



LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

SESSION OF 2025 – 2026

(FIRST SESSION OF THE FIFTY-SECOND PARLIAMENT)

VOTES AND PROCEEDINGS

No. 48

THURSDAY, 3 SEPTEMBER 2026

1 COUNCIL MEETS.— The Council met at 11.00 o'clock a.m.

2 ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF TRADITIONAL PEOPLE.— The President said:

“We meet today on Tasmanian Aboriginal land. We acknowledge and pay respect to the Tasmanian Aboriginal people and elders, past and present. We recognise them as the first inhabitants and the continuing custodians of this land.”

3 PRAYERS AND REFLECTION.— The President read Prayers.

4 LEAVE TO TABLE ANSWER TO QUESTION AND INCORPORATE ANSWER INTO HANSARD.— *Ordered*, That Ms *Rattray* have leave to Table answer to Question No. 60 and have the answer incorporated into the Hansard record.

5 FIRMUS AI FACTORY DEVELOPMENTS IN TASMANIA.— Mr *Gaffney* asked the Honourable the Leader of the Government —

With reference to the Firmus AI Factory deployments in Tasmania that have led to a great deal of community discussion and speculation, and seeking objective information regarding the Government’s understanding of the current state of play —

- (1) Noting the Minister for Business, Industry and Resources’ declarations in a 3 November 2025 media release entitled ‘AI Island: Driving economic growth for Tasmania’s future’, and his description in that media release of an ‘*AI investment mandate*’ together with the role of the Tasmanian Development Board in the new Economic Diversification and Investment Strategy, which is currently out for public consultation:
 - (a) The media release stated that the Tasmanian Development Board will consider how it can use its loan book to back strategic investments that help local businesses adopt AI and digital tools to improve productivity and competitiveness. Does its ‘*loan book*’ include strategic investment to support the development of various Firmus projects and other potential AI infrastructure projects, and if so by how much? and
 - (b) Page 25 of the new strategy paper includes the statement: ‘*The Advanced Technology Strategy is exploring cluster-based approaches to support the growth of emerging domains of capability*’. Following this are six illustrative areas of strength which includes: ‘*Energy-intensive digital infrastructure, including AI computing*’. As a result of these statements:
 - (i) What modelling has been completed to support the inclusion of that area of strength in terms of the limits posed by available power?
 - (ii) What levels of surplus power generation are available in Tasmania for energy-intensive digital infrastructure projects, both now and what is planned to come online over the next five years? and
 - (iii) Is there sufficient generation capacity in Tasmania to ensure that existing domestic and industrial users of power will not be disadvantaged by the development of energy-intensive digital infrastructure projects and if not, will there be regulation to ensure existing consumers will not be disadvantaged by such developments?
- (2) When the Premier appeared before Legislative Council Estimates Committee B on 2 June 2026, he was asked how the government assesses and determines what businesses or industries receive intervention or financial support and what is the threshold of the government stepping in to assist.

In his response the Premier spoke of a process involving the Tasmanian Development Board, threshold issues where it relates to a major industrial that consumes a lot of power that may well have impact on other GBEs, such as TasNetworks, and the role of major industrial steering committee of Cabinet.

- (a) Where do the current Firmus AI factory projects sit within those parameters?
 - (b) With an anticipated stable power demand of 440MW from the current and proposed Firmus sites that it states will need 1,700MW of reserve capacity from renewables to ensure a continuity of supply, does Hydro Tasmania currently have the capacity to meet the 440MW base load of stable power demand?
 - (c) The ACEN Australia North East Wind Project (NEWP) is being seen as a key to the St Leonards and Longreach AI factories. Given that Hydro Tasmania currently has a 25% interest in the Cape Portland wind farm, is the government (through Hydro Tasmania) seeking an equity stake in the NEWP to support the establishment of the Firmus business case?
 - (d) Firmus has a declared commitment to support the development of new renewable energy projects to the tune of 2 – 2.5 times of that which it consumes. Does the government have an understanding of how it will be achieved, by when, and what guarantees are in place to deliver it?
 - (e) The time it will take to build and commission new renewables means long lead times to bring online the Longreach and Wesley Vales AI factories. The closure of Liberty Bell Bay releases 125MW back to the market and with Rio Tinto Bell Bay's 335MW up for negotiation later this year, will Firmus' ability to pay more for power than major industrials guarantee its priority supply, and is there a risk that higher power costs will affect the viability of Rio Tinto Bell Bay with its 550 direct employees and potentially affect a further 1,000 linked positions in indirect and supply chain businesses? and
 - (f) ABEL Energy is another potential large-scale user of power for its methanol plant with its CEO, who is quoted on page 97 of the Joint Select Committee on Energy Matters interim report tabled on 21 May 2026, as stating that it needed 300MW. Has that requirement been factored in to Hydro Tasmania's modelling of renewable power generation, and where will it sit in terms of its industrial power supply balancing and priorities?
- (3) Given the increasing levels of community concern with AI factory developments, the pressure being placed on local Councils and the implications of the Economic Diversification and Investment Strategy which raises the issue of accelerated planning processes for industrial developments:
 - (a) Where do the AI factories and data centres fit within the Tasmanian Planning Scheme?
 - (b) Has the government considered, or is seeking to, give energy priority to Firmus over Rio Tinto to help support both the ACEN Australia wind farm projects and Marinus Link, which in turn would help to support the development of further renewables and AI factories in Tasmania – in other words who or what is in control of what comes first: an available large surplus of power seeking an end user or an AI factory or other large scale consumer seeking power that drives the development of new generation capacity?
 - (c) With the anticipated power requirements and water usage will linked projects such as the Firmus AI Factories be subject to examination as a Major Project or Project of State Significance (POSS)? and
 - (d) Does the Government have any modelling or an understanding of what Tasmania's overall capacity for AI factories and data centres might be in terms of power demand, number, size, location and future expansion?
- (4) Firmus is in an obvious concurrent establishment and expansion phase as a private equity partnership, and one that is expected to be floated in the near future on the ASX as an Initial Public Offering (IPO) which is anticipated to be in the order of \$15.5 billion, with multiple billions of dollars of investment and debt already committed to the company which suggests a degree of investor confidence. As a contrast there are a number of professional money managers/investors who are apparently refusing to invest in Firmus because of either the structure of the business or a lack of information at this stage:
 - (a) What formal due diligence has the government done on Firmus Technologies which is positioning itself to become Tasmania's largest energy customer?
 - (b) There is apparently no escrow period for pre-IPO shareholders for a Firmus Technologies IPO which is a standard 12-24 month moratorium that prevents early investors from engaging in what is colloquially known as a 'pump and dump' scheme. Does the Government have any concerns with such an anomaly and does it have any assurances from Firmus in this matter?

- (c) With the formal prospectus rollout delayed until its full end-of-year accounts have been finalised and some other matters have been dealt with and given the potential implications on the power generation infrastructure and supply in Tasmania, has the government seen a copy of the Firmus Technologies draft prospectus, and if not why not? And
- (d) Given that there are a number of international AI companies looking to expand their reach and operations, and in terms of the Government's perspective, does Firmus' position as an early adopter or beta tester for AI factories in Tasmania give it an exclusive licence for future expansion of its operations in Tasmania?

The Leader answered:

- (1)
 - (a) The Tasmanian Development Board has not provided any financial support to Firmus Technologies or any other AI infrastructure project.
 - (b) The inclusion of energy-intensive digital infrastructure, including AI computing, as an illustrative area of strength reflects existing and emerging investment in digital infrastructure and Tasmania's relevant comparative attributes. This includes Tasmania's established renewable energy platform (including the pipeline of new renewable energy generation projects in development) and cool climate.
The draft Economic Diversification and Investment Strategy recognises that energy is a finite resource and that decisions must balance the needs of households, existing industries and new energy-intensive investment. It highlights the need for careful planning and sequencing, and consideration of costs, benefits and opportunity costs, along with the need for future growth in energy generation.
Tasmania's electricity supply and demand is presently broadly balanced and is influenced by a range of factors. The Tasmanian Government recognises the importance of our existing Major Industrial customers and has made a clear commitment for Hydro Tasmania to prioritise the provision of electricity contracts to existing load ahead of new industry.
Tasmania has legislated targets to increase the amount of installed renewable energy generation capacity by 2030 and 2040. In line with the Tasmanian Government's existing position, all new load, including data centres, should partner with new energy generation projects to support their electricity demand.
There is a pipeline of more than 5 GW of new renewable energy generation projects in various stages of development across the State. If all were to be developed, this would far exceed the State's energy targets. It is projects in this pipeline that energy intensive digital infrastructure projects will need to bring on through contractual arrangements.
- (2)
 - (a) Firmus Technologies has not requested financial support or intervention from the Tasmanian Government.
 - (b) A proposal of this scale would require additional energy supply in Tasmania, such as new wind and solar developments. This aligns with the Tasmanian Government's position that new load developments must support new energy generation.
Firmus has published a policy objective of supporting approximately two megawatts of new renewable generation capacity for every one megawatt of contracted demand.
Hydro Tasmania is considering whether it can support Firmus' full energy requirements. This includes assessing the level of new generation required, which Hydro Tasmania does not anticipate being as high as 1,700MW, along with considering how energy could be supplied while any new wind and solar generation is being built.
 - (c) As noted above, Hydro Tasmania is currently assessing Firmus' requirements and what variable renewable generation would be needed to support these.
Hydro Tasmania advises it is not considering taking an equity stake in NEWP.
 - (d) The Government is aware that Firmus are currently in discussions with Hydro Tasmania regarding the potential for a power contract for Project Southgate. These commercial negotiations remain ongoing, and the Government expects that appropriate details will be announced, should a contract be executed.
The Tasmanian Government is currently developing a Statement of Expectations for Data Centres and AI Infrastructure, which will outline clear expectations for proponents. This includes the requirement that new data centre load partners with enough new energy generation projects to support their electricity demand over the long term.
The Australian Government has recently announced the development of mandatory standards for AI which will set out clear rules for large data centres. The Tasmanian Government is engaged with this work.

- (e) The Tasmanian Government has made a clear commitment for Hydro Tasmania to prioritise the provision of electricity contracts to existing load ahead of new industry.
- (f) As previously stated, Tasmania's energy system is currently in balance, and new large-scale industries are expected to bring on renewable energy generation projects sufficient to meet their power requirements.
ABEL Energy states that its Bell Bay Powerfuels projects will enable up to 700MW of new renewable power build.
- (3) (a) Tasmania has a strong and well-established framework for managing new developments, and this applies to AI and data centre facilities. Any proposal for an AI or data centre facility must go through the same robust planning approvals process as any other development in the State. In Tasmania, data centres and AI infrastructure developments are assessed under the Tasmanian Resource Management and Planning Scheme (RMPS).
The RMPS is a framework of legislation, policies, plans and strategies governing land use and development in Tasmania. The RMPS is primarily administered by local councils, the Tasmanian Planning Commission and/or the Environment Protection Authority.
- (b) Refer to response to 2 e).
New load proponents should partner with new energy generation projects, including variable renewable energy projects, to support their electricity demand. This delivers increased certainty to both parties, allowing new load and new generation to develop in tandem.
- (c) Firmus has not requested that its project be considered under the Major Project or Project of State Significance framework.
- (d) Tasmania's potential growth in electricity demand, including from data centres, is considered through the TasNetworks Annual Planning Reports and through the Australian Energy Market Operator's Integrated System Plan and Electricity Statement of Opportunities reports. There will be practical limitations on load growth due to several factors including electricity network capacity, the State's electricity supply / demand balance, the ability to deliver new VRE generation, and firming availability.
- (4) Firmus Technologies is a private company that is not seeking funding from the Tasmanian Government. Decisions around its capital structure are a matter for the company. The Tasmanian Government is not seeking to take an equity position in the company and therefore has no involvement in the company's potential Initial Public Offering (IPO).
The Tasmanian Government welcomes investment in digital infrastructure and does not seek to provide preferential treatment to any one proponent or project. We are supportive of projects that can demonstrate they will deliver positive economic and strategic outcomes for the state.

6 THEFT OF METAL INFRASTRUCTURE FROM TASWATER SITES.—

Ms *Webb* asked the Honourable the Leader of the Government —

Regarding the reported spate of recent thefts of metal infrastructure from TasWater sites, can the Government:

- (1) Detail the extent of TasWater metal infrastructure which has been stolen, including:
 - (a) The nature of each asset stolen;
 - (b) Estimated replacement costs for each stolen and or damaged asset item;
 - (c) Estimated time for TasWater crews to repair and replace damaged and stolen assets?
- (2) Detail whether similar targeting of other publicly-owned or placed on public sites metal or aluminium infrastructure, for example sporting facilities, has been identified, and if so :
 - (a) The nature of such asset thefts;
 - (b) Estimated costs to those respective organisations suffering such thefts?
- (3) Please provide an update as to what the government is doing to track and respond to this apparent pattern of thefts targeting metal and aluminium assets?
- (4) Has the establishment of a specific Tasmania Police taskforce to address this emerging pattern of metal infrastructure theft been considered, and if so:
 - (a) When was that established; and
 - (b) What is its scope?

The Leader answered:

- (1) (a) In late July, TasWater had the following items stolen from sites in Greater Hobart and the Derwent Valley:
 - Six air valve covers.
 - Two ladder/rescue hatch/rescue covers.
 - One meter cover.
 - Around half of the railings surrounding a reservoir in the Derwent Valley.
- (b) Collectively, TasWater estimates it will cost around \$30,000 to replace the stolen items or damaged assets.
- (c) TasWater estimates that between two and three operators inspected the sites, made them safe, completed police reports, and undertook additional site visits, over an estimated three to four days. This diverted crews from other scheduled or emergency maintenance.

TasWater also had security guards on site overnight at both the Domain and Peppermint Hill Reservoir in the Derwent Valley to monitor the locations until they could be secured.
- (2) Tasmania Police has not identified any notable increase in aluminium thefts from government-owned sites across Tasmania in the last six months.
- (3) The Government is progressing its commitment to develop legislation to address scrap metal theft, including the theft and disposal of copper, aluminium and other metals. Legislation and regulations are being drafted now and will be released for public consultation.
- (4) The Government has consulted extensively with industry to progress these reforms to appropriately target theft of stolen metal.
- (5) Based on current intelligence and reported offending, there are no immediate plans to establish a dedicated taskforce to address aluminium thefts.
- (6) Tasmania Police remains committed to preventing and investigating theft offences across all commercial, industrial and government sites and will continue to deploy resources in line with identified risks and emerging trends.

7 REPORT OF THE PARLIAMENTARY STANDING COMMITTEE OF PUBLIC ACCOUNTS.— Ms *Forrest* presented a Follow-up of the Report of the Auditor-General Improving Outcomes for Tasmanian Senior Secondary Students (No. 1 of 2022-2023).

Ordered, That the Report be received. (Ms *Forrest*)

Ordered, That the Report be printed. (Ms *Forrest*)

Ordered, That consideration of the Report and its noting be made an Order of the Day for Tuesday next. (Ms *Forrest*)

8 SPECIAL REPORT OF THE GOVERNMENT ADMINISTRATION COMMITTEE A.— Ms *Armitage* presented the Special Report on a Resolution to Establish Inquiry.

Ordered, That the Report be received. (Ms *Armitage*)

9 BILL NO. 21.— The Taxation and Related Legislation (Miscellaneous Amendments) Bill 2026 was read the Third time and passed.

10 BILL NO. 21.— A Message to the House of Assembly:—

HONOURABLE SPEAKER,

The Legislative Council has this day agreed, without Amendment, to a Bill intituled, ‘A Bill for an Act to amend the *Duties Act 2001*, the *First Home Owner Grant Act 2000*, the *Land Tax Act 2000* and the *Taxation Administration Act 1997*’.

Legislative Council, 3 September 2026

C.M. FARRELL, *President*

11 BILL NO. 13.— The Order of the Day was read for the Second reading of the Short Stay Levy Bill 2026.

A Motion was made (Ms *Rattray*), and the Question was proposed, That the Bill be now read the Second time.

A Debate arose thereupon.

Question put, That the Bill be read a second time.

The Committee divided.

AYES 9

Mr *Duigan*
Mr *Gaffney* (Teller)
Ms *Glade-Wright*
Ms *Forrest*
Mr *Hiscutt*
Ms *O'Connor*
Ms *Palmer*
Ms *Rattray*
Mr *Vincent*

NOES 5

Ms *Armitage*
Mr *Edmunds* (Teller)
Ms *Lovell*
Ms *Thomas*
Ms *Webb*

It was resolved in the Affirmative.

And the President having left the Chair, the Council resolved itself into the said Committee.

(In the Committee)

Ms *Forrest* in the Chair.

Clauses 1 to 3 agreed to.

Clause 4, Amendment made. (Ms *Glade-Wright*)

Page 6, subclause (3).

Leave out that subclause.

Insert instead the following subclause.

- (3) Despite subsection (1), a service is not a booking platform if the service –
- (a) refers a person to another service for the purposes of the person using the other service to do one or more acts referred to in subsection (1)(a) or (b); or
 - (b) only enables a person to book a short stay in short stay accommodation –
 - (i) directly with the short stay accommodation provider; and
 - (ii) without the booking being arranged or facilitated by any other person;or
 - (c) only relates to bookings in respect of a single short stay accommodation provider.

Clause 4 as amended agreed to.

Clause 5, Amendment made (Ms *Glade-Wright*)

Page 7, subclause (3), paragraph (c), after “dwelling is also”.

Leave out “usually occupied by”.

Insert instead “the principal place of residence of”.

Clause 5, further Amendment proposed (Mr *Hiscutt*)

Page 8, subclause (3), after paragraph (c).

Insert the following paragraph:

- (x) accommodation on land where –
 - (i) the principal place of residence for the owner of the land is a dwelling on the same land; and
 - (ii) the land is zoned for an agricultural purpose, or is zoned for a rural purpose or as a rural area, in the Tasmanian Planning Scheme within the meaning of the *Land Use Planning and Approvals Act 1993*.

Ms *Armitage* in the Chair.

To report progress and seek leave to sit again.

The Council being resumed Ms *Armitage* reported that the Committee had made progress in the Bill, and that she was directed to move that the Committee may have leave to sit again.

Resolved, That the Council will, at a later hour, again resolve itself into the said Committee.

12 SITTING SUSPENDED.—*Resolved*, That the Sitting of the Council be suspended until the ringing of the Division bells. (Ms *Ratray*)

The Sitting was suspended at 12.28 o'clock p.m. and resumed at 2.30 o'clock p.m.

13 QUESTION TIME.— The President called for Questions without Notice. There were six Questions asked.

14 BILL NO. 13.— The Council, according to Order, again resolved itself into a Committee to consider the Short Stay Levy Bill 2026.

(In the Committee)

Ms *Forrest* in the Chair.

The proposed Amendment was, by leave, withdrawn.

Ms *Armitage* in the Chair.

Clause 5, further Amendment made (Ms *O'Connor*)

Page 8, subclause (3), paragraph (e).

Leave out that paragraph.

Insert instead the following paragraph.

- (e) accommodation on land where the land is primary production land, within the meaning of the Land Tax Act 2000;

Clause 5 as amended agreed to

Ms *Forrest* in the Chair.

Clauses 6 to 20 agreed to.

Clause 21 disagreed to.

Clause 22, Amendment made (Ms *Ratray*)

Page 25, subclause (1), paragraph (a).

Leave out that paragraph.

Insert instead the following paragraph.

- (a) the total number of premises in respect of which the short stay levy was payable during the financial year;

Clause 22 as amended agreed to

Clauses 23 and 24 agreed to.

New Clause A brought up (Ms *Rattray*) and read the First time as follows:—

A. Review of Act

- (1) The Minister is to cause a review of this Act to occur, in accordance with subsection (2), no sooner than 2 years after the commencement of this Act.
- (2) A review under subsection (1) is to be on such terms, and conducted in the manner, determined by the Minister before the review commences.
- (3) Within 3 years after the commencement of this Act, the persons who undertake the review under subsection (1) are to —
 - (a) complete the review; and
 - (b) give the Minister a written report on the outcome of the review.
- (4) The Minister is to cause a copy of the written report prepared in respect of the review to be tabled in each House of Parliament within 15 sitting-days after the report is given to the Minister in accordance with subsection (3).

Read the Second time and made part of the Bill (to follow Clause 23).

Schedule 1 agreed to.

Title agreed to.

Bill to be reported with Amendments.

The Council being resumed, Ms *Forrest* reported that the Committee had gone through the Bill, and directed her to report the same to the Council with Amendments.

Ordered, That the consideration of the Bill as amended in Committee be made an Order of the Day for tomorrow. (Ms *Rattray*)

15 BILL NO. 65 OF 2025.— The Order of the Day was read for the Second reading of the Charities and Associations Law (Miscellaneous) Amendment Bill 2025.

A Motion was made (Ms *Rattray*), and the Question was proposed, That the Bill be now read the Second time.

A Debate arose thereupon.

And the Question being put,

It was resolved in the Affirmative.

And the Bill was, accordingly, read the Second time and committed to a Committee of the Whole Council.

And the President having left the Chair, the Council resolved itself into the said Committee.

(In the Committee)

Ms *Forrest* in the Chair.

Clauses 1 to 17 agreed to.

Title agreed to.

Bill to be reported without Amendment.

The Council being resumed, Ms *Forrest* reported that the Committee had gone through the Bill, and directed her to report the same to the Council without Amendment.

Ordered, That the Third reading of the Bill be made an Order of the Day for tomorrow. (Ms *Ratray*)

16 BILL NO. 69 OF 2025.— The Order of the Day was read for the Second reading of the Integrity Commission Amendment (Mandatory Notifications) Bill 2025.

A Motion was made (Ms *Ratray*), and the Question was proposed, That the Bill be now read the Second time.

A Debate arose thereupon.

Ordered, That the Debate be adjourned. (Ms *Ratray*)

17 BILL NO. 28.— A Message from the House of Assembly:—

MR PRESIDENT,

The House of Assembly hath passed a Bill, intituled — ‘An Act to amend the *Sentencing Act 1997*’, to which the House desires the concurrence of the Legislative Council.

House of Assembly, 3 September 2026

JACQUIE PETRUSMA, *Speaker*

The Bill was read the First time.

Ordered, That the Second reading of the Bill be made an Order of the Day for Tuesday next. (Ms *Ratray*)

18 BILL NO. 27.— A Message from the House of Assembly:—

MR PRESIDENT,

The House of Assembly hath passed a Bill, intituled — ‘An Act to provide for the registration of teachers’, to which the House desires the concurrence of the Legislative Council.

House of Assembly, 3 September 2026

JACQUIE PETRUSMA, *Speaker*

The Bill was read the First time.

Ordered, That the Second reading of the Bill be made an Order of the Day for Tuesday next. (Ms *Palmer*)

19 ADJOURNMENT.— *Resolved*, That the Council will, at its rising adjourn until 11.00 o’clock a.m. on Tuesday, 11 September 2026. (Ms *Ratray*)

Resolved, That the Council do now adjourn. (Ms *Ratray*)

The Council adjourned at 5.59 o’clock p.m.

C.L. VICKERS, *Clerk of the Council*.

Briefings:

- *Teachers Registration Bill 2026*
- *Integrity Commission Amendment (Mandatory Notifications) Bill 2026*
- *Land Use Planning and Approvals (Miscellaneous Amendments) Bill*