implementing the recommendations arising from several review processes that we have committed to and finalised. Most of all, we have a strong resolve to deliver the best possible racing community for our state.

[12.23 p.m.]

Dr WOODRUFF (Franklin - Leader of the Greens) - Mr Speaker, the Greens are very pleased to hear that the minister indicated his support for this review proposed by Ms Johnston; I imagine she is surprised to hear that. That is good news, because there is unfinished business from the greyhound racing committee investigations that happened years ago.

We see that the Animal Welfare Act and the Office of Racing Integrity as they function are clearly not fit for purpose. We only have to look at the footage that was released by Animal Liberation Tasmania - the drone footage of Mr Bullock's property - with 91 apparent greyhounds living there in what to the viewer's eyes looks like appalling conditions. That is under investigation at the moment.

We remain concerned that there is a real disconnect between the expectations of Tasmanians about how animals will be cared for and the reality of what happens in the racing industry. There is an obvious disconnect between people who want a racing industry that is fair and protects the rules of racing.

We have an investigation at the moment, the Murrihy investigation, into race fixing and team driving. The minister told us yesterday that the findings of Mr Murrihy will not be

provided on that term of reference on 31 August and he gave no time frame for when they will be completed. That is unacceptable and people are concerned about the whole culture that is the racing industry in Tasmania, and especially about the culture within the Government, within the minister's office and within the Office of Racing Integrity that means that serious complaints of race fixing and team driving and serial animal welfare abuses do not get investigated and sometimes whistleblowers are outed to the community.

We would all remember the member of the harness racing industry who was moved to tears in a television interview about the pressure on him. He was moved to tears about the fact that he had been forced, basically bullied, to provide information and to have that go uninvestigated. To be outed is an appalling abuse of genuine, good-hearted people who want to point out failures in a system that are causing unfairness in racing rules, but also and particularly from the Greens point of view, especially failures in the care for animals who are at the heart of this industry, because it is animals that we are really here to talk about.

It is the animals that are the basis for the profit making of the racing industry. It is the reason, we believe, that Mr Bullock has not been closed down and his dogs have not been removed from racing at all while he is suspended, because he has become too big to fail, so big that it appears the Government has created a culture within government based on the ideology of the Liberals to support the racing industry at any cost. That flows through, it seems, to the Office of Racing Integrity, because the matters they should investigate at arm's length they have not done. This is why we are in a situation now where we have had the Monteith review into the Racing Act, but most importantly at the moment the Murrihy review into the allegations of race fixing, team driving and animal welfare abuses.

We expected the minister to give us a date for when that review will be completed into that second, most important part, because unless we understand what is going on in the culture, we can change the laws as much as we like, but we have no confidence that if we have not rooted out the rot in the system that the laws will be upheld. What we are seeing under the Liberals across all portfolios is an erosion of regulatory independent statutory bodies, with over years now, repeated pressure from government and ministerial offices to perform in the interests of growth of industry over the protection of the environment in the case of the Environment Protection Authority, and the protection against animal welfare abuses that ought to be at the heart of the Animal Welfare Act and also the job of the Office of Racing Integrity.

We were concerned at the outset and we noted in our submission to the review of the Racing Act that the public outrage and pressure that led to the initiation of the Monteith review was not mentioned at all in the purpose of the review, and that outrage was around the allegation that the acting general manager of ORI requested a fine to be withdrawn and deleted from the Office of Racing Integrity's systems as well as other allegations that were made about the office's dysfunction and the low morale.

Despite that being the main reason that brought this review to a head, the review did not even acknowledge it or at any point attempt to identify how the proposed reforms would address those concerns. The mission statement on ORI's website tells us everything - that ORI contributes to a healthy, growing and competitive racing and breeding industry by ensuring that it is safe, fair and credible.

That gets to the nub of the problems with ORI and where it has come under this Government when its mission is first and foremost about promoting the viability of the industry.

That is what we are seeing. That footage showed 91 beautiful greyhounds sleeping on dirt and concrete slabs in the middle of a freezing Tasmanian winter without bedding and with food in the form of rotting carcasses, or a range of different carcasses sitting in the back of a trailer dumped in a paddock. This is not the way that you treat beautiful dogs, but it is what people who want to make money out of greyhounds are allowed to do under this Government.

Unless the Monteith review can do more than fulfil industry propaganda and promote dubious claims about the industry's benefit to the economy, we are not going to make any headway. We support a review on the basis that we have not seen any progress in getting to the heart of the Office of Racing Integrity's dysfunction.

We obviously have flaws in the Animal Welfare Act. Our regulations for animal welfare are not working when you have the conditions exposed by a member of the public even though the RSPCA and ORI have attended that property. We heard that the RSPCA attended 13 times in the last year, so there is something wrong with the funding that is available for the RSPCA to be able to do their work. There is something wrong with the fact that we have these investigative bodies looking at conditions for animals. The public is outraged at them but they find it is all fine.

The background paper also did not discuss the findings and recommendations of parliament's Joint Select Committee on Greyhound Racing, many of which still stand and have to be implemented. The brief mention that the paper makes of that committee incorrectly calls that committee an inquiry into live baiting. That issue made up only one element of the committee's scrutiny. A huge concern we have with the Monteith review is that it recommends several functions be transferred to TasRacing. This includes policing of integrity and animal welfare in Tasmanian racing, the responsibility for licensing for participants, and the employment of race-day stewards and officials.

The review also seeks to relegate the new integrity body to an advisory and educative role rather than an enforcement one. Who will be doing the enforcement and how will it be at arm's length from the industry? At the moment the RSPCA says it does not have the power to act under the Animal Welfare Act. The industry is not making enforcements even though it sees gross abuses. The idea of taking away enforcement is very concerning. It is perverse that the Government has used scandals with ORI as a mechanism to further dilute the regulations and transparency. It is an Orwellian outcome.

Ultimately, the proposed reforms provide for sweeping steps but they are all in the wrong direction. That is why we support a select committee to examine these matters. The Government has shown time and again it cannot be trusted. We understand Labor is in synchronicity with the Government on their issues about racing. I look forward to hearing from them on whether they would like to participate in this inquiry. We believe that the rotten culture at the heart of ORI, the one that elevates the continuation of the racing industry at any cost, including the cost to horses, beautiful greyhounds and humans, has to be broken.

There are many issues in the racing industry that need to be investigated. We appreciate that a specific targeted review into ORI and a proposed new model has strong merit. There is

a draft bill potentially on the way this month. We strongly support the member's move for this inquiry. The Greens look forward to being involved in it. We will look forward to representing the people who made the very strong submissions to the Monteith review: 50 individual stakeholders comprising 31 written submissions made comments in the discussion paper. We know from many of the people that we have spoken to that their concerns have not been addressed.

People want to have change. The mood in Tasmania, as it is everywhere in Australia, is increasingly to ensure that animal welfare is paramount above any other activity or condition. In any racing industry that situation is critical. The Greens do not support the funding of TasRacing. We do not believe there should be public monies put in to prop up an industry which at its heart is run on profit-making from animals.

We see what happens to the dogs on the track. We see what happens to the horses. We see the cruelty and we hear the pain of people who work so hard to rehome greyhounds that have been deeply harmed. I was outside last week with people and their greyhounds who stand up on this issue. I met a number of dogs on which you could see the physical scars and the harm that had been done to them. Think of the dogs that are lying tonight on a cold slab in the middle of Tasmania, in freezing cold conditions.

I stand with the majority of Tasmanians who want dogs like that to be at home in a bed with family and friends who love them. That is what a dog's life should be. Dogs and horses have their own lives. Dogs are pack animals who love to be with humans and to look after humans and to be part of a family group. That is where dogs should be. There is no place for them in an industry that cruelly uses them to make money.

Thank you, Ms Johnston, for bringing this forward. We will look forward to participating.

Time expired.

[12.39 p.m.]

Mr TUCKER (Lyons) - Mr Speaker, I will be making a short and very brief statement on this. I will not be supporting this motion. The racing industry creates hundreds of jobs and brings in massive amounts of money to the Tasmanian economy. Last year the Australian racing industry contributed over \$1 billion to federal and state taxes. The racing industry has said time and time again that the welfare of animals involved is its utmost priority. Time and time again it has shown that.

In theory, what Kristie Johnston is proposing is a good idea. However, there is already a racing committee set up in the Legislative Council. Pushing for a second committee when one is already up is a waste of everyone's time and, quite frankly, does not need to happen. Inquiries are good, and they hold organisations accountable. However, inquiry after inquiry is simply overkill.

We do not need two parliamentary committees set up towards the exact same thing. It is a waste of taxpayers' money. Tasracing has consistently reported, offered, and shown transparency, when animal sanctuaries such as Brightside are not held accountable. There have been instances where various trainers have been done for neglect and abuse, and the racing

industry has swiftly banned these trainers from racing. This is no different to the farming industry.

Animal abuse is not a product of racing. It is a product of sick individuals. As sad as it is, getting rid of the racing industry will not stop animal abuse. The animal industry is being betrayed by poor integrity from welfare organisations. They are happy to take large donations from Tasracing, but are quick to turn around and accuse the industry of facilitating the abuse of animals.

It is understandable that people want to be shown that these animals are well looked after. Tasracing has consistently shown that is the case. This has been proven by the organisation creating the new position of chief veterinary and animal welfare officer. In a media release yesterday, Tasracing CEO Andrew Jenkins had this to say:

Tasracing places the welfare of racing animals across all three codes front and centre of our operational decisions. Doctor Lenz's appointment is assisting us to continue and meet this important obligation and drive further improvement in line with community expectations. Recent animal welfare initiatives introduced include the drafting of a comprehensive Equine Code of Practice, an increase in funding for the Greyhound Recovery Rebate Scheme, the greyhound desexing program and multiple investments in infrastructure specifically relevant to animal welfare.

New South Wales racing chief steward Ray Murrehy is currently conducting his review of Tasracing, which the Tasmanian Government instigated earlier this year. Until this report is delivered, and Tasracing has been given the opportunity to act on Mr Murrehy's recommendations, I believe it is not necessary to engage in another inquiry, and I certainly do not think it is necessary to create another racing committee.

[12.42 p.m.]

Mr WINTER (Franklin) - Mr Speaker, I appreciate the comments and contributions made by others in this place. When I look at the motion, and effectively its terms of reference, they are quite good, quite reasonable.

The problem I have with the motion is its intent. In her contribution today, the mover, Ms Johnston, said she wants to shut down the racing industry. That is her position on this. I cannot find it within myself to support a committee where the intent by the mover - and probably the chair, given the make-up - is to shut down an industry that I love, and shut down an industry that has supported Tasmanian families for generations, and continues to be a key economic driver in the regions. That is where our caucus got to in our deliberations on this.

We support racing. We continue to support racing. We have heavily scrutinised this industry over my last two years as shadow minister, and before that as well. We have had the opportunity to do that through the various committees of this House, through GBE hearings, through Estimates, and also, as referenced by Mr Tucker, in the Legislative Council, where my colleague Mr Willie has been doing an outstanding job of holding the regulators and Tasracing to account - and the former minister to account - for their failings relating to racing regulations.

It is all well and good for the minister to say the Government supports racing, but what racing needs is not someone to get up and say they support it, and say it is a way of life. They

actually need some of these issues to be fixed. The new minister is only a few weeks into the job, so that is fair enough. I appreciate the fact that, unlike his predecessor, he has actually been out there meeting people. I am hearing that already. I think people appreciate - particularly given the 12 months or so before that - having a minister who is actually accessible, so I congratulate him for that - but the issues here are significant.

The question is, will these issues be assisted to be resolved through an inquiry of the House led by someone who wants to shut the racing industry down? The conclusion I came to is that they will not be.

If the terms of reference intended to try to improve racing, to make it stronger and better, then I would support it, but the intent here is to shut it down, and Labor will not be supporting any intent to shut it down.

The racing industry has had a tumultuous few years now. The Office of Racing Integrity has had significant issues, significant staff turnover. I have spoken to a lot of members of ORI and I appreciate the stress and strain and intense scrutiny they have been under. It is not fair on those staff that they are under that level of scrutiny, but that is the position the Government has led the industry and the Office of Racing Integrity, and Tasracing to some extent, towards.

The performance of the former minister in particular has shone a light on the industry - and on some of her failings, and of the regulator, but I want to say the industry is not on trial here - the regulator is. The regulator has done a poor job. The Director of Racing should have been stood down from his role during the Murrihy inquiry.

There is a great precedent here. The Minister for Local Government made a great contribution, a sensible contribution, about Dorset Council. He talked about how, in order for the inquiry into Dorset Council to be undertaken, the councillors had to be stood down so there could be an independent review.

If you apply that same logic to the Office of Racing Integrity, the Director of Racing should have been stood down during this inquiry. Having him still there has undermined the independence of the inquiry. It continues to undermine it today, to the extent that BOTRA - the peak body for the harness racing industry - has passed a no-confidence motion in the Director of Racing.

Now, I am sure the Director of Racing is under a lot of pressure, but he should not be in that role at the moment. He should have been stood down. He is still under pressure because the Government has not done the right thing and stood him down while an independent investigation takes place - and that investigation will be inquiring into some of his actions, and the actions of stewards. They are key components of the inquiry that is going on.

Let us be clear about what has happened here. Two years ago, reporting by Emily Baker at the ABC made major allegations into the Office of Racing Integrity, which in part led to what was to be a review of the act, and then led to being a review of racing more broadly - which was the Monteith Review.

The Monteith Review was released more than 12 months ago. It then took more than six months for the former minister for racing to actually respond. When she responded, she

responded at the exact moment the GBE hearings commenced, so that nobody could actually review it before they started questioning it. That was the level of commitment to integrity.

The same racing minister said the former CEO of Tasracing had left for family reasons, when in fact he had been terminated - which again came out of the excellent work of that Legislative Council committee. By the way, that same committee is still working on its short inquiry into racing at the moment. This is the same committee that has intensely scrutinised Tasracing, and the Office of Racing Integrity. I think it is doing a good job and deserves to be able to finish that work.

Racing is a fantastic industry, but it does need to have these issues resolved. We had a racing minister who said GAP had been a massive success, when we know animal welfare advocates do not believe GAP is a massive success. We know, from the industry itself, that the greyhound industry does not consider it a massive success. In fact, they moved a motion of no confidence in the program as well - but the former minister stood up and said it was a great success.

We know from people like Janet Ainscow, who bravely spoke out - in fact I have not seen bravery like Janet Ainscow's in many years. The way she has been treated by this Government, the former minister, has been horrendous. She remains on less work than before, because she blew the whistle on the regulator, on the actions of the regulator, when she reported that a harness racing driver was prepared to speak about being told to team drive. She was stood down from her role as a steward of harness racing following that, and another complaint she made in relation to the Yole stables. Yes, she remains a thoroughbred steward, but she is receiving less work and less income because she blew the whistle, because she told the truth. There has been no apology to her, no support for her, and she remains in the same situation where I am sure, in fact I know, that she is stressed and she does not deserve to have been treated in the way she has.

We need to clean this up, but the way to clean it up is not through this committee, which is aimed at showing the racing industry, 'Yes, we could clean the industry up if we shut it down', but I do not want to shut the racing industry down. I want to make it better and stronger and improve it, and the way to do that is firstly to fix the Office of Racing Integrity. If the Monteith review legislation eventually ever comes to this place and is ever tabled and debated, that is a good time to scrutinise some of those proposed reforms.

The House might consider one of the points in the motion in terms of the appropriateness and workability of the Monteith recommendations. That is something we could consider referring to a committee, for example, if that is something that is required if there are concerns about some of the proposed changes. The changes appear to be mostly based on Victoria, as far as I can see. I am not sure whether they will need to be but we need to see the legislation.

We have to get this right. There are many Tasmanians who rely on this industry. There are 6000 participants. They are not all employees, as I have heard a few people say. They include people like me, who owns horses, people who volunteer, and people who are in race clubs. There are about 1500 full-time employees in the racing industry. The majority of those are in regional Tasmania, in places like Longford where you have a major training facility, or Brighton, or Spreyton on the north-west coast, or Seven Mile Beach where Scott Brunton trains.

I have to say again that the issues around the Brunton stable are really important to get right for the industry. It is important that we have a racing industry that is sustainable. I believe we should consider the financial situation of Mr Brunton, our most successful trainer, as something we need to consider in terms of whether or not the industry itself is sustainable in terms of the prize money being given. Is the right support there?

He is an important member of the racing industry, as is Ben Yole, who is the major trainer in the harness racing industry, but the industry is bigger than any one trainer. It is bigger than Ben Yole, it is bigger than Scott Brunton, and it is bigger than Anthony Bullock. In terms of the three largest trainers of the three codes, all of them are not reliant on one trainer, though harness racing is overly reliant but is not fully reliant on one trainer. We have to get this right.

The point I want to make is that we support racing and will continue to support racing, but we can see that there are major issues to hold the Government to account for. I believe we have been doing that very strongly and will continue to do so, but we do not need this committee. We do not need a committee that is designed to shut racing down.

I was surprised that the Minister for Racing appeared to be prepared to consider this motion. This is not a good thing for the industry. What we need to be doing - particularly in terms of those parties in this place who support racing - is to move this conversation into the future of racing, the long-term viability, particularly the deed and the future of the deed. We know there are people in this place - the Independent Member for Clark and the Greens - who do not want to see a future funding deed available for Tasmanian racing. We support the long-term future of racing. We need to have a long-term deed which supports the industry and actually makes it clearer to Tasmanians the economic benefits that racing provides to them.

The conversation around this being a \$30 million injection back into racing does not take into account all of the benefits that flow to Tasmanian regions, both economically and socially. We need to have a deed that understands and supports racing and understands the significant support that it provides back to Tasmania. In summary, we will not be supporting the motion.

[12.54 p.m.]

Ms JOHNSTON (Clark) - Mr Speaker, I acknowledge the contributions of my colleagues on this motion and particularly thank those who have indicated support for it. I want to say at the outset that my approach when I come into this Chamber is to be honest and open about where I stand. It is no surprise to anyone in this Chamber or anyone in the community that I am not a fan of racing, but I am a realist. I realise that when you have a government and an opposition that are as one and fans of racing that you need to move to a plan B. Whilst racing will continue, what I want to see is a racing industry with integrity at its heart because that will mean there will be better animal welfare standards.

I thought, apparently mistakenly, that integrity in the racing industry mattered to both the Government and the Opposition. I had hoped that by putting forward this motion, which speaks only to the issue of integrity through the Office of Racing Integrity, that this would be something that we could find common ground on, those who are not supportive of the racing industry and those who are. I was very mindful in drafting this motion of the need to provide balance. I did not put in there, for instance, a specific term of reference looking at animal welfare but instead talked directly to the issue of integrity.

I also ensured, or tried to ensure, that there was balance in the committee make-up and members will know that clause (2) of the motion says members who serve the committee shall be five, being the mover - myself, and my views are very clear; one from the Government - the Government's views on racing are very clear; one from the Opposition - the Opposition has made their views very clear; one from the Tasmanian Greens - they have made their view very clear; and one Independent nominated by the mover. The reason it is nominated by the mover is because it was unclear at that particular time whether Mrs Alexander or Mr Tucker or Mr O'Byrne had the time to serve on that committee and that would be decided amongst themselves, but you have heard Mr Tucker's views. He is incredibly supportive of the industry, the biggest champion, apparently, so there is every potential that this might be even a pro-racing committee. In fact, I would suggest it is more likely than not, but I hoped that those people in this Chamber would participate in good faith on this committee because it was about ensuring integrity.

Integrity is important to me for animal welfare reasons. It is important to the industry participants because they want a fair and level playing field. It is important to the punters because they want to know when they place their bet that it is a fair bet. What we have at the moment is a regulator that is failing at every turn. They are disappointing and frustrating industry participants. They are not upholding animal welfare standards and animal welfare advocates are upset and angry, and punters are wondering when they place their bets whether the race has been fixed and whether there is fair and reasonable regulations and an enforcement of those regulations in the industry.

I am disappointed with the contribution from the shadow minister because I understand his passion for the racing industry but this is a golden opportunity to put aside those philosophical differences in where we think the industry should end up in years to come and to ensure that right now we have integrity. That is what matters. That is what will keep animal welfare advocates quieter if we know that the Office of Racing Integrity will uphold welfare standards. That is what will keep the negative stories out of the media for Tasracing if there is a good strong Office of Racing Integrity to uphold the racing regulations.

This is a way to save the industry if that is what the Opposition and the Government want to do but they are not taking that opportunity by the sounds of it. That is deeply disappointing and there will be people in the industry who will be frustrated that their concerns have no forum if this committee does not get up. The upper House is only considering submissions from the minister, the department, ORI and Tasracing. They have not called for public submissions.

When I speak to owners and trainers on Saturday who want to speak out about the Brunton situation and who want to talk about what ORI is doing to prevent this kind of situation from happening, they have nowhere to go other than to the media or people like me who will call it out in this public place, so that is what we will keep seeing, but a committee could be the circuit-breaker. It could be the forum where those issues are aired, heard and dealt with once and for all. I plead with my colleagues here that if they really care about the future of racing industry and they want to support it and see it go from strength to strength, the only way to do that is to ensure there is integrity and this committee is a foundation for that.

Mr SPEAKER - The question is that the motion be agreed to.

The House divided -

AYES 4

Mrs Alexander
Mr Bayley (Teller)
Ms Johnston
Dr Woodruff

NOES 19

Ms Archer
Mr Barnett
Dr Broad
Ms Butler
Ms Dow
Mr Ellis
Mr Ferguson
Ms Finlay
Ms Haddad
Mr Jaensch
Mr O'Byrne
Ms O'Byrne
Ms Ogilvie
Mr Street
Mr Tucker
Ms White
Mr Winter
Mr Wood (Teller)
Mr Young

Motion negatived.

The House suspended from 1.04 p.m. till 2.30 p.m.

HOUSING LAND SUPPLY AMENDMENT BILL 2023 (No. 17)

Second Reading

Resumed from above (page 34).

Ms HADDAD (Clark) - Mr Speaker, I will speak briefly because I have almost completed my contribution. It is a shame that Government backbenchers continue to miss out on opportunities to bring forward issues that represent their community.

Mr Young - This is far too important.

Ms HADDAD - It is important, I agree with you very much, Mr Young. Nonetheless, it is not always the case that we deal with Government legislation during private members' time.

Mr Ferguson - We appreciate your compassion for our backbenchers.

Ms HADDAD - I had completed my comments on the bill prior to the lunch break but I made that comment.

[2.31 p.m.]

Mr BAYLEY (Clark) - Mr Speaker, the Housing Land Supply Act 2018 was established with the support of the Greens. While we intend to support this amendment bill, we have some concerns that we would like to put to the minister to address and to flag some amendments.

The purpose of the legislation was a short-term way to fast track the rezoning process for eligible government land for use under the Homes Act 1935. This was subsequently repealed and replaced with the Homes Tasmania Act 2022. The proposition was that this would result in faster delivery of public housing.

We are now five years down the track and are being asked to extend the sunset clause on this act by 10 years. Twelve orders have been made, a total of 61 hectares, as we have heard in the minister's second reading speech. It is incumbent upon Government to provide details and evidence of the effectiveness of the act so far.

We heard from Ms Haddad as well as our own investigations on Google Earth for the properties that have been subject to a housing land supply order and we cannot find any evidence of construction commencing on those lands, including on properties that were rezoned five years ago. Forgive me if there is an error there but that is our analysis.

Minister, what is the status of each parcel of land already rezoned under this legislation? For example, how many have had a development application lodged, development application approved, construction approved and construction actually commenced?

The second reading speech of the Housing Land Supply Bill 2018 also noted that some rezoning applications can take longer than nine months to finalise. The rezoning process under this legislation could take up to six months off that time frame. The Greens put it to the minister that taking six months off a rezoning process does not necessarily translate into taking six months off the entire process. That is self-evident in the analysis of what has happened on these blocks. As we understand it, there are options for concurrent processes including submitting joint rezoning and development applications. If it is taking many years from start to finish, it seems unlikely that fast tracking the rezoning process is making much difference to the completion times for developments.

We are really strong supporters of housing and strong supporters of social and affordable housing. I hope the minister can provide some explanation and evidence for this process providing benefit for the delivery of public housing.

Is the minister able to provide an average time from start to completion for public housing developments that go through a standard rezoning process? What is the average time from start to completion for developments that go through this particular rezoning process? If there are yet to be any completed, what is the anticipated time saving and what evidence is there to support this view?

Minister, in your second reading speech you also stated that a total of 61 hectares has been rezoned for housing purposes and transferred to Homes Tasmania for delivery, which could - and I emphasise could - deliver 1000 new homes. We find this language opaque. Do you have an estimate of how many homes are likely to be built on the land zoned so far? How many of these properties will be social housing and how many will be commercial properties?

We note from the second reading speech that the main benefit of this legislation is putting a focus on social and affordable housing.

It is incumbent upon the Government to put some facts on the table to demonstrate exactly how this is working and what it expects to be delivered, not just in vague opaque terms but in specifics. The Greens have a couple of amendments that we have distributed in the last hour or so. The original bill from 2018 was time limited by the legislation for five years, the sunset clause, five years. This why we are in this House today debating the bill.

We are now looking at a bill that will extend it by a further 10 years. That is a significant amount of time for what was originally described as a short-term fix or a short opportunity to rapidly rezone land with a focus on social and affordable housing. We are yet to see any evidence that it is actually working and had any meaningful effects.

The substance of our amendments is to change the sunset date from 2033 to 2026, three years out from now. We intend to keep this legislation in place and have it keep working but also require a review of the act to commence within two years. By the time we come around to looking at this again in 2026 the department and the minister has some cold, hard evidence about the effectiveness of this act that we can analyse and then consider a more lengthy extension to it.

That is the proposition for which we will be seeking the support of the House. We are of the view that the next time parliament sees an amendment bill extending this act we should be presented with evidence of its effectiveness.

[2.37 p.m.]

Mr STREET (Franklin - Minister for Housing and Construction) - Mr Speaker, I will be brief but I did want to speak on the Housing Land Supply Amendment Bill as the new Housing minister, as this is the first piece of legislation that has come through that has a practical impact on the portfolio since I took over.

We are focused on making sure that we can provide housing for Tasmanians. That is why we plan to deliver 10 000 new social and affordable homes by 2032. We are delivering on that target in partnership with Homes Tasmania, with our community partners and in partnership with the Albanese federal Labor Government. We know that increasing supply is key to tackling our housing challenges.

Included in that challenge is land for building and the availability of that land. It is a critical component of the supply equation in Tasmania. It is a fundamental part of delivering the homes for Tasmanians. The Rockliff Liberal Government knows we need to deliver more homes as quickly as possible. This is a key issue affecting Tasmanians. One of the reasons we have created Homes Tasmania when we did was to help deliver the homes that Tasmanians desperately need. That is why we are amending the Housing Land Supply Act to continue to provide flexibility in this area.

The original Housing Land Supply Act was developed as a response to our housing challenges and provided greater certainty to the rezoning process for government land and to facilitate the provision of more social and affordable housing. We created Homes Tasmania to build more homes faster. This is exactly what we are doing. Homes Tasmania has already ramped up investment, delivering 714 homes in the past 12 months.

We are delivering new supply every day with a record 276 homes delivered in June this year. We are also working closely with the local government sector to identify more land supply and collaborate on improving housing supply. Homes Tasmania will continue to ensure we maintain our high delivery rates with many housing developments already under way. There are over 980 new homes in the pipeline at various stages of planning approvals and builds right now.

I have been able to see first-hand the benefits that housing land supply orders create. I had the opportunity to visit the Huntingfield project during my first week as Minister for Housing and Construction. This land release project is now well underway, with stage 1 of subdivision work commencing. The works will deliver the first 30 residential lots which are anticipated to purchase off the plan later this year. The subdivision works will also deliver new road construction and the installation of all essential housing infrastructure connections such as water and sewerage, electricity and telecommunications. When complete, stage 1 will deliver around 210 lots of land, increasing the supply of well-located residential land in affordable and social housing options in southern Tasmania.

The Huntingfield project in total will deliver 470 lots of land when the master plan is completed. Homes Tasmania has commenced the analysis of a further 78 hectares of land to determine its appropriateness for future housing land supply orders. That is exactly why we created Homes Tasmania. Land rezoned under the act is vested in Homes Tasmania, which must take all reasonable steps to ensure that housing supply land is applied for the purposes of the Homes Tasmania Act.

Mixed-tenure developments have been recognised as the best-practice approach for social outcomes for many years now. This is in contrast to the broadacre social housing estates which have been found to not be good practice and embed disadvantage, something which has been recognised for decades now. Best-practice mixed tenure would be 15 per cent social housing, 35 per cent affordable housing, like the Tasmanian Government's MyHome shared equity program, with the remainder going to the open market. We have seen great success with the MyHome program, with 754 households assisted into home ownership in the last 12 months, 45 of them in the month of June alone.

The mixed-tenure approach also helps Homes Tasmania offset the cost of providing social and affordable housing and provides for integrated developments with greater housing choice and diversity. Importantly, remaining land not being used for social or affordable housing is made available to first home buyers and is sold at market rates, which is not the same as a developer seeking to achieve a commercial return for the development. Any financial returns for the sale of land is then used by Homes Tasmania to fund further housing developments. The Housing Land Supply Act has allowed Homes Tasmania to apply to unlock new land for the purposes of social and affordable housing.

The Government, in partnership with Homes Tasmania, is committed to addressing the current housing pressures being experienced across Tasmania. We genuinely care about Tasmanians and we want to do everything we can to deliver safe and secure housing for all Tasmanians. Regardless of what approach we take to doing it, I know there is a tripartisan approach to that cause.

As Minister for Housing and Construction I have been clear and concise about my aim. I want to help more Tasmanians. In order to deliver our ambitious targets and provide

Tasmanians with an opportunity to move into their own home, we need to be innovative and do things differently. The bill proposes to extend our capacity to increase the supply of land for building and the availability of land to give us the best opportunity to deliver more homes for Tasmanians who need them the most, as well as strengthening our economy and providing continuity to our residential construction industry.

Mr Speaker, I commend the bill to the House.

[2.43 p.m.]

Ms DOW (Braddon - Deputy Leader of the Opposition) - Mr Speaker, as my colleague, Ms Haddad, has said, we will be supporting this bill, as we have done on other occasions that this type of legislation has come before this House. We recognise we need to be doing everything we can to increase housing supply across the state. However, let us not forget that this bill is primarily an enabler but it is also planning legislation that has meant that planning processes have improved and done within a shorter time frame.

To all intents and purposes, this legislation sets out to create more homes but we have not seen many of those homes delivered through this yet. I hope it is not 2032 by the time we actually see a house built through this mechanism, because that would be shame. I encourage the Government, the Minister for Planning and the Minister for Housing and Construction, who are both with us in this place today, to get a move on and build the houses that are required to meet demand across the state.

I have just come out of a meeting with the West Coast Council, which was really great. One of the things we focused on was access to housing on the west coast. It is not that dissimilar to the Circular Head community in the need for essential worker accommodation across their community, but also to ensure there is adequate accommodation for economic growth and the growth of their key industries. This Government has had nearly 10 years to address that and have not done so. It is only now that they have developed a strategic relationship or partnership with the West Coast Council. I urge the Government as a matter of urgency to get on and work with the West Coast Council on this very significant issue, because it means that health professionals are not choosing to come and work in their communities, which means that essential services are not being delivered to the people of the west coast, and it is holding back economic growth.

When it comes to planning policy, this Government has had a good go at it but they have not really achieved what they set out to do all those years ago in 2014. I remind the House of this document, which talks about a 'fairer, faster, cheaper, simpler planning system'. Mr Deputy Speaker, you would probably agree with me that it is everything but across Tasmania and they have not achieved what they set out to do. We do not have a statewide planning system across the state yet.

Mr Ferguson - Yes, we do. Burnie is on board. Not all the other councils are, but we have a statewide planning system.

Ms DOW - No, not all the councils are, which means that we do not have a statewide planning scheme yet. All of the local provision schedules are not complete.

Mr Ferguson - Yes, we do; the TPS is in place.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER - Order. Ms Dow, through the Chair.

Ms DOW - He is inciting me, Mr Deputy Speaker.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER - I realise that, and I am saying through the Chair, please.

Ms DOW - I am responding. The minister does not like me saying that but it is a fact. He probably will not like me saying that while he was away on leave, it was the Premier who went out and talked about their latest innovative legislation around planning reform; it was not him as Minister for Planning. I wonder if he knew that was happening on that day and if he was okay with that.

Of course it came just days after there was a considerable backflip from the Government regarding local government reform. There was not good consultation with local government about that planning change. Let us not forget that for those councils that are part of the statewide planning scheme and have completed their local provision schedules, they are administering this Government's planning scheme. They are doing what is before them, what is provided, what this Government has worked on with them. It is actually the Government's planning scheme they are administering that this Government has such a problem with by taking away that responsibility from councils. In fact, you are dismissing the effectiveness of your own planning scheme by doing what you are doing and outsourcing that through that new legislative process.

You are good at making announcements about planning changes and new planning legislation, innovative models just like this one, but the announcement that was made by the Premier, not the Planning minister, a few weeks ago as part of his reset, means we will not even see legislation around that until the new year, so it is not going to have any immediate effect addressing the challenges around development across the state.

The last point I want to make is about the scheme this Government developed regarding granny flats. I think that was under the previous Housing minister and may have even come out of the Housing Summit where this legislation we are debating today came from. That was around the uptake of that initiative and to say there has only been 63 of those built across the state over two years. That is another measure put in place by the Government that has not been very effective.

There is no doubt that we need to look at new and innovative ways of trying to increase housing supply and meet current demand, but there are a number of things that I know councils have worked closely with this Government on, particularly around changing planning legislation to enable the development of residential premises within CBDs. I know that in a number of regional centres like Burnie and Devonport there has been a great push from councils there to try to get that up and running. There is loads of space above retail spaces and in empty retail spaces across those CBDs that could be converted for residential uses, bringing life back into their CBDs, closer to services for people and perhaps a really good option for older members of our community being closer to the shops and medical facilities, but also bringing a sense of vibrancy and liveliness to those CBDs, having more people living, working, shopping, eating and enjoying the amenity of those centres. That is something that the Government should be doing and has not done to date, and something that would be a good, neat solution to a current problem that we face across the state.

I note that in the minister's second reading speech he talks about the fact that there is good consultation around these housing land supply orders and the developments that are going to be introduced on these sites. It has been my experience in working with my local constituents that this is not the case. Concerns have been raised about the location of some of these developments, with the community wanting to understand more about what the developments will look like, and what the mix of uses across those developments will be. It has been very difficult for the community to get a good understanding of that, and it has not been done well in the past.

I have met representatives from Homes Tasmania and from the minister's office about that. Considering the Housing minister is here today, I ask that he might make note of that as well. There would be great benefit, I believe, in making more upfront information available about what these developments will look like, encompassing local communities and getting the community on board in the early stages of those developments - in the planning, rather than at the end. That would make a marked difference, I think, to people being more accepting of social housing developments in their local communities.

In concluding, we support the bill that is before the House today. We hope it does not take all those years for a house to finally be built under it. There needs to be a lot more work done by this Government on planning reform across the state.

I ask the House to note that for communities such as the west coast, there is a real sense of urgency around access to key worker accommodation. They have spoken at length with this Government about trying to fix some of these issues in their local community, and to date that has fallen on pretty deaf ears. Thank you.

[2.51 p.m.]

Mr YOUNG (Franklin) - Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise in support of the bill. The original Housing Land Supply Act was developed as a response to a crisis, and has provided a streamlined process for rezoning suitable government land for residential development and to facilitate the provision of social and affordable housing. It has been a successful process, and 12 orders have already been made, rezoning over 61 hectares of land for residential development, creating up to around 1000 new housing lots. All of these orders are being progressed, including Huntingfield, which minister Nic Street just spoke about, and which I had the pleasure of visiting with minister, Guy Barnett.

Another is in Burtonia Street, Rokeby, in the great electorate of Franklin. The Burtonia Street land release project will deliver 48 residential lots. The 48 lots include one lot that is being returned to council, which is for stormwater and sewerage infrastructure and not developable. Nine lots are being retained by Mission Australia Housing to deliver 16 social housing dwellings. Twelve lots have been returned to Homes Tasmania, and this reflects payment to the value of the Burtonia Street land. These lots will be retained for a future program including assisted home/land ownership. Twenty-six lots are available for sale on the open market. These will be promoted through MyHome in the first instance, for the first 30 days, then a targeted sales campaign for first home owners.

Overall, we anticipate that at least 20 units of social housing will be delivered at Burtonia Street - 16 by Mission Australia and four by Centacare Evolve Housing. The remaining lots are first being offered as affordable accommodation which reflects the purpose of the Housing Land Supply Act and the Homes Tasmania Act 2022. If there is a market for these lots, almost

the entire subdivision could result in affordable housing, demonstrating why the 15 per cent to 20 per cent social housing rule is a policy guide, not a fixed, hard and fast rule.

The majority of the orders made so far relate to existing surplus government-owned land. However, following the amendments made to the Housing Land Supply Act in 2021, Homes Tasmania has been able to plan more strategically to identify appropriate sites for residential use within a broader context, such as in accordance with a regional land use strategy or a local settlement plan. This also means Homes Tasmania will not necessarily have to compete with the private sector for existing residential land zones, but be able to identify new opportunities to provide housing.

We also know our current housing pressures are not a simple matter with a simple fix. Through our extensive planning reforms, the empowerment of our new housing authority, Homes Tasmania, and record levels of investment, we are making sure more land is available for social and affordable housing, and building more homes for Tasmanians than ever before.

We are also continuing to invest in initiatives such as the First Home Owner Grant and our shared equity program. Further, we are encouraging additional new residential opportunities through the Residential Land Rebate and the Ancillary Dwelling Grants program.

However, the job is not done, and there is still much more we can do. We have ambitiously committed to a 10-year plan of delivering 10 000 new social and affordable homes by 2032. This is why we are developing a new legislated pathway, to allow some planning decisions to be made by an independent development approval panel established by the Tasmanian Planning Commission.

While the type of projects that will be eligible for this new decision-making process will be determined through consultation as the enabling legislation is being prepared, we would expect that social housing would be a prescribed purpose - enabling them to be assessed purely in accordance with a provision of a planning scheme, and not held up and delayed by the influence of local politics.

The ability to make new housing land supply orders ceased on 20 July 2023, five years after the act commenced. This short time frame reflected that the act was primarily a short-term response to increase the supply of land for housing. However, there continues to be high demand for new housing, and the Government needs to pull all the levers at its disposal to help deliver that housing.

The Housing Land Supply Act has been successful in providing an efficient means of rezoning new land for housing. To meet our commitment to deliver 10 000 new social and affordable homes by 2032, it is important that we can continue to make housing land supply orders. This bill proposes to extend that capacity, to align it with our 2032 commitment. It will allow Homes Tasmania to plan ahead and identify new opportunities for residential development with a certainty that they will be able to rapidly rezone that land and provide new homes for Tasmania.

I commend this very important bill to the House.

[2.57 p.m.]

Mr FERGUSON (Bass - Minister for Planning) - Mr Speaker, I thank everybody who has contributed to the debate on this bill. While not the longest bill in the world, or the most complex in terms of what it seeks to do, it is very important to the Government. Naturally, my colleague, Mr Street, the newly minted Housing minister and his team at Homes Tasmania need maximum certainty to be able to get on and deliver their very extensive pipeline of new housing - both social and affordable.

Homes Tasmania joins the cohort of developers across the state in the private sector that are seeking to rezone, subdivide and take to market new properties - whether it is land for release, or for house and land packages.

In the main, I think the debate that we have enjoyed since yesterday has been very good, very apolitical. Ms Dow was perhaps the most political, and I will deal with those comments one at a time, but nonetheless I appreciate the fact that the Labor Party, the Greens and the Independents, as far as I can assess, are all in favour of the legislation. I note there are proposed Greens amendments.

As the Planning person in this equation, I will endeavour to respond to the questions around housing delivery, but it is just not my portfolio. They are questions that are far better answered by the minister with that portfolio responsibility - in this case, minister Street. If any of my answers do not provide the level of detail members may be looking for, I urge you to address them - perhaps through a letter - to your colleague, minister Street.

However, in my role as Planning minister, I see myself as providing an important support role within Government to the Housing portfolio. I appreciate that there has been a range of useful thoughts and comments through the debate we have had as well and so, let us deal with those one at a time.

Thank you Ms Haddad for your contribution. The extension of the Housing Land Supply Act forms one of a number of planning-based reforms that we are progressing to assist with housing supply in Tasmania, particularly social and affordable housing. It is also just one of the many pathways that Homes Tasmania and social housing providers are using to provide more homes for Tasmanians. Why do we need to do this? We have seen such pressure on our housing stock in our state and, in my own judgment, it is directly relatable to our growing population. It is such a straight forward causal link between growth in population and increase in housing demand. It is as simple as that.

It is important to note that the rezone provided by a housing land supply order is just the first step in the development process and all of the 12 orders made so far are at various stages in progressing through that process. I am advised that homes are under construction, although I am not the portfolio minister, in Rokeby and at Newnham.

In terms of the inclusion rezoning point, we know that inclusion rezoning is a complex issue and involves intervention well beyond the planning scheme. I am advised that evidence tends to indicate that to be successful inclusion rezoning requires ongoing ownerships of properties by housing providers to ensure the social and affordable housing outcomes are ongoing, not a once-off subsidy.

The Housing Land Supply Act provides an important vehicle for rezoning government land and ensuring that a share of housing is provided for social and affordable outcomes and, appropriately, immigration into new and existing communities.

The 2021 amendments, which we have not dealt with much in this debate, of the Housing Land Supply Act, also enable Homes Tasmania to acquire new land to then be able to deliver through that same process. That was an update to that original legislation. The parliament has embraced that.

In terms of the end users, the requirements in the Tasmanian Planning Scheme are generally neutral towards the person and the way in which they tenant that property. It is about the land use - the property use - of housing rather than asking if the occupant of this house is a home owner, a renter or a social housing client. A home is a home and the planning requirements are aimed to provide suitable homes for whoever is the end user of that home. The planning requirements generally focus on the suitability of the use and its impacts on the surrounding area, and the design and placement of the dwelling for onsite and offsite amenity outcomes.

The point that I am making here, particularly for your benefit, Ms Haddad, is these outcomes should be considered for all dwelling types. Whoever is going to live there, we would want a zoning outcome to be based on evidence of its purpose rather than the identity of the client group that might occupy those particular homes.

Ms Haddad - Minister, can I ask a question by interjection that is adjacent to what you have just talked about?

Mr FERGUSON - I do not mind.

Ms Haddad - Is that all right, Mr Deputy Speaker?

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER - That is all right.

Ms HADDAD - Covenants were uncovered recently that came as a surprise to many of us that there is still the ability to have a covenant preventing social and government housing from new subdivisions. The former minister, Mr Barnett, said that the Government was going to remove those. We all agree that they are pretty abhorrent. Is that work progressing?

Mr FERGUSON - I do not have current advice on that.

Ms Haddad - I will put a question on notice.

Mr FERGUSON - Mr Barnett and I both expressed our distaste at those covenants. However, they were private covenants entered into between developers and subsequent owners. I do not want to commit for the record for certain but I understand that that might have been withdrawn.

Ms Haddad - Good, all right.

Mr FERGUSON - I do not want to get it wrong. If you would care to follow it up with Mr Street, it may be wiser to get the more accurate answer on that. Thanks for the question.

I found it distasteful. Even where Homes Tasmania are developing large scale subdivisions I understand that often the figure that is recommended is about 15 per cent.

Mr Street - About 15 per cent for social, 35 per cent for affordable and 50 per cent for private.

Ms Haddad - In new developments?

Mr Street - In new developments.

Mr FERGUSON - In the larger ones, in particular. For example, Huntingfield would be the best example where we are trying to attract the right mix of housing outcomes so that we are able to build strong communities together. That would be a useful comment to make.

Back to the State Planning Provisions (SPP) review. We recognise that our planning requirements must provide appropriate settings for the approval of a variety of housing types to meet our community's needs. The current review of the SPP is considering the residential use and development standards in the Tasmanian Planning Scheme through the Improving Residential Standards in Tasmania project. This is a priority project from the five-yearly review of the State Planning Provisions.

The State Planning Office is managing this project with the help of an experienced consultant group to bring forward recommendations to improve the planning requirements for housing. This work is being done in consultation with the key stakeholders in this space. The project will deliver recommendations on improvements that can be delivered through amendments to the State Planning Provisions to ensure we can provide for a variety of quality housing types for Tasmanians.

This will include implementation of consistent planning requirements for apartments and town houses. The project will involve a detailed audit on housing diversity in Tasmania to determine inhibitors and enablers in the planning scheme, with a particular case study on social and affordable housing. That is what my team is doing. I am not waiting for the last straggling councils to get in through the gate before we review those SPPs. We are doing it now.

There were a couple of comments on independent panels. I note the point in relation to varying interpretations of social benefits across councils in relation to social housing proposals. This is one of the key reasons that we want to establish a pathway for certain planning decisions, not all, to be made by an independent expert panel rather than the elected members being the only pathway.

We want to ensure that all development proposals are fairly assessed, fairly decided and determined not against personal bias or political opinion of whatever is the majority of councillors on a council. We want them to be determined and fairly assessed on the basis of what the planning scheme allows.

We want developer certainty. Developer certainty does not mean that the developer is certain they will get a yes. Developer certainty means that I read the planning scheme, I identify what I am allowed to do with property and then I seek to develop it in accordance with that planning scheme with a reasonable expectation that the answer will be yes. If you deliberately

contravene or go beyond what you believe the planning scheme supports then you should expect a no.

The problem that we have experienced in some councils more than others is that some councils are openly hostile to good developments, including housing, including social and affordable housing, and the developers, naturally, are deserving of developer certainty. I want those people who are waiting for housing to have that greater certainty as well.

There was a foolish claim that the Premier made the announcement of our policy on this while I was on leave as if to suggest some sort of divide. Completely ridiculous. The Liberal Party does not work like the Labor Party. For the benefit of the record only, my team and I wrote that policy. I squared it off with the Premier before I took that leave and I was pleased with the announcement. I was pleased that it was welcomed, not only by the Property Council, perhaps with a sense of relief but also -

Dr Woodruff - They have been waiting for years for you to say this.

Mr FERGUSON - I am not listening to that. The Planning Institute of Australia Tasmania branch also welcomed it and said that it was a positive step forward. I would like to emphasise that having this additional pathway provides a greater sense of certainty. We will be consulting on the finer details of this and ultimately bringing a bill to parliament.

The support has been good. Some councils have said to us and the local government board that is reviewing local government, that they would like to take their hands-off planning altogether. They feel conflicted.

Mr Bayley - Not very many.

Mr FERGUSON - The fact is, Mr Bayley, some have said that and I find that interesting. It demonstrates that there is some tension with elected members on councils. People run for council and are not perhaps fully aware or appreciate that they will not just be sitting as a council. At most meetings they will have a completely distinct section of their agenda where they are no longer sitting as a council but as a statutory planning authority. People who run for office on a particular platform sometimes make decisions sitting as a member of a planning authority and they get a decision deliberately against their own planning scheme because they want to stand up for some neighbour, constituency or idea, and then it gets taken to appeal and is overturned. That has happened. I can think of a number of examples where council have said, 'Well, we know it's probably going to get overturned at the tribunal but we want to take this position'. What a waste of ratepayer money because that is who pays them when they lose.

Councils will be able to volunteer planning decisions into the development assessment panel themselves. Some councils will say, 'We are the proponent, we do not think we should assess our own development application so we're going to put it into the DAP'. Others will say, 'This one's a bit hot for us, we can sense there's community division in our local area. We don't really want this to be politicised so we're going to volunteer this into the development assessment panel', and in other cases developers will say, 'This particular council here are very hostile to good developments, we don't trust them, we would rather trust an independent body', and they will be able to submit to the Development Assessment Panel (DAP).

I make the point that in none of these examples will it be a different planning outcome than intended by the scheme, and that is an important contribution for me to make. I feel that Ms Dow, who was sent in to do the political element of the debate, has misstepped over some of those key points. I believe the Labor Party will support that legislation when it comes forward because it will be good for Tasmania. I know that the same voices that have encouraged us are speaking to you in saying that they hope Labor will support it as well.

On the matters that were raised by Mr Bayley, I appreciated your contribution. The housing land supply process is about one part of the longer spectrum of works that need to happen to take unzoned land to become an actual completed dwelling. The housing land supply process is just about the rezoning element, nothing more, and the rest of the process is the same as the standard process. I am advised, and I hope that you find this useful, that the time savings are therefore only through the rezoning stage. I am advised that it is about five to six months average versus a nine to 12 month average through the standard process. Is that helpful?

Mr Bayley - Yes.

Mr FERGUSON - That is very high-level advice from my team here. In respect of the numbers, as my second reading speech indicated, it was a suggestion of what 61 hectares could be capable of delivering in terms of the nomination of 1000 new homes. The actual numbers will only be known once those subdivision plans are finalised and of course ultimately developed, but I did a quick calculation on an average base of 600 square metres, noting that not every property is a single dwelling on a single block and there are multiple dwellings as well in that mix. I hope that is useful for you, Mr Bayley.

The proportion of houses delivered as social housing is determined by appropriate planning that considers the nature of any project, its location, scale, the services available in the local area and the tenure mix of surrounding suburbs. That can only be achieved by considering each project on its merits, and then applying a tenure mix that is appropriate for that project. A larger area of land will be utilised for a mix of tenures and we gave the example of Huntingfield, one of the best examples, although it has been a slow one - and I am happy to debate that any time you want. A larger area of land will be utilised for a mix of tenures including private housing and affordable home ownership and may result in developments with around 15 per cent social housing. Some smaller land release projects, especially those providing supported accommodation like, for example, the six lot groups, they might be 100 per cent social housing and in fact that is precisely what has happened in a small number of cases.

The proportion of social housing is not stipulated in a housing land supply order and is not intended to be, Mr Bayley. I hope that is useful. I am advised that stipulating a minimum or a maximum percentage that must apply to any development, however well-meaning, has the potential to adversely impact on the good outcomes that are already achieved through the provisions of the principal act, the Homes Tasmania Act.

I have touched on this but I will repeat for full clarity that yes, through the council and the commission process, the more standard process, a developer can apply for both rezoning and a subdivision at the same time. However, this process we are debating for this particular legislation is only for the rezoning element of that, so the process of the housing land supply allows the rezoning to occur while the subdivision is being developed and finalised to develop the best possible outcomes.

The Tasmanian Planning Scheme has been in place for years. Some of the more proactive councils got on board early and have been operating under that model for some considerable time now and others have been slower and that has been very frustrating for those councils. We have 21 right now fully operating within the Tasmanian Planning Scheme, two within coming weeks, and the remaining seven to a greater or lesser extent are stragglers. The Government, through the State Planning Office, has been encouraging and supporting and in some cases also providing financial resources to enable those councils who said that the reason they are struggling would be helped with some funding.

The Tasmanian Planning Scheme that we have in place and has been operating for some years is actually working. I recently shared with the House that in 2021-22, the most recent year that we have this kind of data available, there were 1750 homes approved where there was no permit required. If it is deemed that you have met the requirements you do not need to go through the formal process at all. That was around about half of the total dwellings of that year. I am also told that the discretionary approvals averaged 40 days, far better than something like 80 days in those councils that are still catching up, and in the permitted category an average of 21 days. For those that were tick and flick, I think they took sometimes only five days, so those benefits are working. The simpler, faster, cheaper Tasmanian Planning Scheme is working and I am really pleased about that.

The Government has also made a range of changes to Land Use Planning and Approvals Act (LUPAA); I did that when I was minister for State Growth. That was about cutting red tape and locking in better time frames so people were not frustrated and hanging around waiting for council to get around to something. We have also implemented the major projects legislation and I made a change to the Southern Tasmania Regional Land Use Strategy as well only recently this year.

The Greens criticised me for using my 'golden pen' but I made a really sensible decision to encourage more housing that we need and by making that change to our land use strategy, it still puts the commission as the decider of that future application but what the Government has done is open the door and said, 'You are welcome to apply'. I was disappointed that the Labor Party, depending on who you spoke to, played merry politics on that. Droughty Point could be one of the most exciting new housing developments in the state today.

I might close there. Sorry about some of the politics that was played by Ms Dow but they are the responses. Sorry if they make you uncomfortable, Ms Dow.

Dr Woodruff - Your whole speech has been political, Mr Ferguson.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER - Order, Dr Woodruff.

Mr FERGUSON - Dr Woodruff, you are always ready with a negative interjection.

We have legislation and I want to see it passed. I want to see housing built, I want to see land rezoned, and the passage of this legislation will support the Government, support our minister and support our community to get more housing more speedily, adding to the existing cohort of developers that are bringing their own land for rezoning through the more conventional process.

Bill read the second time.

HOUSING LAND SUPPLY AMENDMENT BILL 2023 (No. 17)

In Committee

[3.20 p.m.]

Clauses 1 to 3 agreed to.

Clause 4 -

Section 4 amended.

Mr BAYLEY - Mr Chair, I move -

Page 4, proposed section 4, paragraph (a)(1A)

Leave out '2033'.

Insert instead '2026'.

This is a very straightforward amendment. I touched on it in my contribution earlier. The Housing Land Supply Act was always meant to be a short-term act. Five years was its original duration. Here we are five years later discussing an extension. In the Greens' view, a 10-year extension - a doubling of the initial short-term tenure of this act - is a long time, when it is supposed to be a short-term fix.

We are also going to propose a review. Reviews are always a good option for acts such as this to test their effectiveness and their function. The purpose of this amendment is to shorten the extension time of this act, to provide an opportunity for that review to be carried out in advance of this House considering a longer extension.

We are of the view that we should be provided with evidence of the act's effectiveness before being asked to extend it for an extra 10 years. It is a simple proposition. It is not trying to hold up, block, delay or stymie the effectiveness or the use of this act in the short term. The House can always come back again in three years time, which is our proposition, to re-look at this once we have had some evidence put on the table that tests how this is working, is it working, and if so does it deserve that long extension?

Mr FERGUSON - Thank you, Mr Bayley, for your proposal. The Government does not support the amendment. I will explain why. The expiry date of 1 January 2033 was deliberately chosen to align with our 10-year plan to provide 10 000 new social and affordable homes by 2032 which I believe we are all committed to. It was about having that alignment. We contemplated whether we would make it permanent in the act, but we have aligned it to the 10-year vision. It provides Homes Tasmania with the necessary certainty to purchase appropriately located land and establish an ongoing pipeline of projects to help reach that target.

I have not heard why you would randomly set 2026 as a date to curtail the ability to make orders. That is only two more years. All it would mean is that we would be back here in two or three years debating this again.

Generally, the orders process does work well, noting that they are subject to disallowance in the parliament. We do not support changing that alignment to the 10-year strategy. Housing is vitally important to us. I would argue it is more important to this parliament and our state today than it was when this policy was drafted in 2018.

Ms HADDAD - The Labor Party will be opposing the first amendment from the Greens. I have explained that to my colleague, the member for Clark. We support the Government's 10 000 homes in 10 years promise but they have failed to deliver on that promise. In the first year they were 682 homes short of what should have been a 1000-home delivery.

I am not opposing the amendment out of glowing recognition of the Government's record. Quite the opposite. I want to see housing delivery increase in this state and it is necessary for Homes Tasmania to have at its disposal the tools they need to do that quickly.

I did not work in housing but from my background working in the department where Housing was a few years ago I remember frustrations within the department around planning and zoning processes that were impediments to increasing supply. Supply is the biggest crisis we have at the moment. There are many other things I want to achieve in the Housing portfolio one day but supply is the big one. For that reason I will not be supporting the first amendment from the Greens.

Mr BAYLEY - Minister, I hear you: 2026 is only two or three years away. At that point this act will have been in effect for seven or eight years. That is an appropriate time to conduct a review to see whether it is effective. We are not reviewing just these next two years. We would not be reviewing just these next two years. We would be looking at the effectiveness of the act as a whole. You are right, we share the aspirations around building another 10 000 homes. We are fully behind that aspiration.

I point out that a review and a debate would give us the opportunity to test progress against that target. We have made the observation in other contributions in this House from our analysis about Government's prospects of meeting those targets. As Ms Haddad has said, it is failing already. We also note by your own numbers the need for \$150 million to fund that commitment. We do not see that in the Budget so we are deeply concerned about the intent of the Government in meeting that target.

It is all very well to put out a glossy 10-year strategy for the delivery of these homes. We support that as an aspiration and as an intent. Unless you are prepared to put the money on the table to make it happen we know that it is all going to be in vain. We note the contributions of members in relation to this amendment. It is disappointing because this House and the legislation can always do with review before we make longer term decisions about its future.

Ms Haddad - Are we on the first amendment?

Mr BAYLEY - Yes, that is right.

Ms Haddad - That is the extension of time?

Mr BAYLEY - Yes. To go to your question and apologies for confusing you but the purpose of it is to provide time for that review before we make a decision on a longer term extension.

Ms Haddad - Okay.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIR - The question is the amendment to Clause 4 be agreed to.

The Committee divided -

AYES 3

Mr Bayley (Teller)
Ms Johnston
Dr Woodruff

NOES 19

Mrs Alexander
Ms Archer
Mr Barnett
Dr Broad
Ms Dow
Mr Ellis
Mr Ferguson
Ms Finlay
Ms Haddad
Mr Jaensch
Mr O'Byrne
Ms O'Byrne
Ms Ogilvie
Mr Shelton
Mr Street
Mr Tucker
Ms White
Mr Winter (Teller)
Mr Young

Amendment negatived.

Progress reported: Committee to sit again.

MOTION

Energy Projects - Cost Estimates

[3.35 p.m.]

Mr WINTER (Franklin) - Mr Speaker, I indicate from the outset that a vote will be required. I move -

That the House -

(1) Notes:

- (a) the letter sent by the Deputy Premier, Hon. Michael Ferguson MP and the Minister for Energy and Renewables, Hon. Guy Barnett MP, to the Prime Minister, Hon. Anthony Albanese MP on 12 July 2023, in which they state the cost

of Marinus Link has 'increased materially', and that Marinus Link Pty Ltd has indicated 'further increases are likely';

- (b) the letter outlines the North West Transmission Developments and the Battery of the Nation projects 'are also subject to cost escalation'; and
 - (c) the letter outlines the Tasmanian Government's concern that these projects are currently 'not able to be effectively managed within the fiscal capacity of the Tasmanian Budget'.
- (2) Orders the Minister for Energy and Renewables, Hon. Guy Barnett MP, to outline to the House, before 6 p.m. on 16 August 2023, the latest cost estimates for:
- (a) Marinus Link;
 - (b) North West Transmission Developments; and
 - (c) Battery of the Nation projects.

I bring on this motion today to ask for additional transparency over a significant proposed expenditure for the state of Tasmania - a significant proposed expenditure that the Government itself has identified offers significant risks to its budget.

We know this because last week the Government tabled a letter that explains the Government's concerns about the cost of Project Marinus, but also a number of other projects as well. That letter to the Prime Minister and the federal energy minister, Chris Bowen, says, amongst other things:

We are concerned that the project [Project Marinus] may not remain in the long-term interests of Tasmanian consumers or the state and, as such, the Tasmanian Government is not in a position to continue to take this project forward and is seeking your further engagement regarding alternative pathways to deliver the project.

Tasmania remains committed to progressing important on-island related energy projects including the North West Transmission Developments and Battery of Nation projects. However, there would also need to be ongoing discussions around ensuring that strong binding measures are in place to ensure that Tasmanian electricity consumers do not bear significant adverse price impacts as a result of the project proceeding.

I have a few concerns about this. To start with, there is the uncertainty. This Government has been talking about Project Marinus for 10 years now. It originated in 2013 with the former shadow energy minister, Matthew Groom. It was then supported by the then Liberal Opposition - including Guy Barnett, the Liberal candidate for Lyons in 2014, who back then was advocating for *Look to the Future: Making the Case for a Second Basslink*.

We are talking about 2014. This has been a project that the Liberal Party in Opposition, and in Government, had talked about relentlessly, but delivered nothing. Now we have a letter from the Government questioning themselves:

We are concerned that the project may not remain in the long-term interests of Tasmanian consumers or the state.

It is an incredible line that the Tasmanian Liberal Government, after 10 years of pursuing this project, has written to the Australian Government, who they did a deal with nine months ago, to say that they are no longer sure it is in the best interests of the state.

The minister has been asking me what I think of Project Marinus for the last week, yet I do not know what he thinks of Project Marinus anymore. I know what he thought about it in 2014. I know what he thought last year. I know what he says here - but what he has written to the Prime Minister of Australia is very different from the rhetoric that he puts here.

The parliament needs to get to the bottom of this. That is why we are asking the House to support a motion that would table, today, the information that has been redacted from this letter, particularly in paragraph one. We believe numbers have been redacted. We want to know what these numbers are.

We want to know what the impact on the Budget is going to be. We have had the preliminary outcomes report back today, with an additional half a billion dollars having been borrowed by the Treasurer of Tasmania. It was not able to tell us what the repayment costs on those would be, but we understand that there is a significant increase in borrowing, as of today, through the preliminary outcomes.

We understand that what happened here actually relates to advice that the Government received from Treasury and Project Marinus. We understand there is concern within the Government about the financial risks associated with the commitments they have made - commitments and announcements they have made over 10 years, that this minister has made over and over.

We understand the Government will probably oppose this, but we are asking the House to do what it has done on other occasions recently but not all the time, and that is to require a higher standard of this Government; to require this Government to be transparent and use the words that the Premier used when he first became Premier to talk about transparency, the words that our friends on the crossbench have talked about of there being transparency in government. I think that is important particularly with this project.

There has been a lot of discussion around a stadium. The Government says it will cost \$715 million but it will probably be a lot more. These projects are significantly more than that. Marinus was originally going to cost \$3.8 billion. I point out that the Government was very happy to say how much it would cost then. In Estimates this year they were happy to say what Marinus would cost when it was \$3.8 billion, but they have redacted the new cost from the letter and are not telling us what it will cost.

If it was good enough for them to tell Tasmanians it would cost \$3.8 billion, why is it not good enough for them to tell us that it is going to cost \$5.5 billion, if that is the number? Journalists are telling me that they have been backgrounded at press conferences that the

number is \$5.5 billion. That is where we are at, so if people think it is \$5.5 billion, tell us that is the number. This is a massive project for Tasmania.

The confidence that Tasmanians can have in this Government by negotiating the right deal for their state has to have been eroded by the fact that this Government, this Premier and this minister for Energy went to Canberra less than a year ago, shook hands and signed off on an agreement that they now say is not in the best interests of the state less than a year later. That is embarrassing, saying that the deal that this Tasmanian Liberal Government signed off on is no longer in the best interests of the state less than a year later, not 10 years ago. It shows that the due diligence was not done and there are clearly issues with the deal.

I want to talk about Treasury advice. I understand that Treasury is the agency that has raised very significant concerns about this project and that in fact, the Treasurer has also raised those significant concerns. In the end, he was acting as Premier as this letter was written, raising those concerns with the Prime Minister that this project may not be the best interests of the state. It is an enormous admission from the Government. In this case, Treasury has said there are significant financial outlays and risks associated with the Tasmanian Budget with Project Marinus on its own and that there are significant risks. I have not seen it but I understand that is the advice and I do not think that that is at odds with what is in this letter.

If only we could apply that same Treasury scrutiny to other projects this Government is proposing. I wonder why, in this case, you see Treasury apparently doing its job and outlining that there are significant risks. We have seen in the Budget what are briefly listed as risks, but I wonder why this Government has not applied that same Treasury lens to other projects it is proposing. These decisions have gone through the Tasmanian Cabinet and it has gone through that lens, but other projects, maybe a stadium, did not go through that same scrutiny within this Government.

This is the outcome of a process in which they have received Treasury advice, they have gone through Cabinet, it has gone through a governance process and what has come out is a letter which says that the project might not be in the best interests of the state. I think that is the process but all it does is tell us that the deal they struck last year was not adequate. It did not have the right protections in place for Tasmanians and it still does not.

Further scrutiny needs to be applied to the other components. The North West Transmission Developments, depending how you cut it, is part of Marinus or it is not. The North West Transmission Developments are proposed to be developed and built by TasNetworks. It is listed here and says:

Tasmania remains committed to progressing on-island energy projects including the North West Transmission Developments and Battery of The Nation projects. However, there also needs to be ongoing discussions around ensuring that strong and binding measures are in place to ensure that Tasmanian electricity consumers do not bear significant adverse price impacts as a result of the project proceeding.

The reason I point this out is what that indicates to me is that there is not right now. It says there would need to be ongoing discussions around ensuring that strong and binding measures are in place so that Tasmanian electricity consumers do not bear the adverse price impacts. What that tells you is there is not. The minister for Energy was asked time and time

again, particularly at the Estimates table and at GBE hearings last year, what the price impact is going to be on Tasmanian consumers, businesses and major industrials from this project and what the impact is going to be on power bills, not just for households and small businesses through their tariffs, but also for major industrials. The economic powerhouse of this state for decades has been our major industrials and they deserve to be treated better than this.

Instead of having a transparent process where the Government tells us that this is going to be the price impact, what they have done is send out government businesses to tell the major industrials - not in writing, but verbally - that prices for them could go up by up to 40 per cent under the deal that they struck. No wonder they are worried about it. I would be worried about it too. In fact, I think they are being very patient with the Government considering the answers that they have had, but there are other unanswered questions they have on a range of other issues associated with this.

We are lucky and privileged to have our four major industrials in this state. Some of them such as the Boyer paper mill fought to stay here. There was a chance that they could have closed down. They were in competition against a New Zealand plant and a plant in New South Wales and they won out and are still here today producing newsprint in Tasmania. We ought to thank them for it and we ought to have policies in place that are in their long-term interests.

What this Government is doing is putting their interests last. They say they have a Tasmania First energy policy which is, by the way, what their old energy policy was called before they scrapped it. Now they have gone back to the same rhetoric saying it is Tasmania first. Tasmania is last. It is whatever Tasmanians get on the National Electricity Market under this Government; that is where we have got to.

What we are seeing from this letter is there are not protections in place for Tasmanian consumers and that is the deal the Government struck with the Australian Government. Now they have gone to the Australian Government and asked them to bail us out - 'Australian Government, please bail us out. This has been our plan for 10 years. We have been talking about it for 10 years, in the case of one member, and never delivered on anything, so please federal Labor government, like you did nine months ago when we could not get a deal done with the former Morrison government that did not have energy policy for its entire existence, please bail us out because we do not know what to do. We have signed up to this, we have now figured out we can't afford it because we have stuffed the budget, so bail us out'.

It is timely that the preliminary outcomes report came out today because these issues are linked, because this letter says that the Tasmanian Budget cannot deal with these price increases, whatever they are, and the Tasmanian Government is asking for a bailout from the Australian Government.

I understand that what the Australian Government is dealing with on a national scale is significant. There are significant challenges in our National Electricity Market, and it comes from having a former coalition government that had effectively no energy policy. They rolled Malcolm Turnbull because of his energy policy because he believed in climate change. Without a national energy policy for almost 10 years, or without a coherent one, we have not had the investment, we have not had the buy-in. The policy, in fact, the first time around from the Liberals was that there would be a nationally funded second Basslink, but they could not get any buy-in from Scott Morrison or anybody after Malcolm Turnbull left, so we had nothing. We had them begging at their last election to fund Marinus and they got almost nothing.

It took an Australian government that actually believes in climate change and understands the energy challenges in Australia to commit to this, because Australia wants what Tasmania has, let us be clear about that. Australia needs what we have here, they need our resource, they need our skills, they need our hydro, but we have to make sure that the deal is right for Tasmania. For us, the House, we need to be confident that the deals this Government is entering into are the right deals for Tasmania. To do that we need to have the information, which is what this motion is doing.

I want to go to that motion specifically now. This motion is ordering the Minister for Energy and Renewables, the Honourable Guy Barnett, to outline to the House before 6 p.m. today the latest cost estimates for Marinus Link, North West Transmission Developments and the Battery of the Nation projects. All that information will be available. We are not asking him to do anything that he does not already have. He obviously has them: that is the basis of this letter. They now have cost estimates.

The letter says 'Project costs have increased materially' from whatever the number was, probably \$3.8 billion at the time of signing the letter of intent to probably \$5.5 billion, so we are told. Apparently some journalists have been backgrounded. 'With Marinus Link indicating that further cost increases are likely'. There is more to come.

We want to understand what is going on here. It is important we do. The Government wants to stand up every question time, no matter what question gets asked, particularly by the independents who asked very reasonable questions today, and say the same thing, no matter what the question is - 'Does Labor support Marinus?'

Does the Government? The letter says it does not? If the Government supports Marinus, what is this letter about?

The House has a role to play here, as it does on the advice about the stadium and the role it played in providing additional transparency. We have made some progress. We now have a list of the documents that the Government claims are cabinet-in-confidence. There is more work to do. We have made some progress and got some transparency.

We would not have had the AFL deal if not for the actions of the House and the actions of our two Independents. We would not have had access to it in the Clerk's Office to see the unredacted version if not for this House doing its job. I am asking the House today to do its job again. I am pleading with the House to do its job. This project is important for Tasmania. Energy policy is important for Tasmania. It is important that we get it right. It is not a game where you stand up and make jokes or play political games. It is a really serious project.

In 2014 they were going to build a second Bass Link. In 2018 they were going to delink from the National Electricity Market and have the lowest power prices in Tasmania by 2018. Prices were going to go down by up to 10 per cent because we were going to delink from the National Electricity Market. They did not do that. They hid the fact that they did not do it. They said they were going to do it and nine months out they put a statement up on the Treasury website and thought that no one would remember that they promised to delink us from the National Electricity Market

Then the minister went on Leon Compton's radio show and said that it never happened, it must have all been a dream. It did happen. It is in writing. Your policy was there for all to

see. We have a video of you spruiking that you were going to delink us from the National Electricity Market.

The price cap was going to go in place, and it did. This House, this parliament, put a cap on power prices. Did you know that? It went through unanimously. We all supported it. It was spruiked relentlessly by the Minister for Energy, put through by the former treasurer, Peter Gutwein, proposed, moved and supported by Labor, the Greens, the crossbench, the other place. Granville Harbour wind farm still got built. They are now saying if you cap prices you cannot build wind farms. Well, it did.

The world did not end. People's power prices just did not go up and up. That is what the policy was about. It was about making sure Tasmanians paid Tasmanian prices for Tasmanian power. That is something the other side used to believe. It is still in their policy documents and as of a couple of days ago when I had a look, it is still on their website to cap power prices. The same policy that they stand up here and say is going to ruin everything is still on their website.

It is etched in my memory because that is what they promised. They promised Tasmanians that they would cap power prices not just at the 2018 election when they did, to their credit, cap power prices for three years, until the 2021 election. During that election they said that if there was high volatility within the National Electricity Market they reserve the right to cap power prices. There was massive volatility within the National Electricity Market over the past 18 months, the exact circumstances in which they said they retained the ability to cap power prices, and they are not doing it.

Not only are they not doing it but they voted against it three times. The first time they refused to even have the debate, the second time they voted against it for the last financial year and the third time they voted against it for this financial year.

They refuse to cut power prices. Because of their actions, power prices have gone up by, on average, \$428 more than they should have. There is no excuse for this. It is still on their website, it was their policy, and their reaction to it is just to pretend that it never happened.

'Leon, I never had a policy to delink from the National Electricity Market', said Mr Barnett. You did, you are on video, you are still on video, it is still in writing, it is still your promise and you have broken it. It is disappointing.

Like the former Abbott-Turnbull-Morrison government that had no coherent energy policy, this Government no longer has a coherent energy policy. We do not know if they really support Marinus because they say they do here but in their letter they definitely do not say they do.

They say on their website they will cap power prices but in here they say capping power prices might be the worst thing ever. I do not know what they will do about that. They say they support windfarms, but they watch projects like Robbins Island enter into a planning appeals process which is going to take a long time to resolve and which puts the project at serious risk. They have said in the past they support the Whaleback Ridge windfarm proposal, but today I am not sure. Uncertainty is the thing.

The Tasmanian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (TCCI) has called it an energy crisis. Michael Bailey from TCCI has raised this concern. He has been raising this concern for a long time. He has been saying there is not enough power. He says we need power if we are going to grow our economy.

The Premier and the Treasurer have been saying we need to grow our economy. Access Economics' latest report shows that the Tasmanian economy is forecast to shrink this financial year by 0.3 per cent. They want to talk about the CommSec report but they do not want to talk about what is coming in the future. They want to talk about the past but never about the future. The Access Economics report talks about the future, and its forecast for Tasmania.

It is little wonder the economy is forecast to shrink when businesses cannot expand. They cannot expand because there is not enough power because the Government has the energy policy all wrong. Not only have they got it all wrong, they kept changing it, from 2014, 2018, 2021, to whatever the heck they are doing now.

The House has a role to play today because it is only asking for the bare minimum of transparency. We are not asking for anything extravagant, we are just asking them to tell us what the costs have blown out to. How much is Marinus Link? Is it \$5.5 billion? Is the north west transmission developments \$800 million or more? Lake Cethana, we understand, has blown out significantly. I am talking in the order of billions of dollars, but I do not really know because I do not have access to the information.

I have been up in that region and people are excited about Lake Cethana. They can see that it might create a lot of jobs. The timeline 2035 is a long way off, but if there is a plan that is in the best interests of Tasmania, then that is a good thing. We need to know if it is affordable.

The Government is now saying to the federal government that it is not sure these projects are affordable and there needs to be something in place to protect Tasmanian consumers so they do not bear significant adverse price impacts.

There is a risk. It is written in the letter. We want to understand what the risks are. That is not unreasonable. I do not think that what I am saying to the House, that I should understand what the costs are, is unreasonable. Tasmanians and Tasmanian businesses deserve to understand what Tasmania's energy policy is. It is unclear.

The Government has one policy on its website, another policy in here and another policy in its letter to the Prime Minister. What is the Government going to do? I ask the House to pay very careful attention to this motion and let it be known to the Government that it should have included these costs in the first place. These costs did not need to be redacted in the letter when they were tabled, especially if the numbers are going to be backgrounded anyway. These should be made available to Tasmanians - Treasurer, they should be made available.

Mr Ferguson - Legally we are not able to.

Mr WINTER - You are not supposed to interject while you are not in your seat.

Mr SPEAKER - Order, Treasurer.

Mr WINTER - The numbers are important for Tasmanians. If it was good enough for the Treasurer to say Marinus was going to cost \$3.8 billion two months ago. Why will he not say it is going to cost \$5.5 billion now? What is happening with these debates is that during the debate when arguments are being made, we often have the spectre of the Deputy Premier taking Independents out to the Long Room and they do not hear the debate. It actually happened only yesterday. It is really important that we actually listen to the debate. If the Treasurer has something to say to the Independents, he could say it from the box. He could make his arguments there.

It is important that we have transparency in the letters, in the information, and also transparency in the Parliament of Tasmania, so that every member of the parliament can understand what the arguments are. I am making the argument that this information should not be withheld from the House. If the Government has nothing to hide, I do not know why they are trying so hard to hide it. I am looking forward to hearing what others have to say on this debate.

The history of this is significant. The history is 10 years of talking about this project. Frankly, Tasmanians are sick of it. They just want to know what is going on with this project. We have a policy that has morphed from 2013, where the Government said it was going to be paid for entirely by the Australian Government, to the Tasmanian Government struggling to get the former Morrison government to do anything, to signing up to a deal less than 12 months ago that they now say is not a good deal for the state.

These things should not have to be rewritten. They should have been written in the original deal. All the House can do today is hold the Government to account and demand to have answers to these questions. If they are not going to support this, I am looking forward to hearing from the Government why they will not release this information.

I am looking forward to hearing from the Independents. I know they are committed to transparency. They have been talking about this project more than any other, I believe. I am looking forward to hearing what they have to say. A project of this size - in the billions of dollars - deserves to have the utmost scrutiny and deserves to have a government that is upfront and honest about the cost of the project and the ongoing cost to Tasmanians.

[4.03 p.m.]

Mr BARNETT (Lyons - Minister for Energy and Renewables) - Mr Speaker, I am pleased to speak to this motion by state Labor and foreshadow an amendment, which I will speak to shortly.

Let us address the concerns that have been expressed by the shadow minister - and express my concerns on behalf of the Government, in the strongest possible way, that the motion would be forcing me and the Government to act contrary to legal advice, contrary to the principles of probity and confidentiality, contrary to - and in breach of - non-disclosure agreements. I will outline in greater detail the serious concerns not just about the motion, but about state Labor, and about how totally incompetent and incapable they have proven to be by bringing forward this motion.

This is evidence, if anybody ever needed it, that a Labor-Greens government should never get their hands on the Treasury benches because they have no idea of how to run an economy, and no idea how to deal with business. This is a political stunt by state Labor - obviously to

avoid the distraction of what is happening in the next couple of days with the campaign by Mr O'Byrne for the leadership of state Labor, and to frog-jump Mr Winter. We all thought Mr Winter was coming. Here we are in winter and we know it is Mr O'Byrne. This is simply the game of thrones being played by state Labor. This is one big distraction.

We have always said our Government will work hard to ensure that Marinus Link becomes a reality on terms that are right for Tasmania. It has always been part of the plan. It was part of the plan last year. It is part of the plan here and now, and it will be part of the plan going forward.

The Premier and I made it clear two weekends ago that there is a line in the sand we will not cross. Marinus will only proceed if it is in the best interests of Tasmania. It is pure and simple.

State Labor came into this parliament last week regurgitating the same messages, the same positions, the same diatribe as recent weeks. Their shadow minister has spoken for more than 30 minutes and has not declared a position on Marinus Link.

Our Government, year in, year out, supports it - subject to it being in the best interests of Tasmania. We have made it very clear each time. We have a power plan - a plan for growing supply. Unfortunately the Opposition has a plan to restrict supply, and I will go into that, too.

On behalf of the Government, I make no apologies for standing up for Tasmania and Tasmanians. I said last week, the Premier said last week, that discussions are ongoing, collaboratively, with the Commonwealth, and we appreciate their positive engagement. We thank them for that. Those engagements and discussions are ongoing and progressing in a positive way, and I am confident we will have more to say in the time ahead.

We have a plan and we are getting on with it. The plan is about increasing energy supply to ensure the economy can grow to meet the needs of a growing population, and a growing economy. It is excellent, is it not, to have a challenge when it comes to meeting the needs of a growing economy?

We want to create more jobs now and into the future. That plan ensures we continue to have among the lowest electricity prices in the nation. This has been our plan since 2014. We have delivered on it, and will continue to deliver on it. I give that commitment to deliver on that plan. We will continue to provide improvements and strengthening of our energy security. As I said, Labor has no plan but price caps - which will destroy our retail sector, destroy confidence, and undermine investment and jobs and opportunities into the future. It will restrict electricity supply rather than expand it.

There has been mention during this debate of the Tasmanian Chamber of Commerce and Industry. They are full throttle, in full-bodied support for Marinus Link, big time. You cannot get more supportive of Marinus Link than the TCCI. They want to bring on more supply to meet the needs of their members, whether major industrials or medium-size or smaller businesses. We know and acknowledge the small business sector - the backbone of our economy for rural and regional communities. Make no bones about it, the TCCI is backing Marinus Link big time, and to suggest otherwise is disingenuous.

As to the notice of motion, our Government is committed to providing Tasmanians transparency on projects that impact them, such as Marinus Link, and Battery of the Nation. Given Mr Winter is very familiar with the regulatory framework for the energy market, I am sure he would be aware that the costs of Marinus and North West Transmission Developments - and their impact on Tasmanian electricity consumers - will be publicly and comprehensively examined by the Australian Energy Regulator as part of the future regulatory pricing determination processes. This is all part of the process.

As the shadow minister you should already know that.

Mr Winter - It was supposed to be in your submission in January. That is what I was told it would be.

Mr SPEAKER - Order.

Mr BARNETT - A lot of project information is already publicly available on the TasNetworks Marinus Link and Hydro Tasmania websites, along with the work completed over a number of years now at a national level demonstrating the need for the projects, most notably the 2022 Integrated System Plan that marks Marinus Link as an actionable project. That means it is a priority project for Australia. If you ever catch up with Daniel Westerman - and I hope you do some time - the chief executive of the Australian Energy Market Organisation, he will tell you how important Marinus is to the Integrated System Plan and the National Electricity Market.

This comes up regularly when we have our Energy ministers meetings, but of course you would not know about that. We were pleased to host the Energy ministers and Climate Change ministers in Devonport in July. It was a great honour. They came to Tasmania because they recognise our plans for going from 100 per cent to 200 per cent renewable -

Mr Winter - They came to Tasmania because it was Tasmania's turn to host it.

Mr BARNETT - They came here because I invited them here. Minister Bowen said yes to both Roger Jaensch and I for being willing to host them at the Paranal Centre in Devonport. It was excellent to have not only minister Bowen but other ministers and officials from around Australia, which Hydro Tasmania hosted, at Lake Cethana to look at our pumped hydro project plans and they were very impressed with our plans. You can ask them yourselves. I am proud of Tasmania. I am proud of Hydro Tasmania for the work they have done. All the undermining, criticism and relentless negativity of state Labor is absolutely absurd.

Let us focus a little bit more on the procurement process. You would expect the procurement and contracting for major infrastructure is regularly done via commercial-in-confidence processes. This is not unusual. It is standard business practice. It is important to note that these projects are all at varying stages of their respective procurement processes. Whether it be Marinus Link, North West Transmission Developments or Battery of the Nation, they are all going through processes for a live procurement.

I asked my department, Renewables, Climate and Future Industries Tasmania (ReCFIT), for advice and they advised very clearly that the disclosure of any information while active procurement processes are under way is detrimental to the probity and competitive

tension that we are seeking to achieve through such a process, and that any departure from these principles has the potential to undermine the best value outcomes for Tasmania.

Let us make it very clear: releasing this sort of information here and now during a live procurement process is absolutely mad. It is undermining our economy and will cause not just me but the Government to be potentially in breach of a whole range of agreements. Do you think there have been non-disclosure agreements signed? Of course there have been. It is incredible that you would come into this place and put forward a motion ordering the minister to breach confidential agreements.

Mr Winter - That's not what it says.

Mr BARNETT - That is mind-boggling. That is exactly what the motion says. It is ordering the minister to deliver those cost estimates. That is exactly what you are doing. This is a live procurement process. No wonder you should stay away from the Treasury benches and anything to do with Treasury or business dealings at all, at any time into the future. It is dreadful. It is absolutely irresponsible and reprehensible. I hope you take a good hard look at yourself.

Mr Winter interjecting.

Mr SPEAKER - Order, member for Franklin.

Mr BARNETT - This is your motion, nobody else's. You brought it in. You have owned it. You raised it last week. The same message has come in here today and you bring forward this motion for this parliament to breach confidential information, to breach contracts, to breach confidentiality arrangements, to breach probity rules, and to breach non-disclosure agreements. Seriously, this is reckless. It is in addition to the relentless negativity. It is a shameful display of your lack of understanding.

Yes, I am a lawyer but anybody, whether lawyer or otherwise, should know that you act for confidential business practices in accordance with due process and probity. That is the view of ReCFIT and that is the view of the minister on behalf of the Government.

Releasing cost information related to the projects during a live procurement process compromises the integrity of the process, creating probity and sovereign risk issues. We have not even talked about sovereign risk issues. What sort of message are you sending to the business community that wants to come here and do business in Tasmania and sign up an agreement? What sort of messages are you sending -

Mr Winter - Origin? There is no power available so what will they do?

Mr SPEAKER - Member for Franklin, I have just about had enough of your interjections. If you wish to stay in here and listen to the debate I suggest you do just that.

Mr BARNETT - Mr Speaker, I thank you for that because those interjections are highlighting the lack of understanding, the lack of professionalism and the concerns I have backed in by the business community and others with respect to sovereign risk. We have a shadow minister who comes in here, puts forward a motion and says seriously, 'I want to throw out the window all the probity rules, all the confidentiality agreements, all the non-disclosure

agreements and force the Government to essentially break the law'. That is shameful. This is a reflection on you. I am sharing a response to this. I have mentioned sovereign risk.

We support investment. We support jobs, development and growth, but this is a major blunder by state Labor when it comes to breaching confidence and impacting adversely on sovereign risk, not to mention the negotiating position. We have government business enterprises, legitimate businesses making arrangements with and going through a live procurement process and this member opposite on behalf of state Labor wants to say to our government business enterprises, 'Up yours, reveal the information, live procurement process'. What a damaging approach to doing business we have here.

Mr Ferguson - What would federal Labor say?

Mr BARNETT - I wonder what the federal Labor government would say - a very good question from the Treasurer. What would the federal government say right now? What would other governments say when you have a shadow minister recommending the breach of confidentiality agreements and live procurement processes? All those processes are going through live procurement, and that takes time. There is an appropriate time to disclose information such as estimated costs for a project and once those procurement processes have concluded, in accordance with the generally accepted probity principles and subject to any contractual arrangements between the parties, absolutely no problem.

I want to ensure that our government business enterprises or any business have a government that supports them going through that process and once that is done, in terms of the appropriate time to release that information, to disclose that information is absolutely entitled and that is what we are committed to doing. The Government has always said that we would negotiate to get the best deal for Tasmania and we will continue to do so.

This motion is clearly a stunt. You have been found out. It is designed to compromise the negotiations for cheap political point-scoring and that is shame on you. It reflects on you, nobody else. It reflects on state Labor. You have dug a massive big hole and you have now jumped into it. That is what has happened. It is clearly irresponsible and demonstrates that Labor does not understand the process. You are not capable of delivering any critical infrastructure project and of course this is a very major one for Tasmania for delivering jobs, investment growth and confidence in Tasmania and there is a track record. What is that track record?

We have talked about the Bridgewater bridge. Did they build the Bridgewater bridge when they were in government? No, I do not think so. They spent the money on other things. That is a big infrastructure project. How far did they get with the Bridgewater bridge? They did not get too far at all; they spent the money on other things. Caught out. What about another one? I am in the Health portfolio now. What about -

Mr WINTER - Mr Speaker, point of order under Standing Order 142(e), digress from the subject matter under discussion. I ask you to draw the minister's attention back to the question.

Mr SPEAKER - On the point of order, I allowed significant leniency towards you, in going back to 2014 policies and so on. The quid pro quo is that I allow that leniency to the minister when he is answering the question.

Mr BARNETT - Thanks very much, Mr Speaker. They do not like the facts being shared in this parliament in response to their reckless abandon that they have shown towards to the business community and confidence in the economy.

What was the second example I was going to? The second example was the building and redeveloping of a Royal Hobart Hospital. I have been Minister for Health now for 22 days and I have been there five times. I am so pleased and proud of the redeveloped Royal Hobart Hospital.

What happened when Labor and the Greens were in government? They did not lay one brick and they could not even get a helipad as part of their plans going forward. As the Premier, Jeremy Rockliff and the Treasurer as well as the rest of us on this side have said, we are builders; we are not blockers. We are going to get on with it.

I have said before, Hydro is not cheap. They will spend \$100 million per year to maintain and repair their assets. Likewise, they do not generate all the energy we will need for the future as demand grows. That is why we need more supply. We need more wind and solar. We will be supporting Hydro to upgrade the developments. Of course we are pleased and proud of their plans for Tarraleah and bringing on new capacity through that redevelopment. Their plans are very exciting.

Likewise, Lake Cethana pumped hydro is very exciting, whether it is 750 megawatts or thereabouts, it is a very significant project but it is subject to going through a live procurement process. It is subject to a business case that must be completed.

Mr Speaker, I want to say a couple of other things in response to the member's deliberations: firstly, with respect to -

Member interjecting.

Mr BARNETT - If you do not think this is on the public record, I remind you of a media release I put out in December 2022 where I said Marinus Link has begun a tender procurement with international suppliers for the highly specialised cable and converter equipment necessary to deliver the project. This is all on the public record. You should have read the media release. That is what it said.

The important part here, which those opposite continue to look past, is that this tender process for Marinus Link is currently live, with evaluations and direct negotiations with suppliers under way. The process has been overseen by rigorous probity oversight, legal and commercial advice with a strict probity plan and framework implemented. Additionally, breaching the highly sensitive contract negotiations could present a sovereign risk to the state - and a whole lot more.

To protect the integrity of this live procurement, the higher standards of probity that have been employed as well as the confidential commercial negotiations to ensure that the project can be delivered at the lowest possible price, it is not possible to table documents relevant to this process at this critical time.

However, I have foreshadowed an amendment, Mr Speaker, and I will circulate this. The amendment reads:

Omit paragraph (2) and

Insert the following:

- (2) Notes the Tasmanian Government, recognising probity, commits to table the cost estimates for each of the below projects following the completion of all relevant procurement processes.
 - (a) Marinus Link;
 - (b) North West Transmission Developments; and
 - (c) Battery of the Nation projects.

That is the commitment that the Government is giving. It is going through due process to protect confidentiality to make that very clear that we have a job to do. We will do it in confidence, in accordance with legal and commercial advice. We will not be breaching non-disclosure agreements. We will not be breaching any contracts. We will not be breaching probity rules and principles. It is as simple as that. This is a reflection on state Labor and their reckless abandonment of due process which is so consistent with their approach.

Please feel free to circulate that amendment. I draw members attention to it.

Just to recap on Marinus Link, I have talked about growing the economy, creating more jobs and providing energy security. We want to continue to have amongst the lowest power prices in the nation. Of course it will deliver very significant emissions reductions going forward and likewise telecommunications capacity building.

That is something I know the minister for telecommunications in Tasmania, Madeleine Ogilvie, is particularly keen and excited about. We have a big job to do and we are going to get on and do it.

Tasmania has spent over \$100 million on Marinus Link and the North West Transmission Developments (NWTd) to date. This expenditure is not wasted and it is as I have said previously any funds that Tasmania has spent already will contribute to our equity contribution. It is a critical part of ensuring we invest wisely in the future. To the end of June 2023, the total combined expenditure to date is \$158.8 million, \$125.6 million for Marinus Link, and \$33.2 million for the North West Transmission Developments. This includes \$55 million-plus from the Federation Funding Agreement.

We appreciate the federal government's support for progress to date and I will be happy to say more about that in due course. As I say those deliberations and discussions are ongoing and going very happily. We appreciate that ongoing engagement.

There have been questions in the past about the planning process for the North West Transmission Developments. I remind those in this Chamber as I have before that there is a major infrastructure development agreement, which passed through this parliament, approving the development approval process for the NWTd and that is appreciated. I believe Mr Roger Jaensch was a responsible for that legislation at the time. Thank you, minister Jaensch, for your leadership there.

There is much work going on. We want to build on our renewable energy credentials in this state; we will continue to do that. These developments will unlock our low cost dispatchable hydro capacity, pumped hydro storage and high quality wind resources. They are essential to our future renewable energy plans. As I have said, the Australian Energy Market Operator has identified north west Tasmania as a high priority renewable energy zone, with its potential to host the connection point to Marinus Link.

There is a lot of work going on behind the scenes to develop and consult with the local community regarding the renewable energy zones, the renewable energy coordination framework. This is something we are doing diligently; we are following due process. There needs to be further consultation with the community absolutely. These large-scale infrastructure projects are very complex and they have a long delivery process.

All projects in Tasmania are subject to rigorous environment and planning approvals with the opportunity for public submissions on issues that affect land owners and communities. Tas Networks is currently progressing the design and approvals for The North West Transmission Developments and continuing to provide opportunities for consultation input from land owners and the community. We encouraged Tas Networks to continue to engage with all impacted land owners accordingly. They are working with the land owners and other key stakeholders, including the Tasmanian Farmers and Graziers Association (TFGA) to ensure that those compensation frameworks are fair, reputable and contemporary. They are working hard on that.

As I have said, we have our renewable energy target. It has been passed through the parliament; we are proud of that. We thank the parliament for its support. We make no apology for having very ambitious plans when it comes to our renewable energy developments. Yes we support our renewable energy developments but they must go through due process - the design and approval process and the planning approval process.

There was a question about Tarraleah and Lake Cethana. To be very clear, both those projects will have to come to parliament in terms of having consideration of the legislation for those projects. This is an amendment relevant to the hydro electricity developments in Tasmania, so there will be plenty of opportunity for further consideration. There is absolutely an appropriate place to go. As I, and others have said previously, all this - in terms of Marinus Link - is subject to financial investment decision by the end of next year.

There is a lot more work to do to ensure that we get the best possible outcomes for Tasmania. We make no apology for doing that. We will keep fighting for Tasmania to get the best possible outcome. We make no apologies for standing up for Tasmania. Right here, right now, we need to ensure that we protect Tasmania's interests from reckless abandon from State Labor who would bring on and force the Government to be breaching contracts, breaching non-disclosure agreements, and forcing GBEs to doing the same. It is reprehensible and they should be ashamed of themselves. This amendment will tidy it up.

We are pleased to reveal that information once it goes through that procurement process and make that very clear, not a problem at all. There is a process. You have to follow the process. We will do exactly that in the best interests of Tasmania.

[4.31 p.m.]

Mr TUCKER (Lyons) - Mr Speaker, the price of power is one of the most fundamental of all matters affecting the living standards of Tasmanians and the competitiveness of the industry in this state. A succession of leaders - from John Earle more than 100 years ago, through to Albert Ogilvie, Eric Reece and Robin Gray - realised affordable and reliable energy was the driver of a thriving economy and a thriving community. That remains the case today. It should be front and centre for every government every day. Unfortunately, what we are seeing is anything but.

This is a government that is clearly distracted by the grand dreams of successive premiers for a new Circus Maximus on the Hobart waterfront. The Government seems more interested in political spin than policy substance: a government that appears prepared to put the interests of mainland power users above the interests of Tasmanians who pay the bills here; a government that has been all over the place on energy policy.

Five years ago, the solution was the Hodgman plan to impose a price cap on power bills, exit the National Electricity Market, and set Tasmanian prices on Tasmanian power system costs. The Minister for Energy, Mr Barnett - the same one we have today - assured us that this would save up to \$200 per year for the average Tasmanian household. Come 2021, the Government bragged that it had successfully de-linked from the mainland wholesale market volatility through legislated capped regulated power prices, and the results have been a 12 per cent cut in residential prices and an even bigger 19 per cent reduction in power bills for small businesses. What a difference two years makes, Mr Speaker.

Now we are being told that we need to be in the National Electricity Market and despite prices skyrocketing by more than 22 per cent in two years, we are told that being part of the national grid is now going to put downward pressure on prices. It is even worse.

When Mr Winter and the Labor Party adopted the Hodgman policy of capping power prices to relieve the cost of living, the Government claimed it would not work, and worse, would destroy the retail sector, drive up power prices and destroy our businesses and industries. Well, what is it minister? Did it work for the Government or not? If it did, why would it not work again?

We know why the Government has dropped the ball on this energy policy. That is because the emperors have been consumed by the Circus Maximus dream on the waterfront. Marinus has been pursued by successive governments over many years, culminating in the Premier and Minister for Energy signing a partnership agreement in October last year to jointly fund the export of renewable energy from Tasmania for the benefit of mainland consumers. There is no question about who stands to benefit.

TasNetworks showed that 94 per cent of the benefits flowed out of Tasmania and just 6 per cent of the benefits will go to Tasmanians. Despite that, the Premier was over the top about this deal. 'This is the next economic frontier for Tasmania; it secures Tasmania's future through increased confidence of our energy companies, for developers about their investment decisions, and greater certainty of supply for affordable, reliable and clean energy that benefits all Tasmanians', he said. Minister Barnett said, 'Importantly, equitable cost sharing between the Commonwealth, Tasmania and Victoria had been agreed meaning that Tasmanian consumers will only pay their fair share'.

Mr Speaker, compare these statements with what the Treasurer revealed in his letter to the Prime Minister on 12 July. I will read the part of the letter out for you:

We are writing to you regarding the Marinus Link project. Further information has been received that indicates that project costs have increased materially from the time of the signing of the letter of intent with Marinus Link Pty Ltd indicating that further cost increases are likely. In addition, suppliers are seeking terms and commitment that are inconsistent with progressing in a measured way towards the final investment decision in December 2024.

... based on current information, the substantial material increases in the cost and risks associated with the Marinus Link project are not able to be effectively managed within the fiscal capacity of the Tasmanian Budget. This is particularly evident when the costs and risks of progressing the north-west transmission developments and Battery of the Nation projects, 'which are also subject to cost escalation' are taken into account ...

we are concerned that the project may not remain in the long-term interests of Tasmanian consumers or the State and, as such, the Tasmanian Government is not in a position to continue to take this project forward and is seeking further engagement regarding alternative pathways to deliver the project.

Tasmania remains committed to progressing important on-island related energy projects including the North West Transmission Developments and the Battery of the Nation projects. However, there would need to be ongoing discussions around ensuring that strong and binding measures are in place to ensure that Tasmania's electricity consumers do not bear significant adverse price impacts as a result of the project proceeding.

The claim is that the cost increases come as a big shock to the Government bunker. We know why that was: its emperor's attention has for years been focused exclusively on its plan for the new Circus Maximus at Macquarie Point.

To the rest of the world, price increases for construction projects are no surprise at all. Anyone building or renovating a house knows the pain of price increases only too well, minister. Builders across the country who had lock themselves into fixed priced contracts found themselves going broke one after the other with a particular reference to power developments. The tale of Snowy Hydro should have been object lessons to anyone who was either half-awake or obsessed with the AFL Circus Maximus dream. The Snowy 2.0 pumped hydro project, originally kicked into play by Malcolm Turnbull, has repeatedly blown out in costs. In the timeline to completion the builder went broke and the cost is now estimated to have skyrocketed from the original \$2 billion to \$10 billion, which is as much as another \$10 million for associated transmission lines.

Just over a year before the Premier and the minister signed on to do the deal, which we now know, courtesy of the Treasurer, was only going to break the budget, Infrastructure Australia issued its first infrastructure market capacity report in response to a request from Council of Australian Governments (COAG). The report forecast a surge in demand for skills,

labour and materials because of a rapid increase in public infrastructure investment with consequential risks of cost escalation and delays. Infrastructure Australia specified in great detail the looming increases in demand, particularly the shortfall in skilled workforce to do the work. It was obvious that projects were going to be affected across the board.

This was all 12 months before the Premier signed up to this cost-sharing deal. How on earth, in view of these warnings and the experience in the market place, did the Government sign up to this shocker of a deal in October last year? This appears to be one of the most incompetent performances by government on a critical issue in the history of this state.

It is evident that the Government on these two major issues, the AFL stadium and Marinus Link, have been swayed by adolescent enthusiasm, unconstrained by responsible adult supervision. On the record to date, key Government divisions in scrutiny and supervision, this is the role the parliament must play, given that it appears Cabinet has not been able to achieve it. It is obvious that the Government, rather than doing its homework before it signed the deal, is now relying on charity from the federal government to get it out of a hole. That is exactly what happened with the failure to negotiate the GST exemption for federal funding at Macquarie Point.

These appear to be two of the most incompetent performances by Government on critical issues in the history of this state. I would like to finish with a quote. The Treasurer said this today, 'It is okay. The policy will pay for itself'.

[4.41 p.m.]

Dr WOODRUFF (Franklin - Leader of the Greens) - Mr Speaker, I cannot promise to get quite as many laughs across the Chamber. That was pretty good, Mr Tucker.

I will start by speaking to the amendment that the Government has put here. It is outrageous. Mr Barnett's speech was trying to paint the narrative that we are all simpletons in here and so are Tasmanians. Trust us, he said, we are doing deals on your behalf behind closed doors. We could not possibly talk about it to you because anything we could say might break confidence, legal privilege and all the other big scary words that he used. What he has tried to remove from this motion of Labor's, which we support, is the important stuff. His amended motion says, 'the Tasmanian Government, recognising probity, commits to table the cost estimates for each of the below projects following the completion of all relevant procurement processes'.

We understand there is wide speculation from many places in Tasmania that this minister, Marinus Link, TasNetworks and Hydro are in secret deals to sign our state up to a procurement tender process for cables worth in the order of \$1 billion to \$2 billion. If he is waiting to tell Tasmanians what he signed up to, until he has finished inking his signature on a contract that is going to put us in a debt that we do not know about, he can think again.

We will not put up with it. Our job is to scrutinise the Government. This is the most enormous debt that this minister and this Liberal Government is proposing to take on behind closed doors in Tasmania's history. I cannot imagine another time where this much money has been talked about: not only the Government going into debt but telling nobody anything about the details and the cost.

He is going to do an advance purchase procurement. He has never denied this, under repeated questions from the Greens and Labor in Estimates the last couple of years. I asked the minister nine times about the costs for Marinus and about whether there was a procurement process in train. He refused to answer. That is what he does. He does not answer but he is responsible as a minister of the Crown for being honest in this place, being transparent. This parliament has a right to order the Government to table the documents, to table all the expenses they are proposing to sign up to and to understand the separate cost estimates for Marinus Link, the North West Transmission Line and Battery of the Nation.

We heard at Estimates from Mr Voss that the range of cost for Marinus Link would be \$3.1 billion with an upper range of \$3.8 billion. Now we have heard that the most credible estimate is it would be in the order of \$5 billion to \$5.5 billion. That is just for Marinus Link. We have not heard about the North West Transmission Line.

This is an enormous step for the state to consider taking on. That is a big deal. It should be something that the whole of the community has a considered discussion about.

Marinus Link, if it ever was the right way to go, has now lost the race because it has been blown out of the water by the advancement of battery technologies. The original agreement that Victoria signed up to before the federal election was a sweetener that the Labor Party was requiring the Victorians to sign up to before the Victorian election. That required them to sign up to a 6.5 per cent contribution towards the equity in Marinus Link.

That was not in Victoria's interests. The Minister for Energy in Victoria, Lily D'Ambrosio, has released the Victorian Government's commitment to a 100 per cent renewable energy plan. No part of that plan mentions importing renewable electricity from Tasmania. It is not in their equation. It is because they have gone with the pathway that many large businesses and state jurisdictions are going with: investing in large-scale batteries. These provide the firming capacity and short-term or increasingly longer term storage options for excess electricity that is generated from wind farms and solar.

It gives those generators the opportunity to produce and put power into the grid. When they have excess they put it in the batteries and release it later on. The Marinus business case has been blown out of the water by the advancement in large-scale batteries. It has also been blown out of the water by the costs that we are hearing of and the lack of discussion about how that debt would be placed on Tasmanians, how long it would last for and how much we would be paying back each year. There will be a debt on the state and there will also be ongoing costs each year for servicing that debt.

The Liberal Government has never provided a business case. They like to say that they are the best economic managers but they are the worst. They cannot tell Tasmanians how much they are going to spend and they cannot tell us how long we will be in debt for. They cannot even tell us where the money is coming from. They cannot tell us how much they are seeking from the federal government. That is not business in confidence. That is just openness. There is no legal danger by telling Tasmanians what their intentions are with getting a loan from the federal government. That is just straight dealing.

A minister of the Crown has refused to tell Tasmanians whether or not he signed up to an advance tender contract to procure a cable - an advance down-payment. We would like him to respond by the end of today. He can come back during the adjournment to do it, since he

has now run out of time, and tell us whether he or his Government or his GBE has signed a procurement contract for a cable - and, if so, for how much?

There is no opportunity here for the Government to hide on this. The parliament is very determined that these large sums of money cannot be extracted from Tasmanians without our understanding and without our agreement.

Labor has outlined a process here to order the Government, to order the minister, to provide the letter that was sent by the deputy premier Michael Ferguson, and by himself, to the Prime Minister in July, and to provide the details about the North West Transmission Developments and the Battery of the Nation projects which that leader says are subject to cost escalation, and to outline the Government's concerns, which the letter ostensibly contains, that the projects are currently not able to be effectively managed within the fiscal capacity of the Tasmanian budget.

We want to see all of the information surrounding the conversations with the federal government around this matter, and we want all of the latest cost estimates and any contracts that are being considered or are in the process of being signed at the moment - and we want to have them today.

[4.52 p.m.]

Mrs ALEXANDER (Bass) - Mr Speaker, in a world that relies on electricity to maintain economic stability and ensure the health and wellbeing of its citizens, reliable and affordable power is an essential that no one can do without. It is the job of government to do everything it can to ensure power is available for its citizens, businesses and essential services.

In other words, it is the Government's responsibility to literally keep the lights on, at the lowest possible price. The Liberal Government, under Will Hodgman, had an outstanding record on this matter. We know the Hodgman policy approach was to exit from the national electricity market, which had been driving prices up, to limit the price gap increases to the rate of inflation, and a pledge to set Tasmanian prices on Tasmanian power system costs.

That was endorsed by Tasmanians, and Will Hodgman was re-elected with strong voter support. Unfortunately, the Government's performance since then has gone downhill. There is absolutely no doubt that power bills are being used as a revenue raiser to help meet the cost of a spending program that has driven the state budget to record debt and deficit.

When it comes to Project Marinus, the key question is, who pays - and who benefits from that? We know who benefits, because TasNetworks commissioned a report that shows very clearly how the benefits are distributed: 38 per cent goes to New South Wales, 28 per cent to Victoria, 20 per cent to Queensland, 8 per cent to South Australia, and just 6 per cent to Tasmania.

Whether Tasmania should be engaged in a multi-billion-dollar exercise to overwhelmingly transfer the benefits across Bass Strait is a legitimate question - but for Tasmanians, the far bigger question is, what will be the impact on their power bill? The Government keeps asserting that Marinus will put downward pressure on prices, and that all power users across the National Electricity Market will be better off if this proceeds.

I would like to highlight that nowhere in the documentation is there any evidence that Marinus has been benchmarked against the Hodgman pricing formula - which, at that time, was Tasmanian prices based on Tasmanian system costs. In other words, if we - as premier Hodgman committed - exit the national market, we would have cheaper power based on the Hydro's cost of production.

When consulted on Marinus Link, TasCOSS said:

Our core concern ... is that the costs of Marinus Link also have the potential for detrimental consequences for Tasmanian consumers, in particular residential consumers.

The illusive question of 'who pays' for Marinus Link remains unanswered, yet it is critical that Tasmanian households are not burdened with increased costs to fund an infrastructure project that principally benefits mainland customers and Tasmanian generators ...

TasCOSS is not aware of a commitment by the Tasmanian Government that prices in Tasmania will not increase as a consequence of Marinus Link ...

TasCOSS is yet to be convinced Tasmanian households will be net-beneficiaries of the Marinus Link, or that it will benefit Tasmania in general ...

Tasmanian households should not be penalised for our 100 years of investment in renewable energy, nor be expected to pay a further premium for a project that will deliver most benefits to mainland customers and developers of renewable energy projects.

The Tasmanian Government has announced that our state is now 100 per cent self-sufficient in renewable energy generation, and Tasmanians have achieved this by investing in our renewable energy assets for over a century through our power bills and our taxes.

There is no clear indication from the Tasmanian Government or TasNetworks on what constitutes our fair share, or any indicator for measuring the satisfactory resolution to the question, who actually pays? TasCOSS wants to understand what is meant by Tasmania's fair share. In the absence of other reasonable measures offered by TasNetworks or the Government, TasCOSS suggests that Tasmanian customers should pay no more than 6 per cent of the project costs.

The obvious question is, why should Tasmanians pay more than we stand to get out of it? Ms Adrienne Picone, the CEO of TasCOSS, said:

The number of Tasmanians in energy debt continues to grow, and the total amount of household energy debt has ballooned to more than \$15 million.

Recently we learned that without Aurora's contribution, the Energy Hardship Fund would have been exhausted, such is the need for financial support in the community.

On 27 June 2023, Fruit Growers Tasmania issued a media statement called 'Electricity Price Increases Leaves Tasmanians Out in the Cold':

The decision by the Tasmanian Government last week to increase electricity prices by 9.5 per cent under a banner that 'Tasmanians are paying among the lowest power prices in the nation' is cold comfort to Tasmanians and Tasmanian businesses across the state.

Fruit Growers Tasmania warns that a 9.5 per cent increase in our electricity prices just does not make good economic sense. Fruit Growers Tasmania CEO, Peter Cornish, said:

It's short-sighted and quite frankly, lazy.

Mr Cornish adds:

In the middle of a cost-of-living crisis, the Tasmanian Government has full control over electricity prices and could make a real difference but with inflation at 7 per cent, the Tasmanian Government has decided to increase electricity prices by 9.5 per cent, which will in fact increase inflation, putting further pressure on Tasmanians and Tasmanian businesses.

Tasmanian governments of the past invested in hydro power schemes to provide reliable and inexpensive electricity to attract people to come to live and work in Tasmania and companies to invest in the state. It should be no different now.

Electricity is a big cost to businesses, with price increases for many Tasmanian businesses on electricity contracts well above 9.5 per cent. But if Tasmania was known for lower electricity prices for business, it would become a selling point for companies to relocate or expand here. And on top of that, we are in the enviable position of being able to offer 100 per cent renewable electricity.

The independent Tasmanian Economic Regulator sets the maximum electricity price, but it doesn't set the actual electricity price. Electricity prices are set by the Tasmanian Government, not the Regulator.

Fruit Growers Tasmania believes there is no plausible justification for electricity prices increasing by 9.5 per cent.

Fruit Growers Tasmania is also calling for the Government to provide lower electricity prices so companies can invest more, expand production, employ more people, pay more tax, and help fund those essential services we all want.

The cost of power production has not gone up by that much. The reason our electricity prices are going up is that the Tasmanian Government is effectively taxing users through electricity pricing. Governments should not use power bills for back-door taxation.

Fruit Growers Tasmania further add:

From every perspective, lower electricity prices would provide an advantage to Tasmania's fruit industry.

It would be an advantage to the packhouses that sort, pack and store our berries, cherries, stone fruit and pears, and to the pumps that power our irrigation, and the processors that convert our fruit into juice, cider and other value-added products.

Time expired.

Mr SPEAKER - The question is that the amendment be agreed to.

The House divided -

AYES 9

Ms Archer
Mr Barnett
Mr Ellis
Mr Ferguson
Mr Jaensch
Ms Ogilvie
Mr Street
Mr Wood (Teller)
Mr Young

NOES 13

Mrs Alexander
Mr Bayley
Dr Broad (Teller)
Ms Dow
Ms Finlay
Ms Haddad
Ms Johnston
Mr O'Byrne
Ms O'Byrne
Mr Tucker
Ms White
Mr Winter
Dr Woodruff

PAIRS

Mr Rockliff

Ms Butler

Amendment negatived.

Mr SPEAKER - The question now is that the motion be agreed to.

The House divided -

AYES 13

Mrs Alexander
Mr Bayley
Dr Broad
Ms Dow
Ms Finlay
Ms Haddad (Teller)
Ms Johnston
Mr O'Byrne
Ms O'Byrne
Mr Tucker
Ms White

NOES 9

Ms Archer
Mr Barnett
Mr Ellis
Mr Ferguson
Mr Jaensch
Ms Ogilvie
Mr Shelton
Mr Street
Mr Wood (Teller)
Mr Young

Mr Winter
Dr Woodruff

PAIRS

Ms Butler

Mr Rockliff

Motion agreed to.

**PUBLIC INTEREST DISCLOSURES (MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT) BILL
2021 (No. 22)**

In Committee

Consideration of Council amendments.

Clauses 4, 5, 6, 8, 9, and 10 and new clauses A, B, C, D, E, F, G and H

Dr WOODRUFF - Madam Deputy Chair, I move -

That the amendments of the Legislative Council be agreed to.

Before speaking to the amendments, I thank a number of people in respect of the bill. I want to thank the Attorney-General, Mr Sealy from the Attorney-General's office and Mr Patterson from the department for their work on these amendments, as well as anyone else from your office, Attorney-General, the department and the OPC who was involved.

The approach on these amendments was a very collaborative one and our feedback on the first draft of the amendments was taken on board, which is appreciated.

I also thank the member for Mersey, Mike Gaffney, MLC, for kindly agreeing to take carriage of the bill through the Council, which he did with a high level of confidence and attention to detail as we would all expect. Mr Gaffney put considerable work into communicating with members in the other place and provided us with insightful advice on how to handle things like timings and briefings for members.

I also thank the Leader of the Government in the Legislative Council, Mrs Hiscutt, and her office for assisting in sorting out the arrangements.

I provide a very brief reminder to members. The Public Interest Disclosures (Members of Parliament) Bill 2021 amends the Public Interest Disclosures Act 2002 to allow disclosures in relation to a member of parliament to be made to either the Ombudsman or the Integrity Commission. The bill also extends the act to allow for a disclosure in relation to an employee of a member of parliament to be referred to either the Ombudsman or the Integrity Commission. As it currently stands, the only authority a person can refer an employee of a member of parliament to is the Ombudsman.

The time this bill was first debated, the Attorney-General indicated her Government's support for the bill subject to a further assessment taking place prior to the bill being introduced

to the Legislative Council. This further work identified an issue with our bill regarding a situation when a disclosure in the public interest relates to a matter of parliamentary privilege. Amendments were then drafted. First, such that disclosures can go to the Ombudsman, the Integrity Commission or the Speaker or President. Second, that disclosures relating to matters of privilege can be referred by the commission or the Ombudsman to the Speaker or President.

We then requested that those amendments be amended to provide that in circumstances where the commission or Ombudsman refers a disclosure on a matter privilege to the Speaker or President, this would not occur unless permission has been granted by the person who lodges the disclosure. That amendment was incorporated, with an additional caveat that permission would not be required if there is no means of contacting the person who made the disclosure in the first place.

I will now detail the specific amendments.

Clause 4 amended. As originally drafted, clause 4 amended section 7 of the principal act. It allows disclosures in relation to a member of parliament or a staff member of a member of parliament to be made to either the Ombudsman or the Integrity Commission. The bill removed reference to the Speaker and President from this section.

The amendments to this clause reinsert the Speaker and President as options for a person to make a disclosure to while retaining the Ombudsman or Integrity Commission as disclosure options introduced by this bill. It neither therefore prescribes nor compels who a person could make a disclosure to. The amendments do not alter the arrangements introduced by the bill regarding a staff member of a member of parliament.

Clauses 5, 6, 8, 9 and 10 are omitted. Those clauses of the bill remove references to the Speaker or President from sections 15, 23, 84, 87 and 88 of the principal act respectively. These amendments were consequential to the removal of the Speaker and President as a disclosure option under the act. These clauses have been left out as a consequence of the amendment that retains the Speaker and the President as disclosure options.

New clause A introduces a new section 29CA and this deals with the referral of matters from the Integrity Commission to the Speaker or President. The retention of the Speaker or President as disclosure options and the new inclusion of the Integrity Commission as a disclosure option require new provisions in the act to allow the commission to refer matters to the Speaker or President. As I outlined earlier this new clause provides that the Integrity Commission can only make a referral to the Speaker or President with the consent of the person who made the disclosure. The exception to that rule is an instance where a person did not provide information that enables that person to be contacted.

New clause B under section 29C of the principal act: if the Integrity Commission is referred a matter by the Ombudsman or a public body the commission may either deal with the disclosure under the Integrity Commission Act 2009 or refer the disclosure back to the Ombudsman or public body.

Section 29D(2) requires the Integrity Commission to notify the referring body and the person who made the disclosure of its decision under 29C. New clause B amends section 29D(2) to add a reference to the new section 29CA introduced by the new clause A that we have here so that the same notification is made if the Integrity Commission refers on the

disclosure to the Speaker or President or otherwise is not required to take further action under that section.

New clause C introduces a new section 36 allowing the President or Speaker to refer a disclosure to the Ombudsman. This is a similar provision to the current section 78 in part 8 which is repealed in this bill.

New clause D makes amendments to section 37 of the act consequential to the insertion of the new clause 36. Section 37 of the act ceased to have effect in 2009 when the then section 36 in the act was repealed. However as there is a new clause C that inserts a new section 36 relating to Ombudsman referrals section 37 has been amended accordingly.

New clause E section 42 allows the Ombudsman to refer matters to a public body if appropriate, otherwise section 39 generally requires the Ombudsman to investigate every disclosure the Ombudsman has determined is a public interest disclosure.

New clause E inserts provision new section 42A to allow the Ombudsman to refer a matter relating to a member of parliament to the Speaker or President if the Ombudsman considers it appropriate to do so. As in the new section 29CA this section first requires consent from the person who made the disclosure unless the person did not provide information that enables them to be contacted.

New clause F part 6 of the act deals with investigations of disclosures to the Ombudsman relating to members of parliament. Section 46 part 6 currently provides to whom the Ombudsman should give notice of a disclosure, the new clause F amends section 46 clarifying that the Ombudsman would give notice before conducting an investigation of a disclosed matter relating to a member of parliament and would give that notice to the Speaker or President.

New clause G section 53 of part 6 provides to whom the ombudsman gives an opportunity to comment if there may be grounds for making a report adverse to a public officer. The new clause G amends this section to provide it is the Speaker or President in the case of a member of parliament.

Section 55 of the act will continue to require the Ombudsman to give a person an opportunity to be heard before any adverse comment is made about them in a report.

A new clause H amends section 56 to clarify, as was the case under part 8, now repealed, to whom a report in relation to an MP is provided to the Speaker or President.

I apologise to people who are listening for having to rattle through that but it is a time-limited period. I thank all members for their very collaborative way of working through these complicated issues. I believe that we have landed in a very good place that provides for the protecting of matters of parliamentary privilege being taken through appropriate channels with correct authority.

This bill was tabled last year well before the *Motion for Respect: Report into Workplace Culture in Ministerial and Parliamentary Services* but the bill subsequently became even more relevant to that report's findings and it enables a sensible and safe process for the assessment of allegations that is outside of politics or the fear of reprisal. I commend these amendments.

[5.21 p.m.]

Ms ARCHER - The Government supports the bill as amended in the other place. I know the amendments have been developed by our Government working in collaboration with the Greens, as stated by Dr Woodruff to address an issue in the bill arising from parliamentary privilege and some related matters to avoid unintended restrictions on investigation to the public interest disclosures. I thank Dr Woodruff and her staff and specifically, Thomas Whitten.

Dr Woodruff - He hates being named.

Ms ARCHER - I know he hates being named but in these legal matters, in particular, he is very good.

Obviously, I appreciate the cooperation that we have had across my staff in the Department of Justice and the Office of Parliamentary Counsel (OPC) as well.

This is a classic example of when we identify something that we want to put off to have a really good think about it so there are no unintended consequences. This is a good example of that. At the time the bill was debated in this place, no initial issues were identified with the bill; however, given the technical nature of the bill and the complexity of the legislation, as amended, I did flag during the debate that further advice would be sought to ensure there were no unintended consequences before it got to the other place.

On the advice of my Department of Justice a number of proposed amendments to the bill were developed and they preserve the spirit and intent of the bill while addressing the issues that have been identified.

I will not go through in great detail the way you have, Dr Woodruff. I know you have limited time and I do not want to repeat the clauses one by one but I will say that the amendments are necessary to avoid unintended restrictions on the investigation of public interest disclosures that might arise where the disclosure is affected by parliamentary privilege. Parliamentary privilege prevents an inquiry into what is said or tabled in parliament, including in the proceedings of its committees, other than by parliament itself as such.

Under the bill as passed in this place, if a disclosure relating to a member of parliament is covered by the privilege, the Ombudsman and the Integrity Commission would not be able to investigate the matter. This issue does not hinder the Ombudsman and Integrity Commission managing disclosures or parts of disclosures about an MP's conduct that does not relate to parliamentary privilege.

It was also identified that the bill, firstly, leaves unclear as to whom the Ombudsman gives notice or reports to on the investigation and, secondly, removes protections under the act for a person who wishes to disclose to the Speaker or the President.

The main amendment is to add the Ombudsman and Integrity Commission as people to whom disclosures about MPs can be made while retaining the option for a person who prefers to disclose to the Speaker or President directly. I think that is a really important feature of our Westminster system to be retained.

The amended provisions provide the disclosure that relates to a member of the Legislative Council and it is to be made to the President of the Legislative Council, the Ombudsman or the Integrity Commission. Likewise, they provide that a disclosure that related to a member of the House of Assembly is to be made to the Speaker of the House of Assembly, the Ombudsman or the Integrity Commission. These provisions expand the options to persons making disclosure and do not mandate who the disclosure is to be made to.

The provision uses the words 'is to'. Members who are familiar with the Acts Interpretation Act 1931 will recall that section 10(a) of the act - and I know that you were asleep at the age, of course - provides that words 'is to' are to be construed as being directory in contrast to the word 'must' which is to be construed as mandatory.

Further, amendments provide the Ombudsman or Integrity Commission may, with the consent of the complainant if they can be contacted, refer a matter to the Speaker or President where appropriate. For example, this may be where there is a parliamentary privilege matter that they cannot properly investigate.

It is noted that persons making anonymous disclosures sometimes provide a contact detail such as an anonymous email address or similar. The consent requirements would apply in this case. If a person has not provided any means to contact them, the consent requirement need not apply. If a consent requirement did apply in this case, it would seem to have the undesirable result that such a person would not know their disclosure could not be dealt with further as their disclosure was not referred to the Speaker or the President due to the consent requirement.

It is preferable to allow such disclosures to go to the Speaker or the President, if appropriate, on the basis a person not providing contact information is sufficiently anonymous and, in any event, protected from reprisals.

They are the comments that I wish to make about these amendments. As I said, they have been developed in collaboration with the Greens and so they should go through.

Ms HADDAD - I know that this debate has limited time and I wanted to put on the record that the Opposition will be supporting these amendments as we did in the Upper House and to commend the member for Franklin, the Leader of the Greens, Dr Woodruff, for her work and also your office as well. I know how hard Tom has worked on this and a lot of things in your office. As was said on the original debate on this bill, an example of Parliament working collaboratively, which does not always happen, often we end up in a very combative environment here and sometimes have to do that side of the job that does not always come naturally to lots of us but this was a nice example of Parliament working collaboratively.

I know that the Government has worked on these amendments with the Greens and with the member for Mersey who took them through the Upper House. My Labor colleague supported them there. I do not feel the need to put on the record again as the Leader of the Greens and the Attorney have done the detail of what the bill achieves and what the amendments achieve other than to note that this is an important improvement to the existing legislation and I think it modernises our workplace in a way that all of us, as people who work in this building, should welcome and encourage.

I know that the parliament took quite a long time to come to having a big interest disclosures legislation at all and Dr Woodruff went through that in her original speech on the

bill when we debated it last year. There were attempts from as early as 1995 by Labor in Opposition and then the Liberal Party in Government but bills lapsed so there were attempts by Michael Field in 1995, Judy Jackson in 1997 and Ray Groom in 1998 but it was not until 2001 when Peter Patmore, then Labor Attorney-General brought in the 2001 legislation.

This bill improves upon that legislation and it will mean that when and if things do not go right that there are avenues appropriate for MPs, for parliamentary and ministerial and other staff working in the political system they will have choices and options available to follow up on those complaints, either through the Speaker in this place, the President in the other Chamber or through the Integrity Commission and the Ombudsman. I understand the complexity of the changes that were made in the upper House to ensure there is a process for if and when there are matters that are affected by parliamentary privilege that someone needs to raise an issue about. That was the substance of those amendments in the upper House.

This is a good step forward in our public interest disclosure system in Tasmania. We will be supporting the amendments.

Amendments agreed to.

Resolution reported.

Resolution agreed to.

MOTION

Native Forests - Motion Negatived

[5.32 p.m.]

Mr SPEAKER - Before I ask the member to indicate whether she requires a vote on this motion, I note that this is the second item and we only have half an hour left, so it is a restricted debate. You can continue the debate at another time. It is your choice whether you call a vote. I am not saying you cannot do that. I am just indicating that a restricted debate makes it difficult for everybody to offer their opinions. If you do not call on the debate then you can bring this motion back on at a further time. In saying that, is a vote required?

Dr WOODRUFF (Franklin - Leader of the Greens) - Mr Speaker, a vote is required.

Mr Speaker, I move -

That the House:

- (1) Notes Tasmania's native forests are some of the most carbon-dense living ecosystems on Earth.
- (2) Understands clearfelling and burning of state-owned native forests releases 4.65 million tonnes of carbon a year, and is the biggest polluting sector in our economy.

- (3) Recognises we are in a climate heating emergency, with fires, droughts and tornados imperilling life across the planet, and every tonne of carbon that stays in the ground is precious.
- (4) Condemns the Liberal Government for continuing to allow the destruction of ancient Tasmanian trees and their canopy of life that supports countless threatened species.
- (5) Acknowledges that 5000 people attended forest rallies around Australia over the past weekend to call for an end to native forest logging.
- (6) Celebrates the more than 60 protesters who are standing in Wentworth Hills and the Florentine to prevent centuries' old giants from being destroyed.
- (7) Understands these protests are but the start of the biggest forest protests in over a decade as people defy draconian laws in defence of beauty and nature, today and for future generations.
- (8) Agrees the overwhelming majority of people across Australia and Tasmania want native forest logging to end immediately.
- (9) Calls on the Liberals to end native forest logging, and transition the remaining workers into restoring the forest estate and protecting our carbon stores.

We brought this motion on today because I can see a strong rift happening in Tasmanian society, with the Liberal Party and the Labor Party on one side and the majority of Tasmanians on the other. The published footage yesterday of an enormous ancient tree on the back of a log truck, filling up the whole truck caused a national outrage.

It is the most viewed article on the *Guardian Australia's* website and it has been widely distributed across the country. The reason is that we collectively understand that life on this planet is precious, it is fragile and it is wholly dependent on having an intact biosphere and on having flourishing biodiversity. We increasingly understand that because we see what is happening with the breakdown of the climate system around the world.

We only have to look at what has been happening in Maui. Despite the best resources a society has, one of the richest societies on the planet, the United States, is vulnerable to the volatility of the climate system, to the tornados that fan huge fires, uncontrollable by humans. All of the work of early warning systems, of firefighting capacity, of military aircraft, all the pre-fire preparation cannot withstand hurricane force winds that whip up a conflagration. That has been the story of Maui and recently the story of the Mediterranean that has suffered days of 45°C heat in cities that are not designed for that. People are suffering and dying, as they did in Arizona and Texas, trying to live in 50°C, which is not habitable for anybody who is vulnerable or elderly or poor.

In the climate emergency we are waking up. Tasmanians and Australians are waking up and understanding that our native forests are some of the most carbon-dense and precious

ecosystems that we have on Earth. They collectively house beautiful cathedral-like wonders of life. They are moist places. They are homes to species which are so rare, far more important than precious gems, because they have a life, they have a beating heart. It is those masked owls and the swift parrots that people understand were living in or around that giant tree that was felled and put on the back of a truck and taken to be pulped. The majority of that tree will go into pulp.

This is the story of Tasmania and what we are seeing as the disconnect between the Labor and Liberal parties and the people of Australia and the people of Tasmania. The majority of people of Tasmania and Australia do not want native forest logging. They are very clear: 65 per cent in 2021 and not just Greens voters, 71 per cent of Labor voters Australia-wide want an end to native forest logging. Three in five coalition voters also want an end to native forest logging. This is an Australia-wide movement. It is a state-wide movement.

In the forests today and tomorrow and the day after protesters are going in like the 60 who went into Wentworth Hills on the weekend and like the scores of people who went into the Florentine Valley today and yesterday. They are standing up, they are engaging in non-violent protest training, they are increasing in numbers and they are preparing to do everything they can. This is the last stand of habitat that is available for the swift parrot and masked owls.

The huge rally in Hobart on the weekend had a beautiful energy. Young people coming into that place get heart from going to a rally with other people like them. They are signing up to do non-violent protest action. They know that unless they show up, vote and stand in the way of bulldozers nothing else will happen.

Thank you to Colette Harmsen. She stands in jail waiting her time to come out and to re-engage. While she is there her voice is powerful. It gives us hope because she shows that she is one of the thousands of Tasmanians who are prepared to do everything they can to protect these beautiful forests. These are not just for people today, they are for future generations. People are defying the draconian anti-protest laws that are in place in this state, as they are in Labor states everywhere else in the country. Labor and Liberal have come together on this. They know that they have to stand against people and they have to protect the fossil fuel companies that they ultimately all get paid by. The Labor and Liberal Party will do everything to protect oil and gas companies, who are predatory, and who are collectively assaulting nature in Australia.

We are seeing the same thing down here, where we have a state-subsidised native forest logging industry. Forestry Tasmania - paid for by taxpayers - took that giant tree out of the Florentine Valley yesterday. Forestry Tasmania went into that coupe and felled two other giant trees. There are at least another 50 trees, according to the report this morning in the paper, of similar girth that are ready for the chop in that coupe.

There are obviously no regulations in place in Tasmania worth the paper that they are written on if this sort of carnage can occur in our forests.

We are calling on the Liberals and on the Labor Party to understand that you are alone in this. You do not have the support of Tasmanians. You do not have the support of children. You do not have the support of doctors who want us to protect the forest because they can see the climate emergency that we are in. They understand the amount of carbon that is stored in our forests. They understand that in a climate crisis, as we are in now, every amount of carbon

that we can store we should - because we are still burning it. We are still emitting carbon in the cars that we drive, in the lives that we lead. We are, every day, releasing carbon.

One of the best ways we can reduce the impact on the climate that we are already seeing is to protect forests. Antonio Guterres, the Secretary-General of the United Nations, said this the other day:

Protecting forests is one of the most effective ways to address the climate crisis. They are invaluable in our climate action.

That is what we can do with the forests in Tasmania, instead of emitting - as they do through Forestry Tasmania's activities - 4.65 million tonnes of carbon every year. It is the biggest polluting sector in our economy: bigger than cars, bigger than the whole transport sector combined - 4.65 million tonnes of carbon we could make a decision about. The Liberal Government could make a decision about, and Labor can support them - because what they are doing at the moment is holding regional Tasmanian communities in limbo. They are using them as a political plaything. They absolutely are.

You know, as in every other state, that the end of native forest logging is coming. It will come this year, or next year, or in three years' time, but it will come. You know that because you can see the writing on the wall - or if you cannot, go and look at what every other state in Australia is working towards.

Labor Party, have a look at what is coming your way at the conference this weekend. Understand that the people are going to win on this. What you are doing is purposely using regional Tasmanian communities that have unsustainable industries. Instead of working for their futures, instead of giving their children something they can look forward to being part of, something they can train for, you are keeping them locked in an old industry - a dinosaur industry that is subsidised by the public purse and has no future.

Instead, you could be going to regional communities. You could be teaching people about forestry restoration. You could be training people who already have skills in the forestry industry to transition into restoring forests, because that is what we need in a climate emergency. We need to protect the carbon stores that we have. They are vulnerable.

Everything is now vulnerable. We need to protect forest stores from fire. We need to protect them from infestations. We need to grow them and help them become more moist. They have been dried out by decades of native forest logging. We have woolly regrowth. We have plantation forests, and all the science is showing that both of those sorts of forest communities are more dangerous, more at risk of fire than an intact moist native forest.

We saw that around Geeveston. We saw the different patterns of fire burning and the gradation of risk between the regrowth forests and plantations compared to the intact native forests. They are wetter and they are more fire retardant.

We are calling on the Liberals to end native forest logging. We are calling on the Liberals to transition remaining workers out of the carbon estate - out of the sector, into restoring native forests. We are calling on them to protect the carbon stores that we have, and to grow the carbon stores.

Of course, it is not just in forests that we can grow carbon stores. We can grow them in grasslands and many other places, but we have carbon stores there already. We have trees that are hundreds and hundreds of years old - like the tree that came out yesterday from the Florentine. That tree started growing in the medieval ages. That is how old that tree would have been and yet we cut it down to make paper, because only 1 per cent of Tasmania's native forest estate that gets clear-felled ends up as sawn timbers. Just 1 per cent. The rest of it gets burnt. It goes up in smoke. It adds to emissions.

Meanwhile, 5000 people around the country rallied last weekend, and there will be more again this weekend. Their focus is on Labor, because Labor has seen the writing on the wall in Victoria. Labor has done the sensible thing - and, of course, that is having an impact on Tasmania.

That is why we need to end the merry-go-round which is damaging our children, and damaging regional communities, but especially damaging the planet that we all live on, and the opportunities for us to have a beautiful future, where it is healthy. Every single day for the rest of our lives we will be living in a heating climate. Regardless of what we do, that is going to happen - but we can make it less hot, and that is our challenge. Everything we can do to take carbon out of the atmosphere will make it less hot.

Mr Speaker, I finish by saying that our native forests are deeply spiritual places for palawa people. Tasmanian Aboriginal people have lived in our forests and around our forests for tens of thousands of years. They have shaped those forests and they have cared for those forests. With them, the Greens stand with the people of Tasmania who are fighting to protect the forest, protect our future, and the glorious wonders of beautiful plants and animals that are nowhere else on earth except in those forests. I commend this motion.

[5.48 p.m.]

Dr BROAD (Braddon) - Mr Speaker, it will not surprise anybody that Labor will not be supporting this motion. To be pretty clear, this motion is about politics, not progress.

In the last sitting, last week, a motion was passed in this place making it pretty clear to everybody that the vast majority of members in this place support the native forest industry.

We have once again a Greens motion calling on the Liberals this time, not the whole parliament, to end native forest logging. We know how this works, Mr Speaker. We know there has been a protest over the weekend, and then, as part of some 'tick a box' exercise, the Greens have to pass a motion in support of those protests. We have seen this a number of times. The Bob Brown Foundation organises a bunch of protests and then the political wing of the Bob Brown Foundation rocks up to parliament and puts up a motion like this, obviously knowing that we cannot support this. They obviously know the Liberal Party cannot support it, but they go ahead anyway.

There is no compromise. There is no acknowledgement of different points of view. There is no acknowledgement of things like the deal that was struck in the past with what was the Tasmanian Forest Agreement (TFA). There is no recognition of that at all. It is a simple blunt instrument: no native forest logging in Tasmania.

Dr Woodruff - That deal does not exist anymore. You know that.

Dr BROAD - We heard the member talk in absolute silence.

We know that, despite the rhetoric of the Liberal Party, the Tasmanian Forest Agreement for all intents and purposes, still stands.

Dr Woodruff - No, it doesn't.

Dr BROAD - We have in this state a permanent timber production zone. Who approved the Permanent Timber Production Zone? The Greens voted for the Permanent Timber Production Zone.

Dr Woodruff - No, we didn't.

Dr BROAD - All the trees that are part of the Tasmanian Forest Agreement -

Dr Woodruff interjecting.

Mr SPEAKER - Order.

Dr BROAD - Absolutely, the Greens supported this - as did, I might add, the Wilderness Society. I also might add that the new member for Clark, Mr Bayley, was a key person involved in the negotiation of the Permanent Timber Production Zone. Those trees that were on that truck were part of the Permanent Timber Production Zone.

I also point out that Sustainable Timber Tasmania said that tree was cut down for safety reasons - I do not know what that actually means - but looking at that log on the truck you could see that it was destined to be a mill log. Obviously, we need as many mill logs as we can get in this state because the contracted 137 000 cubic metres is not available, so every millable log needs to be milled. The industry is pretty strong on that. If that was not a mill log, that log would have been split. It would not be sitting on a truck as an entire log. It is much easier to transport split logs than it would be as an unsplit log. That log is destined to become flooring or a table. It is not destined to be made into paper as the member states.

No doubt, the bits that cannot be milled such as the edges and the sawdust that comes from the milling process may end up as a by-product, but the vast majority of that tree will end up as a value-added product.

Dr Woodruff - What about the rest of the forest it came from?

Dr BROAD - We have a deal. There was a deal struck and that deal still stands, but now we have the member saying we should end native forestry. Why have a deal in the first case? Why have a compromise?

Dr Woodruff - The Liberals ripped it up, Dr Broad, you know that.

Mr SPEAKER - Member for Franklin, if you comment any more I will ask you to leave.

Dr BROAD - It is absolutely still in place. This motion is all about politics. It is about going to membership mailing list and saying that, once again, the Greens have stood up and

tried to end native forestry and once again, the Parliament of Tasmania - those bad people in the Liberal and Labor parties - have voted against it.

There is another point of view. We heard in evidence given in Estimates that since estimates of carbon emissions were started back in the 1990s, that the Tasmanian native forest sector has been carbon negative. We know that the state is carbon negative. Instead of having another crack at an industry like the native forest sector, which is carbon negative, the Greens would be better placed redirecting their calls for change to the vast majority of their members who live in the cities of Australia, watching their coal-fired televisions, looking at their social media on their coal-fired iPads and iPhones, surrounded by concrete and asphalt having a far greater impact on the environment and having a far greater emissions profile than Tasmanians.

Tasmanians have done a really good job at reducing carbon emissions. Where should the Greens be directing their attention? They should be directing their attention where they could have an even bigger impact - the carbon emissions of the cities of Australia rather than Tasmania.

We are one of the very few jurisdictions in the world that is carbon negative yet, from motions like this, you could get the idea that Tasmania is a carbon laggard, our performance, when it comes to carbon emissions, is the worst in the country, not the best. The Greens should be better directing their attention elsewhere. There has been a deal done on forestry that they signed up to. They helped draw the permanent timber production zone. Those trees that are being harvested, are trees the Greens agreed to being harvested.

Now, if they think that that deal still does not stand, it does. We still have a permanent timber production zone. The very trees that were on the back of that truck were the very trees that the Greens were willing to sacrifice as part of the compromise that was the Tasmanian forest agreement. To say otherwise is not factual and to say that Tasmania needs to massively up their performance when it comes to carbon emissions fails to recognise that the state, as we speak, at this very moment, is carbon negative. We are sequestering carbon as a state and they would better direct their attention elsewhere where they can probably have a greater impact than trying to end a sustainable native forest industry.

[5.56 p.m.]

Mr TUCKER (Lyons) - Mr Speaker, Mr Bayley is really going to set the world alight, isn't he?

Over 800 thousand hectares of native forestry is on private land. I wonder what that cost is per hectare. If the Government was to ban native forestry, would those private native forest owners be reimbursed for that loss? Mr Speaker, I reckon Mr Bayley and Dr Woodruff are writing cheques that their body cannot cash.

There should be no argument on whether Tasmania should continue with native forestry. The answer should be immediately and, always, yes. Aside from the fact that the forestry industry is worth well over a billion dollars to our state economy and generates and supports thousands of jobs within the state, Tasmania has an excellent record in environmental management of forestry operations.

We have one of the most sustainable timber industries in the world and rigorously regulated native forest operations. It would be remiss of us to believe that by stopping native

forestry, you would also be stopping the demand for timber. People would just look elsewhere for timber, most likely in countries overseas that have a lot less regard for sustainable forest practices, not to mention the carbon footprint of shipping that amount of timber to Australia from those other countries.

If the Greens truly understood the consequences for our environment, should our state ban native forestry, they would not have put forward this motion. Theoretically, putting a stop to native forestry would reduce the amount of carbon Tasmania produces, but the answer is not that simple. The fact is, someone, somewhere else will pick up exactly where Tasmania left off and Tasmania, wanting to buy timber, will just buy it from them.

Surely the Greens must agree it is better putting money in Tasmania's forestry industry and stimulating Tasmania's economy rather than spending it overseas. By ensuring native forestry stays in Tasmania rather than moving overseas, the Government can closely regulate it, ensuring the sector is as sustainable as possible.

Mr Speaker, 88 per cent of old growth forests are in reserve; 59 per cent of native forests are in reserve. That is forestry that cannot be touched by the timber industry. It is also important to note that the old growth forest trees that have been touched since before settlement, the old giants, as the Greens have said, are different to native forests.

I will finish with a comment that was made in Australian Forest Products Association's (AFPA) media release:

Shut down a stumble over-regulated native forest operations in Australia and imports go up, from countries with much lower environmental standards. The result is a net loss to the global forestry cover and a net loss to the global econ-ovironment.

Tasmania has an excellent record in environmental management of forestry operations. It is tightly controlled by the Forest Practices Authority and we always replant after harvesting. We still have two-thirds of the forest cover that existed at European settlement and far more of our forests are protected in reserves than virtually anywhere else on the planet.

Thank you, Mr Speaker.

Time expired.

Mr SPEAKER - The time for debate has expired. I will put the question.

Mr FERGUSON - Point of order, Mr Speaker. We will all look to you for a ruling here. There is to be a division at the end of private members' time. The House has ordered a particular statement from the minister. He is presenting himself before 6 p.m. to do so. I will allow you to rule on whether the minister has the opportunity to speak now or after the division.

Mr SPEAKER - Even though the motion was passed I need to put the division first. There will be an opportunity straight after that for the minister to answer the question as if it was before 6 p.m.

The question is that the motion be agreed to.

The House divided -

AYES 3

Mr Bayley (Teller)
Ms Johnston
Dr Woodruff

NOES 19

Mrs Alexander
Ms Archer
Mr Barnett
Dr Broad
Ms Dow
Mr Ellis
Mr Ferguson
Ms Finlay
Ms Haddad
Mr Jaensch
Mr O'Byrne
Ms O'Byrne
Ms Ogilvie
Mr Street
Mr Tucker
Ms White
Mr Winter
Mr Wood (Teller)
Mr Young

Motion negatived.

ADJOURNMENT

Energy Projects - Cost Estimates

[6.05 p.m.]

Mr BARNETT (Lyons - Minister for Energy and Renewables) - Mr Speaker, I rise to update the House on Motion No. 162. Our Government has committed to providing Tasmanians transparency on projects that impact them like Marinus Link, North West Transmission development and Battery of the Nation projects. As I stated through the debate on motion 162, the tender process for Marinus Link is currently live with evaluations and direct negotiations with a number of suppliers well underway.

This process has been overseen by rigorous probity oversight in legal and commercial advice with a strict probity plan and framework implemented. I am unable to breach these processes as it will expose the state to significant legal ramifications. All three projects noted in motion 162 are in live procurement processes. Procurement and contracting for major infrastructure are regularly done by commercial in confidence processes. This is not unusual, it is standard business practice. It is ReCFIT's view, my department, that the disclosure of any information while active procurement processes are underway is detrimental to probity and would have serious unintended consequences for the future of Tasmania.

Once those procurement processes have concluded and they are in accordance with generally accepted probity principles and any contractual arrangements between the parties are resolved we will provide the information to Tasmanians. We will not jeopardise probity and procurement processes. It is a significant sovereign risk issue. In regards to Marinus, the Government has always said that we would negotiate to get the best deal for Tasmania. We will continue to do so.

I asked the House to understand and appreciate that I am not withholding information I am able to provide. I have stood here this evening providing the best possible level of compliance with the order of the House. We are following strict probity and procurement processes. We have to follow these processes as this is what we have told the market we will do as they provide their confidential construction offers. As noted in our proposed amendment we will be updating the House once procurement processes are resolved. To be clear, this is not about lack of transparency, this is about proper process, good governance and sovereign risk.

These are matters the other side say are important and matters they have sought to scrutinise. Daily negotiations are still underway on these procurements, with figures yet to be finalised and constantly moving. It would jeopardise the negotiations to share these. We are committed to being transparent: we will provide cost estimates when it is reasonable and appropriate to do so. We will not jeopardise Tasmania's interest for the sake of politics and neither should this House.

In conclusion, I will now table the letter that I have received from the chairman of Marinus Link, Roger Gill, dated today to the shareholding ministers, myself as Minister for Energy and Renewables and Mr Michael Ferguson. It says:

As publicly announced in December 2022, Marinus Link has begun a tender procurement with international suppliers for the highly specialised cable and converter equipment to deliver the project.

This tender process is currently live, with evaluations and direct negotiations with a number of suppliers well underway. It is important to note that this process has been overseen by rigorous probity oversight and legal commercial advice, with a strict probity plan and framework implemented.

To protect the integrity of this live procurement, the highest standards of probity have been employed, as well as the confidential commercial negotiations to ensure that the project can be delivered at the lowest possible price, I am advised that breaching these highly sensitive contract negotiations by tabling commercially sensitive information would compromise contractual negotiations and risk breach of our legal and confidentiality obligations with a potential outcome of failed tender process and/or litigation.

I table the letter, Mr Speaker. In conclusion, as further information comes available to me or the Government, I will ensure that it is tabled at the earliest opportunity.

Energy Projects - Cost Estimates

[6.10 p.m.]

Mr FERGUSON (Bass - Deputy Premier) - Mr Speaker, I will speak very briefly. I think we all understand, as much as we might have different opinions about it, there has been a resolution of the House that has been agreed -

Dr WOODRUFF - Point of clarification, Mr Speaker. The minister did not seek the leave of the House to table that document.

Mr SPEAKER - We are on adjournment. The minister has made a statement, and now the Deputy Premier -

Mr FERGUSON - The Government accepts -

Ms WHITE - Mr Speaker, can I seek your guidance as to why the minister is speaking? The order was specific for the Minister for Energy and Renewables to comply with. I am curious whether we all get to speak on this or not.

Mr SPEAKER - We are on adjournment. We went to the adjournment at 6 p.m. I made the call that the minister for Energy could make a statement and he made that. Now we are on adjournment.

Mr FERGUSON - The Government's position is that we accept that the resolution of the House has been made. There is no dispute about that, nor about the timing of it.

The minister made a very strong effort to present himself to the House to meet at least the 6 p.m. order. I will ask the House to accept, in good faith, that the minister has acted swiftly and as professionally as he possibly can with the information, and the restrictions that hold him to being able to provide a certain level of information.

The minister has also indicated that as further information - potentially even tomorrow - is provided, he will provide further advice to this House.

I ask this House to respect the difficult position the minister has been placed in. The House has asked him to do something which he believes he is legally not allowed to do. The political overtones on the original motion lead me to wonder what retribution is expected for this minister from the Opposition in coming days. I bookmark that because I am concerned that this is being used as a political strategy to harm the Minister for Energy and Renewables.

I commend him for his speed and his swift response, given that the motion was only carried at 5 p.m. He has already been able to get a level of advice in good faith. We will do our best, and we will all support our colleague on this side of the House with his best endeavours. I ask in anticipation for members to show good faith and recognise that he will provide his best efforts to meet the order of the House, noting that there are some ways in which he may be legally not allowed - may indeed be forbidden - from strictly meeting the terms of the resolution.

Energy Projects - Cost Estimates

[6.13 p.m.]

Mr WINTER (Franklin) - Mr Speaker, as you are aware, I have read this letter only very briefly but I will make some brief comments on the response.

The Government likes to talk about the Opposition doing this. What the Government, and the deputy premier, acting premier, needs to understand is that it is not the Opposition ordering them, it is the House. The House has ordered this. It is not just the Opposition. The crossbench, the Greens and the Opposition have voted and this House has ordered your Government to table certain documents this evening by 6 p.m.

You have not tabled the documents. As you said, acting premier, we need to assess what this document says. At first glance, there is not a lot in the document, but admittedly the minister has not had a lot of time to assess it.

The statements that he made earlier, though, I will reflect on. The statements he made in excuse for not tabling these documents were not believable. They were hysterical. They did not make any sense. They were not convincing to me. Frankly, they were obviously not convincing to the crossbench, because the House made the order that it did.

The minister's excuse for not tabling the documents during the debate did not make sense to me then, and what he said just then does not make sense either. The Minister for Energy and Renewables, Guy Barnett, was ordered by the House to outline to the House before 6 p.m. on 16 August the latest cost estimates for Marinus Link, north west transmission developments, and Battery of the Nation projects.

Mr Speaker, the letter we have seen tabled only refers to Project Marinus, it does not refer to Battery of the Nation projects. Conceivably, he may have other advice that he has not tabled today. For example, Lake Cethana is within the realms of this motion, yet he has not tabled the latest cost estimates for Lake Cethana. There is not a tender process going on for Lake Cethana, yet it is not tabled. He is in contempt of the House if he does not table it by 6 p.m. He has this advice.

The House is ordering this Government to table these documents because it wants to know what is going on with these projects. Our job in this place is to scrutinise this Government. That is what we are doing and we will continue to do it.

This is a re-run of what happened with the advice about the stadium. The Premier tabled a few documents and walked away and thought that was the end of it. It was not. This will not be the end of this either. We are holding this Government to a higher standard than it has for the past 10 years. I accept that is difficult for them to get used to. It is pretty obvious that they are struggling with the scrutiny that this parliament is providing them versus other parliaments.

We have not been able to scrutinise them like this before and we are pleased to be able to do so. Motions like this would not have passed three or four months ago, but they have today, because the House, and Tasmanians more broadly, are demanding a level of scrutiny on this Government that it has not had.

Energy policy in this state is at a critical juncture because the Government keeps changing its mind. From 2014, when they said that they were going to build a Bass Link 2, to 2018, when they said they were going to delink from the National Electricity Market, to 2021, when they said they would cap power prices if there was high volatility within the market, they did not do any of that. Now we are in this mess they have created where they have written to the Prime Minister of Australia to say that Marinus Link might not be in the best interests of Tasmanians. That is why this is highly scrutinised, because it matters to Tasmanians.

Tasmanians are sick of their power bills going, in this minister's words, 'up, up, up'. They are sick of it. They know that Tasmanians should pay Tasmanian prices. They know that Hydro Tasmania was built by them, is owned by them, and they should not be getting screwed by them. That is what is happening. This Government's policies are hurting Tasmanians. That is why they care about energy.

We are committed to transparency and we are committed to getting answers out of this Government. The answers the minister has given, the advice that he has tabled does not pass the sniff test. There are projects covered in this motion that are not the subject of current tender processes and are not covered by the letter the minister received.

We will carefully review overnight the bare minimum the minister has tabled. The House will have important decisions to make in the coming parliamentary sitting days about how it holds the Government, and this minister, to account on this matter.

It is simply not good enough to not provide the information that Tasmanians are seeking. They want to know what the cost of Marinus is going to be and what the impact is going to be on them, their households, their businesses, their employers. They need to understand these things.

We are thankful that the House made the order that it did. It puts the Government on notice on this matter. We will review the documents overnight and ensure that the House's order is properly upheld.

Peter Dixon - Tribute
Bay of Fires - Sydney Film Festival

[6.19 p.m.]

Ms ARCHER (Clark - Attorney-General) - Mr Speaker, I have an adjournment matter to speak about in relation to expressing my sincere condolences for the passing of former magistrate and beloved member of our Tasmanian legal profession, Peter Dixon. I had hoped to speak to this last week when we returned from winter break. Unfortunately, I was too unwell. It is difficult to rise after those issues we have just been dealing with, but I felt it really important to mention this tonight given that I cannot tomorrow night. Some of us have a farewell to Kim Evans tomorrow night, one of our long-serving public servants.

Mr Dixon provided tireless and invaluable service to the Tasmanian community as a magistrate. From his first appointment in 1986 until his retirement in 2012, he carried that out with distinction. Following his retirement, Mr Dixon agreed on several occasions when I requested for him to be a temporary magistrate. That was on a number of occasions and he rarely said no.

Mr Dixon was much loved and respected by the Tasmanian legal community, especially by his colleagues and staff of the Magistrates Court. Prior to his appointment as a magistrate he had a distinguished career as a lawyer in Tasmania, being admitted as a legal practitioner in February 1968, practising on the north-west coast. We wish we would have more these days.

I am sure everyone who knew, practised with or against him or appeared with him will agree that Peter Dixon provided many years of dedicated and tireless service to our community and always had a wry smile for you.

I thoroughly enjoyed appearing before him as a magistrate, or His Worship as he was then addressed. He tirelessly engaged in the hectic pace of the Magistrates Court, generously sharing his breadth of experience with legal practitioners, particularly young new legal practitioners and those who had the misfortune of appearing before him without representation.

Most recently he served as a valued member of the Sentencing Advisory Council Tasmania and thereby contributed to important research and reports in sex offence sentencing, sentencing of adult family violence offenders and sentencing for non-fatal strangulation.

Members of the House might not be aware but the appointments to the Sentencing Advisory Council are made by the Attorney-General. It is very pleasing when you get the calibre of people like Peter Dixon agreeing to a request to be on the Sentencing Advisory Council. In this way his advice and knowledge continued to contribute to our criminal justice system and helped inform important aspects of Tasmanian law reform that I often initiated. I know all members will join me in expressing vale Peter Dixon.

On a separate note and a happier tone, I would like to share with the House some exciting news about the continued growing success of our screen industry in Tasmania. I am sure you will all be aware that the *Bay of Fires* series has recently been released, with the first two episodes premiering at the Sydney Film Festival on the 17 June, ahead of its national release on ABC TV. It is the first time a television series has been asked to take part in the Sydney Film Festival. It is normally reserved for films. It was a great honour. Marta Dusseldorp contacted me about that. She was very proud of that achievement, as should be the cast, crew and production team.

On what is now becoming par for the course for Tasmanian productions, the three highest rating programs over the last month on all Australian network catch-up services are the first three episodes of *Bay of Fires*. The series, which co-creator, actor and co-producer, Marta Dusseldorp, has described as a love letter to Tasmania, was filmed predominantly over 16 weeks in the west coast towns of Queenstown, Zeehan, where my husband was born, and Strahan, with a few days also filming in Collinsvale in southern Tasmania, in my electorate. That is where I got a chance to visit the film set.

This is the second series filmed in our north west to become a ratings winner, with the Logies-nominated *Alone Australia* becoming the highest rated program for SBS and SBS On Demand earlier this year.

Our Government provided \$1.5 million of funding for the production of *Bay of Fires* and the planned second series has also received grant funding through the latest round of Screen Tasmania's project development program.

This incredible success story is a testament to the quality of Tasmanian storytelling and demonstrates the value of the Tasmanian Government's ongoing investment in our state screen industry for not only our screen industry but the broader economy and jobs as well. It also benefits our tourism and hospitality industries, both directly and indirectly, particularly from its exposure onscreen. Although I started off with some very sad news, I am very pleased to provide that update to the House on our burgeoning screen industry.

National Cabinet Meeting - Housing Matildas - FIFA World Cup Semi-Final Match

[6.26 p.m.]

Ms HADDAD (Clark) - Mr Speaker, I want to comment on the very encouraging announcements that came out of the National Cabinet meeting today, specifically the housing announcements. The National Cabinet announced that they have set a new national target to build 1.2 million new well-located homes over five years, from July next year.

That is an additional 200 000 new homes, on top of the already existing targets under the National Housing Accord that was agreed between the states and the Commonwealth last year. There is a new \$3 billion fund for performance-based funding called the New Home Bonus, for states and territories achieving more than their share of the new 1 million home target under the housing accord.

There is a new housing support program, which is a \$50 million competitive funding program for local and state governments to kickstart housing supply in well-located areas. A national planning reform blueprint is being released as well, with planning, zoning, land release and other measures to improve housing supply and affordability.

We all know that those are some of the major barriers to increasing housing supply across the country.

Importantly, they have released a better deal for renters, where they will be working on things like nationally consistent policy to implement a requirement for genuine reasonable grounds for eviction, moving towards limiting rent increases to once a year, and phasing in minimum rental standards. That is really important for the one-third of Australians and Tasmanians who rent.

As I have said in this place before, this just the beginning of what we can expect to see from the federal Albanese Labor government. We have a unique situation in this country where, for the first time ever, with both the housing minister Julie Collins and the Prime Minister, Anthony Albanese, growing up in public housing, and knowing the reality of growing up in public housing. I know that is something not many MPs share, so we can be very proud to see those commitments coming out of the federal government and agreed to by the states.

Finally, I wish all the luck to the Matildas tonight. I know everyone is looking forward to cheering them on. They have done Australia absolutely proud. There has already been an influx of girls and boys getting in touch with soccer clubs across Tasmania and across the country wanting to sign up for their local team and play. That penalty shootout in the last match had everyone on the edges of their seats across the country. Whatever happens tonight, they have done our country proud. Good luck and go Tillies.

Energy Projects - Cost Estimates

[6.28 p.m.]

Dr WOODRUFF (Franklin - Leader of the Greens) - Mr Speaker, I have had a chance to briefly read the letter that minister Barnett tabled from the Marinus Link chairman, Roger Gill.

We are really concerned at the level of disrespect this minister is showing an order of the House. He does not seem to understand that he has now placed the Government in contempt of the House. It was an order that was collectively made from all other members - the Opposition, the Greens and the four Independent members to show Tasmanians exactly what the current cost estimates are for those projects.

We did not ask the minister to provide all the legal documents and all the advice and information around negotiations to do with purchase and procurement of parts of any of those projects. That is not what he was ordered to do. He was ordered to provide the latest cost estimates for Marinus Link, North West Transmission Developments and Battery of the Nation.

He has defied the will of the House and refused to provide the information that he was ordered to provide. He has assembled a grab bag of legalese to try to shroud the fact that he is refusing to give the latest cost estimates of these big projects after the Government has just acknowledged their concerns about the fiscal capacity of the state to pay for them.

We do not accept that there is not a capacity for the minister to come into the House and tell us what their estimated cost is. We are not asking about the precise contract or the process that is in play. There is no legal jeopardy or sovereign risk as the Attorney-General is pretending there would be. If we are already at that point, then as a House we have a right to ask the Government to defend itself to Tasmanians because Tasmanians have never signed up to this level of debt. We do not even know what the level of debt is.

I remember the first conversations around Marinus Link. They were in the order of \$1.8 billion, back in the day, six years ago. That was the figure that was being bandied around. With each election cycle, each campaigning opportunity, each photograph with federal ministers and prime ministers where Marinus Link has been announced and re-announced over the last six years, that figure has steadily increased.

In the last Estimates we had in a Budget scrutiny from Mr Voss and it was \$3.1 billion for Marinus Link and yet we have heard only two months after that it could be \$5.5 billion. This was an order of the House. The letter that he has tabled from Mr Gill shows us that Marinus Link has begun a tender procurement with international supplies for the highly specialised cable and converter equipment necessary to deliver the project.

He goes on to say that they will not or cannot advise breaching what he says are:

highly sensitive contract negotiations by tabling commercially sensitive information that would compromise contractual negotiations and risk for each of our legal and confidentiality obligations.

He is only referring to the cable and to the converter equipment. There is far more in the Marinus Link project that has been proposed by this Government than those two items. There

is the whole cost of construction. That is not referred to in the letter that Mr Gill has written. There is also the whole of the North West Transmission line. None of that is referred to in the letter. That is not what is in train at the moment. In train at the moment, we understand, is procurement for a cable - or two cables. We would like to know, one or two? When will they be delivered? On time? What will the cost be if they are not delivered on time?

We do not have any information from the Government to the question of the cost for the North West Transmission line or Battery of the Nation despite the fact they were ordered. The minister has defied the House's order in relation to Marinus Link to North West Transmission costs, to Battery of the Nation and here we are in a situation where Tasmanians know nothing except the fact that their power bills have been going up, year on year. They are so high at the moment and it is adding to the burden of people struggling to pay all sorts of bills.

The pre-investment decision from the Federal Government will not happen until the end of next year so, what we have is this Government is going ahead, behind closed doors, making secret arrangements that they are not revealing to Tasmanians and defying an order of the House. We want to know what they are spending on our behalf.

Time expired.

Preliminary Outcomes Report 2022-23

[6.35 p.m.]

Ms FINLAY (Bass) - Mr Speaker, I rise on adjournment this evening to speak about what I observe as a worrying trend by this Government that happens across a whole lot of portfolio areas and a whole lot of either important community or infrastructure projects but often it comes out of the mouth of the Treasurer. I want to talk about the worrying trend of saying something and hoping that the Tasmanian community believe it, even though it might not be practically correct.

Early this morning, the Preliminary Outcomes Report 2022-23 was released. It has only been out today but quick off the mark the Treasurer had some spin prepared to provide cover for the reality of the Tasmanian Budget position. In question time this morning he responded to a Dorothy Dixier question and picked out, not the highlights, but elements that he could present in a coordinated manner to make it sound like things were great. They are not so good.

I have had the opportunity to review the report. The format of these reports is not something that I am completely familiar with, although I am very familiar with financial documents, having spent many years at the local council going through financial documents in business and in other community sectors, but I could pick these up pretty quickly. I did not have to go too far into the document to where it outlines in the introduction that the Preliminary Outcomes Report provides details on the general Government's financial results for 2022-23. It presents the preliminary financial data for the general government sector against the forecasts contained in the Budget.

That is important. What it does is present the preliminary financial data against the forecasts in the Budget and also against the estimated outcomes. There are a number of figures that you have to consider before you can make a statement about the reality of those figures.

I only had to get to page 3, not far into the document, to unpick what the Treasurer said this morning. The Treasurer who is also the minister for Infrastructure made some fleeting comments this morning about being builders and about the Government's infrastructure delivery. On page 3, which is only section 2 of the document, it clearly identifies in infrastructure investment that in 2021-22 the actuals were \$819 million. The original budget that they set for 2022-23 - and we are in August, so not so long ago - was for \$1.3 billion.

The preliminary outcome is in fact \$953 million, an estimated outcome for the year, \$968 million, so in fact what that means is that the Treasurer, the Infrastructure minister, promised Tasmanians a suite of projects, \$1.3 billion. What he has actually delivered and what they are expecting to deliver is \$968 million. The problem with this is that he said they are doing well and delivering things, but if you look at the early summary on the things that have been missed out, on page 4 leading into page 5, it talks about the decrease of these projects.

There are projects in the Department of Health that have not been delivered. There are ambulance projects that have not been delivered. There are projects in Police, Fire and Emergency Management that have not been delivered. That is in the summary. If you go further into the document, on pages 16 and 17, it details quite clearly that there are roads of strategic importance that have not been delivered. There are works with the Greater Hobart Traffic Solution that have not been delivered. There is a critical project for the St Johns Park Eating Disorders that has not been delivered. Projects for the Royal Hobart Hospital. Glenorchy Ambulance. A hospital equipment fund. The new Southern Remand Centre has had projects not delivered. Burnie Court complex. The Northern Correctional Facility. TasTAFE has not had projects delivered, including facility upgrades. The Police Fire and Emergency Management major large vessel replacement programs have not been delivered.

You cannot be the Treasurer and the minister for Infrastructure and say you are doing a great job when you have not delivered almost \$400 million worth of projects. That is not being a builder. That is not being very good at your job.

The minister this morning said, 'Are we not fantastic because revenue growth has exceeded expenditure growth?' When you are not spending money on things because you are not delivering your expenditure is not up.

He spoke about revenue growth this morning. He did not say what revenue had grown. Did not say that it was someone else's contributions that added to that. Page 9 of the report talks about revenue variations. There is \$487.9 million more in revenue from the Australian Government because of an increase in the GST allocations. There was another \$67 million from the Australian Government. Another allocation was \$29 million higher because of outcomes.

Not one of those things was due to the competence or capacity of our Treasurer to do things in the interest of Tasmanians, but he took the reward. Treasurer, if you want to be honest with Tasmanians, if you want to be honest about the Budget position and the financial position of Tasmania then do not manipulate what you report and how you express that in this place, and through media releases to the Tasmanian community, because it does not stack up.

You need to reassess your habits. Look to be genuine in the way that you represent these things to the Tasmanian community. There are many people in Tasmania, including people I sat with at the Budget lunches, who see and hear what you do and know that it does not reflect

reality. Tasmanians need a Government that tells the truth, that reflects reality, and is acting in the best interests of Tasmania.

Energy Projects - Cost Estimates

[6.42 p.m.]

Mr JAENSCH (Braddon - Minister for Education, Children and Youth) - Mr Speaker, I rise to add to the Minister for Energy and Renewables statement on motion 162. I want to commend the minister on his statement. I also want to reflect that in the limited time available I note that the minister tabled a letter from the chairperson of Marinus noting the strict probity and procurement issues relating to that project. It stated:

To protect the integrity of this live procurement the highest standards of probity have been employed as well as confidential, commercial negotiations to ensure that the project can be delivered at the lowest possible price.

I am advised that breaching these highly-sensitive contract negotiations by tabling commercially-sensitive information would compromise contractual negotiations and risk breach of our legal and confidentiality obligations with a potential outcome of a failed end-of-process and/or litigation.

We must ensure that this process is protected. The Government has subsequently received a letter from the CEO of Hydro Tasmania with the latest cost estimate for the Battery of the Nation projects. I will table that letter now. Further, the Government has received a letter from the chair of TasNetworks and I table that letter now. The Government has also received a letter from ReCFIT and I table that now.

Mr Speaker, after having observed the proceedings of the House this afternoon, the motion that was brought and passed by the parliament at the instigation of Labor and the urgency and good faith and the earnest efforts of Mr Barnett to respond to that regardless of the concerns that we hold as a Government regarding the legality and the implications of so doing, I have tabled letters because he was unable to appear here for a second time in the adjournment this evening, on his behalf, in further fulfillment of the order.

I also observe though, as a member of the Government and as a member of this parliament that we are now getting into an area that will be of interest to a large number of large and sophisticated businesses with whom this Government does business and all governments do business from time to time. They rely on there being a high standard of professionalism and probity, legal oversight, and conduct for the normal operations of government.

While Mr Winter will tell me that this is not the Opposition's doing, it is the Opposition's motion that was brought earlier today, and passed by this parliament. I believe that the Opposition needs to be conscious that in taking the actions that his has today, there will be businesses and organisations taking note of what could be seen as a risk of doing business in Tasmania. This parliament and Labor as a potential, in their view, future government, they need to be very conscious of the reputation they may be creating today for our state as a place to do business, where normal legal probity and professional conduct of commercial transactions by governments may be seen as a greater risk thanks to actions like those they have taken today. I ask you to take that into consideration.

Energy Projects - Cost Estimates

Oncology Services

[6.45 p.m.]

Ms DOW (Braddon - Deputy Leader of the Opposition) - Mr Speaker, what we have seen there from minister Jaensch is yet another dribbling out of documents. It is a pattern of behaviour now for this Government to come in here, put something on the table, then come back again, add something more to it. We will take time to review the subsequent documents that have been tabled tonight.

I will take a moment just to reiterate that it was an order of this House. It was also an order of this House for Treasury advice the Government still has failed to provide. It is not just the Opposition, it is the House that wants greater scrutiny over this Government. It is the Tasmanian community that wants greater scrutiny over this Government. We are acting on their behalf.

When you have the Chamber of Commerce and Industry in the state saying that we are in an energy crisis and that the lack of energy supply is detrimental to business growth across the state, and the growth of the state's economy, that is a risk in itself. That is an issue of this Government's own making.

Through its actions over the course of a number of months and years in its failure to deliver, the Government has created uncertainty around investment in this state and its inability to work constructively with business and industry to see growth across a number of sectors, including renewable energy.

I want to talk about oncology services at the North West Regional Hospital. I have raised this issue before on the adjournment and I want the attention of the Government on this matter. It does not matter where I go, people are telling me that they are very distressed about the lack of permanent oncologists at the North West Regional Hospital cancer clinic, and the detrimental impact that is having on their care and the care of their loved ones.

A lady wrote to me recently about her husband who has since passed away, but was diagnosed with melanoma. Upon referral to the oncology clinic, it was only a matter of weeks that the oncologist that he was seeing quit and left. It was not until January that he was able to see another oncologist. During that time his disease had progressed significantly, making him very unwell. She also wrote to me about the long wait they had for urgent PET and CTC scans, up to six weeks.

Unfortunately, her husband has since passed away. She is still very distressed about the fact that he was unable to have that continuity of care through a resident oncologist and the detrimental impact that that had on the progression of his diagnosis and ultimately his untimely death. I wanted to put that on the record on her behalf.

In recent days, I have met with another family who have shared their concerns about the workload at that clinic: the workload on the nursing staff due to not having a permanent oncologist in residence at the clinic and the pressure that that is putting on the nursing staff and the continuity of care; the fact that these people living with cancer are not getting to see the same oncologist all the time. That can be so disruptive to the care and the service that is provided to those people.

I know this Government talks a lot about the fact that they funded the cancer buildings and that is great, but you have to have the staff in the buildings to provide services. It is really getting to a critical point and I call on the Government to take some action.

The House adjourned at 6.50 p.m.