



PARLIAMENT OF TASMANIA

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

REPORT OF DEBATES

Thursday 18 August 2022

REVISED EDITION

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Thursday 18 August 2022

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

RECOGNITION OF VISITORS

Mr SPEAKER - Honourable members, before question time starts, I welcome TasTAFE students from the Youth Migrant Education program.

Members - Hear, hear.

QUESTIONS

Cost of Living - Power Prices

Ms WHITE question to PREMIER, Mr ROCKLIFF

[10.02 a.m.]

Tasmanians are staggered you are so out of touch that you are trying to tell them that their power bills have gone down. They believe they should be paying Tasmanian prices for Tasmanian power. As Tania says, 'happy to send him my bill for pretty much the exact time last year and exact usage last year, honestly what a cop out'. Or, as Janet says, 'he needs to read our power bills'. Anne simply says, 'Jeremy, Antoinette'.

Why do you not believe Tasmanians should pay Tasmanian prices for Tasmanian power?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I thank the member for her question. You are misleading the words from my mouth. What I was giving you was a history lesson of power prices; that between 2010 and 2014 power prices in this state went up 65 per cent.

Ms White - What about right now?

Mr ROCKLIFF - You want to talk about people's ability to afford those increases in the power prices? How would you have felt if you were one of the 10 000 people who lost their job over those four years?

Members interjecting.

Mr SPEAKER - Order. Order.

Mr ROCKLIFF - It is important to have that history lesson in context. It is important to also say this Government has put downward pressure on power prices. When there has been an increase in power prices - such as this year - we have stepped in to support the most vulnerable Tasmanians, particularly those on low and fixed incomes, with a \$17 million investment - very well targeted investment - to ensure individuals received their \$180 winter

energy bonus. That is important. It is important also that we continue to be agile, flexible and respond to further community pressures when it comes to inflation, inflationary pressures across the nation, and worldwide as it affects Tasmanians.

That is why we have also come up with a well-targeted investment of some \$5 million supporting the community organisations that support people in need in Tasmania, particularly the \$1.75 million investment into our neighbourhood houses, and further well-targeted investment into the No Interest Loans Scheme (NILS), increasing from \$1.7 million to \$2.7 million. That investment is there for people who are really challenged about paying their power bills.

We will always be on the side of the battler in Tasmania. You will not and you have demonstrated that. You had very scant regard for the battlers in Tasmania when you were closing down industries and sending their jobs and their household budgets to ruin and, at the same time, you were increasing power prices by 65 per cent.

No Interest Loans Scheme - Extension

Ms WHITE question to PREMIER, Mr ROCKLIFF

[10.06 a.m.]

On Tuesday you said and I quote:

Today we are announcing a \$5 million package including extension of the No Interest Loans Scheme, supporting people who are finding it difficult to pay their power bills.

How can you seriously claim power prices are going down if you are now providing loans to Tasmanians who cannot afford their power bills? In exactly what circumstances will Tasmanians be able to access a NILS loan to pay their skyrocketing power bills?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I thank the member for her question. I will start with a quote from the NILS Tasmania CEO, John Hooper, who said:

NILS Tasmania cannot thank the State Government enough for announcing today that our organisation will receive a one-off extra funding amount of \$150 000 to help meet the rising costs in wages and other expenses of this year. Today across so many community organisations assisting Tasmanians in need, there will be great relief.

Can I say quite clearly, that our package is designed to support those who need it most in our community while also helping Tasmanian families and small businesses futureproof against bill shock and give Tasmanians the tools they need to lower their bills.

This Government has provided amongst the most generous concession programs, hardship provisions, energy efficient loan schemes and winter payments in the nation to help those in the community doing it tough. We will continue to do that.

A \$180 winter bill buster discount, a boosted and expanded \$50 million Energy Saver Loan Scheme and no charge for aurora+. That is a \$17 million investment, as I have said before, specifically related to recent electricity price increases as well as a reduction in the daily tariff rate. Eligible concession account holders will have started seeing a one-off payment of \$119 appearing on their bill from this month.

We will always support the organisations. TasCOSS CEO, Adrienne Picone, has said:

This additional \$5 million in funding will enable the community services industry to support and empower more Tasmanians to participate in life, be it socially, economically or culturally. The announcement of additional funding for Tasmania's neighbourhood houses, emergency food relief providers, family assistance program providers, and Aurora Energy's hardship program is positive news for those struggling to afford the basics.

Ms White - Do you think people should be getting loans to pay their power bills?

Mr SPEAKER - Order, Ms White.

Mr ROCKLIFF - I will always lead a government that supports Tasmanians doing it tough. I recognise many people in Tasmania on low and fixed incomes are doing it tough right now.

Ms White - How do people get a loan to get their power bill paid? Do you think it is right they should take a loan out to pay their power bill?

Mr SPEAKER - Order, Ms White. Order. I have said in this House, in this Chamber many times, when you ask a question, that does not give you the right to continually interject on the person who is answering the question. Please, stop your interjecting. Allow the Premier to conclude his answer.

Ms White - He does not have the answer.

Mr SPEAKER - Order.

Mr ROCKLIFF - While you continue to play politics with the lives of people doing it tough we will always be in the corner of the battler. When you were in government you had scant regard for their circumstances. Not only did you send them to the dole queues, but their power prices went up 65 per cent at the same time and you should still be ashamed of yourselves.

Public Sector Workforce - Industrial Action

Ms O'CONNOR question to PREMIER, Mr ROCKLIFF

[10.10 a.m.]

For years your Government has taken for granted the many thousands of Tasmanians who keep this island and its essential services running. At every turn, you have ignored unions

and workers across the public sector as they have, in good faith, raised matters critical to them and their work. Workplace safety and conditions, resources and support, recruitment and retention and fair pay are among issues that apparently have not warranted genuine attention. Now the chickens are racing home as you face industrial action from nurses, paramedics, firefighters, teachers and community services staff. This week's attempt to convince health workers to give up their industrial rights was your Government's latest insulting move. When will you and your ministers stop trying to play tricky games and start working on delivering our public sector workforce the pay and conditions they deserve?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I thank the member for her question.

Ms O'Connor - We have industrial chaos.

Mr SPEAKER - Ms O'Connor, please.

Mr ROCKLIFF - I am not sure what voice you had around the cabinet table when your government decided to sack a nurse a day for nine months, where you were advocating for our nurses then -

Ms O'Byrne - You know that is not true. You regularly get up and say something that is not true.

Mr SPEAKER - Order, member for Bass.

Mr ROCKLIFF - Then there was another example of job losses in the forest industry and our valued resource-based industries through that horrid time of government when the economy effectively went into recession. The public service was also cut at the front line as well and a very good example of that is the nurses in our hospitals.

The member mentioned our offer, in good faith, a fairer offer because it extends to more frontline health staff and removes any uncertainty about the payment due to the escalation and de-escalation of hospitals and health services. Around 3500 hardworking Tasmanian workers will receive this payment over and above the currently agreed but limited COVID-19 escalation allowance. This allowance also provides them with the payment now that it is not reliant on future escalation periods that may or may not tip over the 30-day threshold, and it better recognises workers in the north-west and district hospitals who have spent less time receiving the existing escalation allowance.

It is broader, fairer, easier to understand and available now. We believe the new frontline health allowance is a better way of supporting our nurses and health workers who have done it tough during the pandemic. We are not alone in this. The AMF yesterday in their communication with staff has called this 'good news' and has encouraged their members to respond to a survey. I am advised that early indications are that the allowance has been positively received.

That is an example of where a government puts an offer on the table and through good faith and negotiations comes to an even better arrangement, as indicated by the nurses and the AMF who have said this is good news. I hope and expect a resolution to this very important

matter. I value the work of our paramedics, nurses, allied health professionals, doctors and everyone across our health system who has worked so hard over the last two years.

I have demonstrated in my eight years of being a minister and my seven years as education minister my willingness to sit down and work with our highly valued workforce and that will continue.

Tourism Sector - Job Creation

Mr TUCKER question to MINISTER for TOURISM, Mr ROCKLIFF

[10.15 a.m.]

Can you update on how our tourism sector is performing and how the Government is delivering on our strong plan to support this vital job-creating industry?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I thank Mr Tucker for his excellent question. It is great to talk about our vitally important tourism sector, one that has been disrupted through the pandemic. It is wonderful to see the return of many visitors despite that disruption to our beautiful state. Tourism, in fact, is at an all-time high, with new research reinforcing the exceptionally high demand for travellers wanting to visit. Indicative results from the most recent Tasmanian Visitor Survey shows that the visitor spend for the June quarter was \$868 million, the highest spend for any June quarter on record.

This spend was delivered by close to 300 000 travellers visiting our state during April, May and June, a 6 per cent increase from the 2019 quarter, so pre-pandemic. The month of June alone saw an increase of 21 per cent of domestic visitors on the same month in 2019. It is really an extraordinary result. I hear you muttering over there in your negativity, but you must be happy with that, surely.

Ms White - I speak with people who actually work in the industry and go to the forums.

Mr SPEAKER - Order.

Mr ROCKLIFF - We have clearly shown that the winter in Tassie holds no fear for those in other states. On top of this, the domestic visitor spend in the year ending June 2022 was \$2.346 billion, the highest annual domestic spend on record, up 163 per cent to the year ending June 2021. Domestic visitor numbers were up 42 per cent on the same period in 2019.

Forward bookings from the *Spirits* are also at unprecedented levels. Airlines, despite their operating difficulties throughout the nation, are continuing to deliver good numbers into the state through our four airports. The domestic aviation scene is currently very volatile, as everyone knows, so it is important that we do everything possible to protect forward airline capacity in the immediate and medium-term future while airlines work back to full operating capability. I have written to both the major airline CEOs iterating the critical importance of their capacity to our island state, both in the context of our visitor economy and for all Tasmanians and their families.

We will continue to aggressively drive demand, with Tourism Tasmania moving from its highly effective off-season campaign to the spring campaign at the end of this month and running through until mid-October this year. The campaign will be targeting specific market segments in Queensland, New South Wales and Victoria with a real focus on high household income couples. The campaign will promote road trips and agri-tourism experiences throughout the state.

Tourism Tasmania recently launched its Discover Tasmania website and this will be featured heavily as an effective tool for planning itineraries, catering for all sorts of interests. Furthermore, Tourism Tasmania will be partnering with Qantas to drive conversion of self-drive bookings with dedicated packages being offered between mid-September and December. The campaign budget is \$1.588 million and will amplify the activity that will be happening simultaneously in the market by TT-Line, which is promoting its new service from Geelong which commences in late October.

Ms White - The boats are further delayed.

Mr Ferguson - So negative.

Dr Broad - Well, you absolutely stuffed it up. They would be here now if you had not stuffed it up.

Mr SPEAKER - Order.

Mr ROCKLIFF - Earlier this week, Launceston hosted the annual TICT conference which attracted close to 350 delegates. I am advised that the mood of all in attendance was very buoyant while recognising that we must collectively continue to drive demand to deliver outstanding products and experiences, which I am sure we are well accustomed to in Tasmania.

Our Government is committed to strengthening our tourism industry into the future so that all Tasmanians can benefit and I thank the member for Lyons, Mr Tucker, for his great question.

Members - Hear, hear.

Cost of Living Pressures - Power Price Cap

Ms WHITE question to PREMIER, Mr ROCKLIFF

[10.20 a.m.]

You are so out of touch that you are telling people to take out a loan to pay their power bill. While Labor's priorities address the cost of living, your priority is spending hundreds of millions of dollars on a floating stadium in Hobart. Your priorities are so wrong that late last week even the federal Liberal member for Bass denounced your plan. How can you expect Tasmanians to believe you cannot afford to cap power prices in the middle of a cost of living crisis, but you can afford to spend \$750 million on a floating stadium in Hobart?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I thank the member for her question. I am now beginning to understand, surprisingly, that you do not support the NILS, the No Interest Loan Scheme. I find that extraordinary.

Opposition members interjecting.

Mr SPEAKER - Order. Order.

Mr ROCKLIFF - You have made it very clear in your questioning that you do not support it. You have made it very clear. You are rubbishing it, in fact.

Opposition members interjecting.

Mr SPEAKER - Order. The Premier has the call.

Ms White - Who can even access it? This is about your priorities, Premier.

Mr ROCKLIFF - We know what the Labor priorities are. I know Nick and Dougie, if they were watching this question time - I do not think they wrote that question, because I reckon Nick and Dougie support the NILS. I would if I were them.

Ms White - We know we have gotten to you when you go on that tangent. You do not want to talk about a stadium.

Mr SPEAKER - Order, Ms White, you have put the question. The Premier is allowed to answer. Please allow him to answer the question in silence.

Ms White - Once it gets personal, you have lost the debate.

Dr Broad - Yes, that is what he said: once you get personal you have lost the debate.

Mr SPEAKER - Dr Broad, you have been warned once, please do not interject.

Mr ROCKLIFF - I will quote from the media release from NILS Tasmania, from John Hooper, the CEO:

At the same time we know that Tasmanians living on low incomes are needing our safe, no-interest loans to pay for a new fridge, to replace what has broken down, to pay their child's dental bill, to buy the laptop they need to take up their TAFE course opportunity, and now to assist people with a rental bond to get accommodation for their family. Without NILS we know people will be sucked in to predatory lending because there would not be an alternative. Today, across so many community organisations assisting Tasmanians in need, there will be great relief.

That is from John Hooper, the CEO of NILS -

Opposition members interjecting.

Mr SPEAKER - Order.

Mr ROCKLIFF - demonstrating the value of our cost of living package -

Mr SPEAKER - Order. This is your last warning.

Mr ROCKLIFF - acknowledging the impact of fuel prices, power prices, cost of living. This package, including the NILS, supports cost of living increases for Tasmanians. That is why it has been so warmly welcomed by John Hooper and the NILS. Extraordinarily, Mr Speaker, we now have a Labor Party that is rubbishing that opportunity and that loan scheme.

Emergency Service Workers - Pay Negotiations

Mr O'BYRNE question to MINISTER for POLICE, FIRE and EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT, Mr ELLIS

[10.24.a.m.]

Our hardworking emergency service workers are at the frontline keeping Tasmanians safe. They are overworked and under-resourced. Our paramedics are going on strike tonight because they are beyond breaking point. Meanwhile, your Government recently refused to turn up to wage negotiation with our firefighters, who are the lowest paid firefighters in the nation.

It is clear our emergency service workers need increased resources and support, but you have only offered them a lap of honour on Sunday's football game in Launceston. Although this is a nice symbolic gesture, this is not an opportunity for you to do a victory lap after how your Government is currently treating Tasmania's hardworking emergency service workers.

As a newly minted minister you have been quick to surround yourself with uniforms at a press conference. Will you be as quick to treat our emergency service workers right and pay them equivalent to their mainland colleagues? Despite minister Ferguson misleading the Tasmanian community, will you actually front a meeting with them regarding their request for fair pay?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I thank the member for Franklin for his question and interest in our emergency services. If there is one thing that unites this parliament, it is our belief in and gratitude to those people who put themselves on the frontline each and every day to keep Tasmanians safe. They do important work, and we are all very grateful.

We have negotiations ongoing across a range of different sectors, including the fire service. That is handled by the department. It is handled arm's length from government, which is really important.

Mr O'Byrne - Arm's length from government?

Mr SPEAKER - Order.

Mr ELLIS - As you know, there are lead negotiators engaged in this process. As a government, we are negotiating in good faith with our services. That is important and I encourage the UFU to engage with that process. Obviously, we currently have work bans in place from the UFU and we want to see those end. The Government wants to negotiate. The Government has offered six different pay offers to our firefighting union. None of those have been accepted, but probably more than that, none of those have even been presented to members to give them a choice.

We want our firies to get a pay rise. We want all our emergency services workers to get a pay rise. We are negotiating in good faith to make sure that process is affordable, sustainable, and a good outcome for our emergency service workers.

I thank the member for his question, and look forward to working with him and this parliament to support our emergency services workers.

Fixed-Term Leases - Protection under the Residential Tenancy Act

Ms JOHNSTON question to ATTORNEY-GENERAL, Ms ARCHER

[10.27 a.m.]

Right now, thousands of Tasmanians with fixed-term leases are living in fear. Tenants on fixed terms are frightened that if they try to enforce their most basic human rights of the Residential Tenancy Act for things like repairs, the right to quiet enjoyment, or protection from unreasonable rent increases, vindictive landlords will evict them at the end of the lease. With an incredibly competitive private rental market, where demand far exceeds supply and prices are going through the roof beyond the reach of ordinary Tasmanians, eviction risks homelessness. Therefore, it is not a surprise that frightened tenants are not making complaints to the Residential Tenancy Commissioner.

Currently, any tenant can be evicted at the end of their 12-month lease agreement for no other reason than their lease is ending. Tenants on non-fixed term lease agreements can only be evicted because they have committed a breach, or the landlord is selling the property or undertaking significant renovations, or using the property for another purpose, or having a family member move in.

Do you agree that security of tenure is important for Tasmanian families? Will you commit to amending the Residential Tenancy Act to provide tenants on fixed leases the same protections against no-ground evictions as tenants on non-fixed leases?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I thank the member for her question. This is basically what we debated in the House yesterday. I very clearly put forward our position as a Government, that I am in the process of reviewing the Residential Tenancy Act, not least of all in relation to the issue that has been quite high profile in the media and raised by the RSPCA, the Tenants' Union of Tasmania, and many others in relation to pets in rental properties.

I do not want to reflect too much on yesterday's debate but I will refer to the fact that the very issue of unreasonable rents was raised, and I responded to the House during the debate of

your motion, Ms Johnston. Currently, there is a process. I know it was raised by Ms O'Connor that many tenants are fearful of reprisal if they do make that complaint through the mechanism that is available for the Residential Tenancy Commissioner to review a complaint of unreasonable rent. I went through the figures for the number of complaints that have been considered in the most recent year for statistics, the 2021-22 financial year, and also of those applications. Two were found to be reasonable, six were unreasonable, 21 were found to be partially unreasonable, one related to an invalid increase during the COVID-19 emergency period, six were withdrawn or lodged outside the prescribed time, and two of the outcomes have been appealed, one of which has been discontinued. Two submitted in the current financial year are under assessment.

I encouraged tenants to come forward and make a complaint. As I understand it at the moment, the process is that a landlord cannot respond in a manner that would be reprisal in relation to that specific complaint. Under the Anti-Discrimination Act there would be provisions that also kick in. I am looking at all of this. I did say to the House that we are committed as a government to reviewing the Residential Tenancy Act. Importantly, I also went through the significant support that our Government provided to both landlords and tenants in the COVID-19 period through our COVID funds, the Rent Relief Fund and the Landlord Support Fund. As a total, we provided the sum of \$4.356 million to assist with rent. We also put a rent freeze on, both with respect to residential and commercial tenancy properties.

There was significant relief that was provided during that difficult period for tenants and landlords. That demonstrates our Government's commitment to striking the right balance when we are looking at a review of the Residential Tenancy Act. We do not want there to be perverse outcomes. That is why we are looking at what we can best achieve so that we can have that balanced approach between the rights of landlords and tenants.

I thank Ms Johnston for her question. I repeat what I said yesterday: we are currently in a review phase of the Residential Tenancy Act and I will be taking into consideration all feedback that we receive from all stakeholders and the Tasmanian community.

Cost of Living Pressures - New Stadium Proposal

Ms WHITE question to PREMIER, Mr ROCKLIFF

[10.33 a.m.]

In the middle of a cost of living crisis and power bills soaring because of your broken promise, how can you possibly justify spending \$750 million on a floating stadium in Hobart?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I thank the member for her question. I point the member to the budget paper, where our investment towards that stadium is \$1.25 million, not \$750 million, quite clearly. Your question highlighted pressures around cost of living, and no doubt - as I have seen some of your discussion before, playing politics as usual, no ideas or politics -

Ms White - We introduced legislation yesterday that you voted against: legislation that you have previously brought in.

Mr SPEAKER - Ms White, order.

Mr ROCKLIFF - You make comparisons with respect to investments in sporting infrastructure, health - can I say, in health, some \$11.2 million over the forward Estimates is record expenditure. When you were in government you sacked nurses, you shut wards, and put beds in storage. Tasmanians still remember the horror show of your government with respect to that.

My message to Tasmanians is that we will always continue to grow our investment into our health system, as we have demonstrated. We have demonstrated that over successive years because of the number of people we continue to employ in our frontline health service. My message to Tasmanians is that we can have iconic sporting infrastructure, as well as key investments into health, education and housing and, at the same time, address the cost of living pressures on Tasmanians. This is demonstrated by our winter bill buster payment of \$180, a \$17 million investment and our investment, as I have mentioned, of \$5 million into our cost of living package to support the organisations that support Tasmanians doing it tough.

The question was really incorrect, playing politics once again. Not understanding -

Ms White - It is about priorities, failing to get the basics right.

Mr SPEAKER - Ms White, order.

Mr ROCKLIFF - the huge investments we are making to support Tasmanians in need, or indeed our health system, our education system and our \$1.5 billion investment into housing, to ensure that Tasmanians have that fundamental right to be safe and have a roof over their heads.

Accommodation for Remote and Rural Students

**Ms O'CONNOR question to MINISTER for EDUCATION, CHILDREN and YOUTH,
Mr JAENSCH**

[10.37 a.m.]

As you know, there are comprehensive hostels for remote and rural students in Hobart. Springvale Student Residence is set to close. We have been contacted by the Isolated Children's Parents' Association and the National Council of Women Tasmania, who are alarmed about what Springvale's closure from next year means for young people from rural and regional areas and their families. They need reassurance. You, as minister, and the department understand the huge importance of having this accommodation option in place from next year. They want to know why you have not yet ensured there will be an alternative to Springvale.

Can you give them today, and this House, a guarantee, year 11 and 12 students from rural and remote areas will not be disadvantaged by Springvale's closure - happening as it is in the middle of an affordable housing shortage - and that you will ensure an alternative is in place from next year?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I thank the member for her question. I am aware that Springvale accommodation will be ceasing operations at the end of 2022. The Department of Education is currently providing support to residents and their families and prospective students, as well as to the operator and owner of Springvale Accommodation Pty Ltd, Mr Bob Gilmore. We thank Mr Gilmore for the service he has provided over many years. We understand that due to a range of factors, beyond his or our control, he has made the decision to discontinue operations. We have been supporting him to continue to the end of this year.

Ms O'Connor - So what happens next year?

Mr JAENSCH - The department is exploring with families, a number of alternative accommodation options and other solutions for their future. To support Springvale the department has, as I said, provided additional funding to ensure that Springvale remains open for students until the end of 2022 -

Ms O'Connor - Yes, next year?

Mr JAENSCH - Since March, department officials have been regularly meeting with Mr Gilmore to provide him with support and the department has also established a Springvale support team, which is supporting current residents and known potential residents for 2023. Family and student meetings have already commenced, with a range of different options presented to families to meet individual and unique student needs. Ongoing family and student support will continue until the end of the year.

Ms O'Connor - Yes, but next year?

Mr JAENSCH - Mr Speaker, I will talk to you. Students or families -

Ms O'Connor - That is what they want to know, or you should be anyway.

Mr SPEAKER - Order.

Mr JAENSCH - who have been affected by the closure are encouraged to contact the Springvale support team. Our department has commenced work with Housing Tasmania as well to look at all potential opportunities for the site, including possible refurbishments or upgrades, utilising the facility for youth accommodation or other forms of accommodation. These conversations will progress during the remainder of the year as well. The department is progressing other solutions for future students from rural and remote areas, in particular from the Tasman Peninsula. The department is in conversation with other student accommodation providers including Collegiate, Hutchins, TasTAFE, Colony47, Jane Franklin Hall, UTAS and the GETI homestay option.

I am advised that there are currently 32 residents at Springvale. Nineteen families have contacted the support team so far and meetings have been arranged or undertaken and second meetings are booked. We encourage any members here who are approached by families who are affected or potentially affected in their plans next year to make contact with the Springvale support team in the Department of Education.

Ms O'Connor - Is that a guarantee?

Mr SPEAKER - Order, Ms O'Connor.

Mr JAENSCH - You are speaking over me while I am trying to answer your question. Please let me finish.

I am happy for you to refer inquiries that come to your offices to mine for referral to the Springvale support team. I know that the department has an extensive list of organisations, including what have traditionally been the referring schools associated with people who stay at Springvale, and the families of those who have had residents there in the past and may have siblings coming through the system as well in the future. If you can assist us to spread the word about the Springvale support team -

Ms White - If you send us some details we will.

Mr JAENSCH - I would be very happy to send those contact details to all members' offices.

Housing Stress and Affordability - Government Plan

Mr YOUNG question to MINISTER for STATE DEVELOPMENT, CONSTRUCTION and HOUSING, Mr BARNETT

[10.42 a.m.]

Can you please outline recent progress in implementing the Tasmanian Government's plan to reduce housing stress and affordability in Tasmania and how we are supporting Tasmanians with cost of living pressures?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I thank the new member for Franklin, Dean Young - hearty congratulations on your appointment. I know you will be a tireless advocate for not just the eastern shore but the people of Franklin, and not just in small business and families but across your electorate. Congratulations and well done on that. We are very proud of you and look forward to working with you.

I also pay tribute to the former member and minister, Jacqui Petrusma, as an outstanding member and minister.

Mr Speaker, the question is a very important one because it relates to the cost of living pressures on our community. Housing is a strong and important contributor to these challenges and acting on housing and homelessness and affordability is very important.

We have an ambitious plan for 10 000 homes by 2032. It is ambitious, it is bold, but there is a lot more that we can and need to do. To guide the plan, early last month together with the Premier and my parliamentary secretary, Lara Alexander, we convened a reference group of people from the housing and homelessness sector and the building construction sector to address these concerns, challenges and opportunities. Earlier this week there was another

meeting of that reference group to advise and inform the Government of the important work that needs to be done.

They are looking at the gaps and at the needs, analysing where we need more homes and for which cohort. There is a lot of work that has been done to carefully target the resources that we have. I am very pleased about that and we are progressing towards establishing and releasing a Tasmanian housing strategy. It is a 20-year vision, so a long-term big plan - very bold. Shortly I will release a discussion paper for public comment on that 20-year plan.

In terms of first home buyers, on 1 July the state Government with the Bank of Us started the MyHome shared equity program. I am very pleased with that because Tasmanians can obtain their own affordable home for as little as 2 per cent equity. It is innovative and forward-looking and, from being at a recent ministerial council meeting, the Tasmanian model is very much appreciated and of great interest to other states and jurisdictions. We already have a young Tasmanian to purchase an existing dwelling as their first home. First home ownership is very important in Tasmania and I am pleased and proud of this initiative.

The new housing authority, Homes Tasmania, will be a cornerstone of our plan. I am pleased to advise the House that the asset base value of Homes Tasmania will be in the order of \$3.5 billion on the balance sheet. That is very significant.

Ms O'Connor - It's already that, isn't it?

Mr BARNETT - It is; we have done an analysis through the Valuer-General and I am giving the advice of that analysis to the House today. Up until today we were not aware of that and that is now on the public record.

We will be providing the most integrated, comprehensive and cohesive housing strategy in the country. We have the Private Rental Incentives Program that has been raised in the House this week and we have more to do there. We continue to offer bond assistance through the private rental assistance scheme. I acknowledge minister Street's announcement of the no-interest loans that was raised earlier today. In fact, the Premier referred to John Hooper's comments and response and thankfulness for that initiative and that good work. That will be offering no-interest loans to cover rental bonds and initial rental payments of up to \$3000 for eligible Tasmanians. This is all about addressing the cost of living. This Government puts it front and centre. It is important to Tasmanians that we are on the front foot and delivering.

As to the other measures in terms of housing and homelessness, let me cover a few. We have the \$30 million headworks holiday, we are extending the First Home Owner Grant, and we have the \$5 million for ancillary dwellings for the long-term rental. We are putting downward pressure on rent prices to reduce land tax. All these initiatives are helping address cost of living and housing affordability. We have stamp duty concessions up to \$600 000 for Tasmanians buying their first home and pensioners downsizing. We are responding and relating to the needs in the community. Of course we have the most vulnerable and we have the here and now.

In terms of emergency services and emergency shelter and assistance, there is \$36 million in wraparound services -

Ms O'CONNOR - Point of order, Mr Speaker, under standing order 48. This is a Dorothy Dix question and the minister has been self-congratulating for more than five minutes now.

Mr SPEAKER - It is not a point of order and I manage the time, as you well know.

Mr BARNETT - Mr Speaker, I can say that this is incredibly important. We have just been involved in Homelessness Week and this is a top priority of our Government and for me as minister. I was able to participate in the north, south, east and west to support those in the homelessness sector and I thank them for their efforts. We have \$36 million in those wraparound services.

My ambition is to work with politicians, members of parliament, political parties across the parliament and federal, state and local government to say there is more work to do. I want to work with you on these cost of living pressures. We are taking action but we acknowledge there is more work to do. I look forward to working with all across the parliament.

Electoral Donations Bill - Disclosure Limit

Ms HADDAD question to ATTORNEY-GENERAL, Ms ARCHER

[10.49 a.m.]

Do you think that the disclosure limit put forward in your electoral donations bill is reasonable and meets community expectations? Given your proposed threshold of \$5000 will still leave Tasmania with the worst donation disclosure laws in the country, why have you not suggested a lower threshold and progressed more transparent reform?

Mr SPEAKER - I need to make the point that this topic is an order of the day. Any comments should stay very general and -

Ms ARCHER - Mr Speaker, it is an order of the day. I thought you might rule it out of order because I will find it very difficult to answer that specific question because it relates to a provision in that bill.

Ms O'BYRNE - Point of order, Mr Speaker. Previous rulings have said that listing a bill on the paper that you are not planning to bring on for some time should not preclude matters that are significantly in the public interest from being dealt with during question time. I ask that you direct the minister to answer the question.

Mr SPEAKER - It is an order of the day.

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I will keep it short. The member asked if I thought it was reasonable we have put a \$5000 limit in the bill. That was the amount we voluntarily disclosed above during the most recent election campaign. That is our party's position. It is no different from South Australia - which is actually indexed - so we are not the only jurisdiction with an amount of that limit.

To avoid breaching the provision in relation to orders of the day, I believe I have adequately answered that question.

Electoral Donations Bill - Donations Reform

Ms HADDAD question to ATTORNEY-GENERAL, Ms ARCHER

[10.51 a.m.]

On Tuesday the Premier failed to take the lead on donations reform, and did not commit to bringing the bill on this year. Do you take the Premier's lacklustre support for this significant reform as another sign of his weakness? What is going on here? Can you say whether you have been pressured by anyone inside the Liberal Party organisation to increase the proposed donation threshold in your bill?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, it is very easy for the other side to fling some mud in the hope it will stick. I object to the description used of the Premier. The Premier is not weak. Unlike your team, the Premier has the backing of every single member. To suggest that he is weak, when he is showing great leadership on many issues, as we have been addressing this morning in question time - it is a ludicrous question from the member for Clark. I have mentioned all week that if this is where they are going to go in question time in the first week back from an eight-week break -

Opposition members interjecting.

Ms ARCHER - We are going to be debating the Electoral Act at length. As we said, it is our expectation that we will be debating that this year.

Advanced Manufacturing Accelerating Growth Grant Program - Update

Mr WOOD question to MINISTER for ADVANCED MANUFACTURING and DEFENCE INDUSTRIES, Ms OGILVIE

[10.53 a.m.]

Can you update the House on the Government's plan to ensure Tasmanian companies become more competitive, resilient and able to scale up to better compete in global markets?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I thank Mr Wood for that question. I know he has a great interest in these matters. It is an important question, because manufacturing is a critical sector for Tasmania, which generates a turnover of more than \$7 billion annually, and employs more than 18 000 people locally. It is a statewide operation. I am pleased to announce today that round three of our \$3 million Tasmanian Advanced Manufacturing Accelerating Growth grant program is now open for applications for funding, and that will help us grow the sector.

Tasmanian-based manufacturing businesses can apply for grant funding of up to \$100 000 to purchase capital equipment that will help their market-driven expansion and create new jobs locally. The third round is expected to be highly competitive, following the success of the first two rounds, which saw 20 successful applicants sharing more than \$1.5 million for projects that will generate an estimated investment of \$7.5 million. The first two rounds have also helped to create more than 100 new jobs in the industry right here in Tasmania.

As the House would know, as I have spoken on it many times here, that goes across advanced manufacturing, but also our defence industries and our important ship-building and telecommunications and technology sectors; they are all working in a converged sense.

The grants provide up to a 50 per cent contribution towards the purchase of equipment, with applicants having to contribute at least half of the total project cost. We have also expanded eligibility since the last round, with grants between \$10 000 and \$100 000 now available to Tasmanian-based advanced manufacturers with an annual sales turnover of between \$300 000 and \$50 million. This means more businesses can apply.

Successful applicants will have solid plans to invest in plant equipment that will be used in the manufacturing process and increase production capacity, to boost sales opportunities both on the mainland and internationally. As we know, we had a huge amount of success with this from Tasmania in the recent past.

Today I will be visiting a local business that has benefited directly from this program, our much-loved CBG Systems. It is a leading Tasmanian company that specialises in the manufacture, supply and installation of fire, thermal and acoustic insulation, and specialist antennae systems. In recent years, CBG Systems has made significant inroads into the defence industry market. I was in Sydney this year with CBG Systems and others, and noted their highly successful work program and the interest with which other organisations, both Australian and international, are viewing CBG's innovative projects and programs. CBG Systems is a global leader in its innovative design and manufacture of marine insulation and passive fire protection. As you could imagine, this has applications across both the commercial and defence sectors. I am very much looking forward to visiting this local Clark-based company and hearing more about their experiences of the program.

The program helps Tasmanian companies to become more competitive, more resilient and better able to scale up to better compete in global markets. I am sure everyone in this place would agree a greater international presence of Tasmanian products is a good thing. To find out about our Advanced Manufacturing Accelerating Growth grant program, including guidelines, eligibility and how to apply, please go to the Business Tasmania website.

Rock Lobster Fishery - Expansion of Pot Area

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

[10.57 a.m.]

In emails to you, rock lobster fishers from across Tasmania have uncharacteristically shared their vulnerabilities and deep distress at your proposal to expand the 60-pot area, and shared their concerns about the consequences this will have for them, their livelihoods, their families and their communities. They really hoped you had listened.

However, yesterday, you responded to their deeply personal stories with a 'copy and paste' letter including proforma template fields. In one part, the letter read:

[add the word 'not' if they support the 60-pot area]

Imagine how utterly disrespected our rock lobster fishers are feeling right now.

What do you say to them today to give confidence that you will now genuinely consider their interests when making a decision about your proposal to expand the 60-pot area?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I thank the member for her question.

I have spent a huge amount of time making personal phone calls to numerous rock lobster fishers right across our state, from really young ones who have just started out in the industry, to those who have been working in this industry for decades. No media crews, no press releases, no cameras, no Facebook posts - just me picking up the phone saying this is who I am, these are the decisions that are being made at the moment, and I want to know how you feel about that. How will that impact you?

They have been honest, and open, and I have certainly listened to them. Not only I have picked up the phone, I sat at different wharves around our state just waiting for fishers to come in who I may not know their names, I may not have their numbers, and have just sat and talked to them. Again, no media cameras, no Facebook page posts, just honest and open conversations.

I feel very confident that rock lobster fishers around this state know that they have a minister who has certainly listened.

Peacock Centre - Redevelopment

Mrs ALEXANDER question to MINISTER for MENTAL HEALTH and WELLBEING, Mr ROCKLIFF

[11.00 a.m.]

There is an important piece of work that says for Tasmanians living with mental health challenges, the most important thing for delivering the care is for them to have that care delivered in a community-based setting for their treatment and care options. The Tasmanian Liberal Government is currently doing a great amount of work in reducing the hospital admissions for this particular cohort of Tasmanians, as hospital settings is generally not a good way of treating.

Can you update the House on the rebuild of the Peacock Centre, which is an important piece of infrastructure that will create this particular type of environment, an alternative option?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I thank the member for her question. I know there is considerable interest in this matter. We are a government that continues to invest, reform and improve mental health in Tasmania. Since coming to government in 2014, we have invested some \$370 million to improve access the mental health and alcohol and other drug services, with a focus on prevention, early intervention and new treatment and support options.

The Peacock Centre redevelopment will provide an innovative, first of its kind mental health centre in Tasmania. The redevelopment, sadly, had a significant setback due to a deliberately lit fire on Christmas Eve last year. The build is now on track for completion in November, which I am very pleased about. I remember being in my kitchen seeing the video images of the Peacock Centre burning down on Christmas Eve. I do not mind saying, having recently met with the contractors on site and with my understanding and expectation of the rebuild for clients and the passion in the local community, I had a tear in my eye.

I visited the Peacock Centre and inspected the damage - I think about 27 December - and had a conversation with a local resident who also expressed real sadness, because they knew how important the Peacock Centre is to people experiencing mental illness and the community goodwill towards rebuilding that centre. It was felt very deeply by neighbours of the centre as well and, I am sure, other members who are well attuned to the work and the expectation of the Peacock Centre rebuild.

The centre will host four services that are all new to Tasmania, helping people to get the right support at the right time. It will include: a safe haven which will provide responsive and compassionate care to people experiencing suicidal and situational distress, and it will be open seven days for extended hours: the mental health integration hub, a one-stop shop where consumers, families and carers can be linked to a range of community service providers to help build individual capacity, avoid escalation of mental illness, or assist ongoing recovery. Recovery college will provide courses to support wellbeing and recovery, including for consumers, families, friends, clinical and support staff and community members interested in mental health.

Peacock House will be a 12-bed unit providing specialist assessment and treatment in a homelike environment for people who do not require hospital admission. The beds will increase the overall capacity of mental health services, delivering intensive community-based mental healthcare. This service is expected to commence in early 2023.

Each component will work together based on the needs of consumers, their families and friends, valuing the perspective of those with lived experience, reorientating mental health services towards the community and providing a respectful and responsive care and recovery focus. The centre represents a significant injection of staff to the mental health work force and recruitment is underway with strong interest for more than 45 new disciplinary positions, including peer workers, nursing, allied health and medical staff. Prior to the commencement of services on the site, open days will be held, providing an opportunity for the community to visit.

I am pleased that the rebuild of the Peacock Centre has also resulted in a fantastic grassroots initiative from the construction contractor, Hansen Yuncken, who wanted to show support for mental health awareness within the project team and all subcontractors on the Peacock Centre site. The Place a Hand for Mental Health initiative has seen people working on the project placing permanent hand prints and positive messages on the lining of the external

face of the building to be left as a legacy of support for mental health awareness within the building fabric itself.

It gives me great heart to see people and organisations in our community taking steps to empower their staff to support each other, building confidence to talk about mental health and breaking down stigma. I thank the project team from the bottom of my heart; builders, contractors who are working tirelessly to bring this project to fruition. It has enormous community goodwill. I look forward to Tasmanians benefiting from its services.

Time expired.

MATTER OF PUBLIC IMPORTANCE

Ministerial Standards

[11.08 a.m.]

Ms O'CONNOR (Clark - Leader of the Greens) - Mr Speaker, I move -

That the House take note of the following matter: Ministerial standards.

We thought it was important that the House have a debate and discussion about ministerial standards, particularly this week and in the context of industrial chaos. For example, there is now a Facebook post from the United Firefighters Union of Tasmania who are, flat out, calling Michael Ferguson, a liar. Now, Mr Ferguson can take offence to me restating that but this is the union representing firefighters, who say the Government just told journalists that the UFU have walked away from negotiations:

We were in the meeting room at the agreed time today and the Government did not turn up. We remain willing to meet and negotiate.

We still have not had an explanation from Mr Ferguson about why the UFU believes him to be a liar. It is the sort of accusation that you would think a minister would come in on the adjournment to address but we have not heard from the minister on this issue.

I guess from the Greens' point of view, when a new premier came on the scene in Mr Rockliff we wanted for there to be an elevation of ministerial standards, for there to be some obvious change. We went from a premier in Will Hodgman who really stood for nothing, whose government was characterised by spin and a total lack of substance, to a premier in Peter Gutwein where the truth became an ambiguous thing and we had some very loose language from that premier, particularly around, for example, the circumstances of the 2018 state election and the rivers of dark money that flowed into the Liberal Party and the sweet deal that was given to the gambling industry after that election. There were a number of examples of Peter Gutwein as premier not upholding a decent set of standards. The one that really comes to mind is during the allegations made about a former member in this place whose pseudonym was 'Terry' Brooks and women who had come forward saying they had been catfished by Mr Brooks under a false identity, and we had the premier of the day accusing ABC journalist Emily Baker of tricking up a video.

The reason I go back there, Mr Speaker, is because there needs to be a change. Despite the obvious decency of Mr Rockliff as Premier, so far we have not seen enough evidence that ministerial standards have lifted. We still have ministers who think it is okay to be a bit flabby with the facts, who think it is okay to get up here at the lectern and not give a straight, detailed answer.

For example, Mr Jaensch walked up to the lectern when we had a Cabinet minute that said the Government was moving to weaken tenancy protections and denied the Government was doing that when it was a fact. Mr Jaensch tries to pretend to Dr Woodruff that the Environment Protection Authority is, in fact, independent when every move it makes shows that it is a creature of industry.

We have Mr Barnett, who is the worst offender by a long shot, who worked with his department not to see or release a critical report on river health and then was at best vague with the truth at the Estimates table and at worst downright deceitful. We also think he was misleading about a minute from the Department of Primary Industries, Parks, Water and Environment, where his own advisers advised him not to hold the duck season. Again, we could not get the truth out of Mr Barnett over that. This is the same minister who issued an unlawful lease to Chinese state-owned mining company MMG.

We also have a new minister now, a young minister in Mr Ellis, who has a history. This is the Mr Ellis who has been RMIT fact-checked as completely wrong on forest carbon, who calls vegans 'terrorists', who tells women that their delicate hands make them good for fine manufacturing jobs, has compared ancient Aboriginal petroglyphs with house bricks, and was not elected in his own right - but we will not hold that against him - for the second time a bit over a year ago. Yet, this minister has been given weighty portfolios. He has the climate-related portfolio of Resources, and Police, Fire and Emergency Management. Yet, this is a new minister who does not appear to take seriously or understand the science of climate change.

I have noticed in the House this week that Mr Ellis has restrained himself and has not resorted to some of his previous behaviours. However, given the weight of his portfolio responsibilities and the significance of those portfolios, we hope that the Premier has had a conversation with his new minister about the standards he expects of his ministers. We hope the Premier has had the same conversation with every member of his Cabinet to say that things have changed. We want the Premier to make it clear to his secretary of Premier and Cabinet that the right to information process must be more transparent and that agencies must act within the spirit of the act.

In some ways, this matter of public importance debate is a plea to the new Premier to make sure we have a new and better set of standards than his predecessors had that enabled ministers of the Crown not to be honest, whether it is at the lectern here or at the budget Estimates table because, if you cannot be honest in this place you are, in effect, misleading the people of Tasmania. We want to see an elevation of ministerial standards. We would like to think that Mr Ellis recognises the enormous weight and responsibility he has been given and acts like a grown-up.

Time expired.

[11.15 a.m.]

Mr ROCKLIFF (Braddon - Premier) - Mr Speaker, I thank Ms O'Connor for bringing forward this matter of public importance today. All members of the House should have the collective responsibility for high standards of integrity and propriety for the people of Tasmania and apply that in the course of our duty to Tasmanians.

As a government we are committed to acting professionally and with accountability in the performance of our duties for a strong future for our state. We have taken action since coming to government to improve standards, improve accountability, and improve transparency. All members of this place would be aware that the Government approved an updated code of conduct for ministers following the election in 2021. The code applies to the Premier and each minister and is based on the framework that was adopted by the government in March 2014, updated in 2018 and again in 2021. We have made changes to a number of sections of the code including the section relating to respect for people to ensure there is no doubt that the Government will operate in a manner that withstands the closest public scrutiny.

Furthermore, to protect and uphold the public interest, ministers must take reasonable steps to avoid, resolve or disclose any material conflict of interest, financial or non-financial, that arises or is likely to arise between their personal interests and their official duties. Ministers are asked to declare to me as Premier whether they have any conflicts of interest in relation to their proposed portfolio responsibilities.

If any member holds legitimate concerns, they should and indeed must report behaviour that is not consistent with the code around a number of matters I have raised, particularly conflict of interest, to the Integrity Commission as the appropriate and responsible authority. Not only is the role of the commission to investigate and prosecute misconduct, but its supplementary and equally important role is to deliver education and guidance to members of parliament and the public sector workforce. Our Government values the work of the Integrity Commission, respects its independence and has every confidence in its ability to undertake its duties.

The educational role is critical and one that the commission takes very seriously. The commission devotes a lot of time to developing and delivering new and innovative training packages to support organisations to identify and prevent misconduct. The commissioner has also stated that he is satisfied the commission has sufficient powers regarding his role but has simply not been required to use them. This has been supported through the independent findings of two recent reviews of the Commission which did not find any substantial issues with the commission's powers.

All have signed the members' code of conduct and understand the obligations to adhere to them and to set the standard when it comes to integrity and positive workplace culture. We acknowledge that our duty as community leaders and our common values compel each of us to ensure that parliament is a leading practice example for all Tasmanians.

We are very committed to a safe working environment where people are respected and enjoy coming to work. That was the clear message I gave our parliamentary Liberal Party members when I became Premier, and to members of our Cabinet and new members of Cabinet, that I expect a positive workplace culture, I expect people to be respected and valued for the work that they do and I will lead by example. That is the message I have also shared with senior staff.

Mr Speaker, our Government has commissioned an independent review into parliamentary practices and procedures to support workplace culture, undertaken by the Anti-Discrimination Commissioner, Sarah Bolt. The review is focused on workplaces across parliament, ministerial and parliamentary services, staff and electorate offices - including parliamentary practices and procedures - to ensure a safe, respectful workplace that will reflect best practice in preventing and dealing with any workplace discrimination, sexual harassment and bullying. Importantly, this review will identify where we can improve, along with any barriers or gaps that need addressing.

In her progress update in March, the commissioner noted that the scope of our review is unprecedented within Australia, and commended it for its wide-reaching terms of reference covering discrimination, sexual harassment and bullying. That is a very strong endorsement indeed. Our Government is absolutely committed to that.

My vision for Tasmania is of a place where everyone is encouraged, supported, respected, valued and encouraged again to be the best they can possibly be. In this place, this parliament, we have a very strong opportunity and obligation to the Tasmanian people to lead by example.

Many Tasmanians would view this workplace and some of the language used in this place as not consistent with the standards that members of parliament should be demonstrating as leaders of our community. Vigorous debate is important; robust debate is important. The battle for ideas is important, but where those ideas are diminished is where personal attacks become the nature of this place. I have made comments with respect to that this week.

I encourage those opposite to be mindful of their language and their personal attacks, not only when they speak in this place, but also the written words that I see on media releases. There is a long way for improvement from those opposite.

Time expired.

[11.22.a.m]

Ms BUTLER (Lyons) - Mr Speaker, I am pleased to add to this debate and I thank the Greens for bringing this very important matter to the House today.

We do have a problem with the standards in our parliament at the moment, and with the standards that some of our elected representatives are setting. They are people who should be responsible for actually setting the highest standards.

I am talking about matters I raised yesterday in the House. I do not want to reflect upon that, but I do need to correct or restate that the response provided yesterday by the Attorney-General - who is also, interestingly, the minister for workplace standards - was misleading. It completely differed from the information provided through a right to information request. The minister stated yesterday that there were people in her office and the churn had to do with DLOs leaving the office and coming in and out from departments, and also portfolio changes and responsibilities. That is just false because the Attorney-General has not had changes -

Mr SPEAKER - Sorry, Ms Butler, I need to remind you that if there are any accusations to be made, they need to be made from a substantive point of view, a substantive motion. You can speak generally, but if there is going to be any accusations made it needs to be a substantive motion.

Ms BUTLER - Thank you, Mr Speaker. What an example the Attorney-General is leading at the moment. In 2019-20, seven staff members started in the ministerial office. Quite a few of us here understand the pressures of ministerial offices; they are difficult places to work, and there is high pressure. They are full of conflict, lots of time management, lots of pressure - but having a good workplace culture, and a good team of people who know how each other work, and trust, is really important. I believe I have a very good record of standing up and protecting people, especially against workplace harassment and bullying, so I do think I can legitimately talk on this issue.

If you have seven people coming into your workplace in 2019-20, and eight people leaving, you could have just had a very unfortunate start to that year. You could have had a bit of a cultural issue within your ministerial office. But then, in 2020-21, five people came into that office, and four people were outgoing. In 2021-22, eight new people came into that office, and six people left.

That is a really big issue. That must be the highest churn rate of any of your ministerial offices. We have all heard the rumours; we have all had discussions with people who have left that office.

Mr SPEAKER - Ms Butler, I do have to remind you again, because you talk about rumours. I am going to read standing order 144:

No member shall use offensive or unbecoming words in reference to a member of this House, nor attribute directly or by innuendo to another member unbecoming conduct or motives ...

You need to be very careful how you link your words to saying one thing and then linking it later on, because that is, by innuendo, making an accusation.

Ms BUTLER - Thank you, Mr Speaker. The Attorney-General did suggest that it was due, as I stated, to DLOs, but the RTI information we have here states:

... does not include department liaison officers who remain employed by their home agencies.

That states that pretty clearly.

Number two states - this is from the RTI, and I will read it into the record:

Incoming numbers include staff movements from other ministerial offices relating to portfolio moves, changes and new appointments.

There have not been any portfolio changes within those offices.

Outgoing numbers include staff movements to other ministerial offices relating to portfolio moves/changes and resignations.

As I just stated, there have not been any portfolio changes in that office. The office churn is significant.

Loyalty is a really important part of working in ministerial offices. I remember Judy Jackson's office when she was Attorney-General. Sometimes you had to put your head in the office and say, 'Look, guys, can you keep it down?', because there was laughter, there was intelligence, there was robust debate. She had such a fantastic office when she was the Attorney-General, and her churn rate was absolutely minimal because she evoked loyalty, she did not give her staff a hard time, and she worked with them. That is an example of what a good workplace culture is. That standard needs to be set on a really high level, and we have the evidence here to suggest that it is not working at a high level.

We know the pressures of losing the northern prison debate with Westbury; that was an absolute nightmare for the minister for Justice. The Burnie Court Complex - oh my gosh, what a debacle - to have two dissenting reports from members of the Public Works Committee, one of them being the chair. I can understand the pressures in that office, trying to support a minister or an Attorney-General who is really making very poor decisions.

Look at Corrections at the moment. What a disaster. There are so many breaches of human rights coming out of corrections system at the moment that are not being rectified.

If we are going to talk about parliamentary standards, it has to be led from the top. We know there are so many issues coming out of these offices that we have to ensure that we stand highest. We have to make sure that the standard that is set remains, especially for our lawmakers and the minister for workplace relations. It needs to be set at the highest bar, and it certainly is not.

[11.30 a.m.]

Dr WOODRUFF (Franklin) - Mr Speaker, we sit in this place every day and listen to a number of ministers gaslight and make a range of mistruths. I suppose some of us are used to this and normalised to it but I can tell you that people in the community are not happy with this Government normalising ministers who tell falsehoods and who sign off illegal leases. They are not happy with ministers who pretend there is information about damage done by peaceful protesters to workplaces or workers when no such evidence exists, when they have been repeatedly asked to provide the evidence and they fail to do so.

They are not happy with ministers and treasurers like Mr Ferguson with the Budget making a promise of a massive boost to social housing construction that gives people false hope in a housing crisis, when we know that it will never be delivered and when he makes up numbers that simply are not true. It is simply not true that it is possible to build thousands of new homes in the next eight years, because we have crunched the numbers, which are publicly available and have never been disputed by the Liberals. Since the Liberals have been in government, only 578 social and affordable homes were added to the Housing list in Tasmania, and we know that of the 941 new homes that were promised in 2016-17, the Government only delivered 186. The 2017-18 promise of this Government to build 900 houses only resulted in 212 and in 2018-19, 1500 new homes were promised but only 697 were reported to have been built at that time.

When we have had a government that has only delivered 578 homes, an average of 72 houses a year, and when Mr Ferguson as Treasurer announced that there would be 10 000 new homes built over 10 years, we know it is not true. We are sick of this Government telling complete porkies to people who desperately want to believe this Government cares about the housing crisis and will do anything to relieve their suffering, when there are things on the table,

legislative changes that can be made, that the Government refuses to take and when we have a treasurer who cooks up a budget that is based entirely on falsehoods, spun to make people feel that they are concerned and care a little bit.

This is the same Government that has the now Minister for Education, Children and Youth, Roger Jaensch, who was the former Housing minister. In parliament we accused him of lying because we read from a Cabinet decision that was minuted as a decision that proposed that this Government walk back from our tenancy laws to allow evictions to occur without genuine or just cause. The minister, Mr Jaensch, denied that a change had ever been proposed. Minister Jaensch is on the record as Housing minister denying that and now he is on the record for the evidence we provided to parliament that shows he was lying. What it shows is a dishonesty and a heartlessness about this issue.

Mr BARNETT - Point of order, Mr Speaker. If an accusation like that is substantive then it should be done in the usual way. I draw that to the member's attention.

Mr SPEAKER - I do have to reinforce that. As I have said previously in this debate, if there are allegations to be made then they need to be made in a substantive nature. Anything that the House has dealt with in the past has been dealt with and the House needs to move on. If you are going to make allegations then they need to be made in a substantive way.

Ms O'CONNOR - Point of order, Mr Speaker, seeking clarification. Members in this House have historically been able to make any number of allegations. That is part of our job. I am a bit concerned that what we are seeing here is an attempt to shut that down and to restrict our right to speak.

Mr SPEAKER - No, the debate is a general debate about ministerial standards. If there are individual accusations to be made they need to be made in a substantive way.

Dr WOODRUFF - They were made in a substantive way, Mr Speaker, more than 12 months ago.

Mr SPEAKER - And therefore the House dealt with them -

Dr WOODRUFF - More than 12 months ago -

Mr SPEAKER - Order. I have made my point. I will ask you to continue.

Dr WOODRUFF - They are a historical record, aren't they? Is it not correct that we can refer to debates that are more than a year old?

Here we are now and meanwhile we have the same minister who is in charge of children and youth and he has been obviously found out, on multiple occasions, to have fabricated the truth. We see him in Estimates all the time pretending to people that the EPA is independent and he is going to bring the legislation on. People can see from his actions that we cannot trust him and it says everything that we should be concerned about with this Government. We should have ministers who tell the truth in this place.

Time expired.

[11.37 a.m.]

Ms FINLAY (Bass) - Mr Speaker, we have had great contributions this morning from this side of the House and the Greens. I am perplexed to see across the Chamber, for those who have not been able to see this, that we have four Government members who are scrambling to decide who should defend the honour of the Government. No-one jumped so I am happy to jump because, in the time I have been in this place, in just over a year, I have been nothing but dumbfounded by the absolute disregard for due process and honesty.

I came from a place where for almost 20 years, although we were all independent and separate, we were a team that worked together and said, 'What is in the best interests of the great city of Launceston?' When I came to this place, I naively thought that although there would be a great strength of debate and a great desire to have a positive impact across the lives of all Tasmanians, we would sometimes try to work together to build the best outcome and be very positive in our approach to the matters before us.

We have just had question time this morning. In the question times I have been involved with for just over a year, people often speak the voice of Tasmanians. They speak the voice of people. By the time the matter gets to us, by the time a matter is so heavily trodden on a really complex journey that has not been resolved and it comes to a political member of the community, it is complex, it is dire, it is distressing, it is overwhelming. Those voices are spoken here in question time, often on behalf of Tasmanians from across the state, and there is disregard, disrespect and complete pushing aside of the realities of these concerns, with responses that often speak of nothing associated with the subject matter raised, and sometimes humour at a time when there is great distress being presented.

Ministerial standards? They say, and I cannot remember who said it so I cannot attribute this quote, but they say that the standard that you walk past is the standard that you accept.

We just heard the Premier before talk about the concern of personal attack. Premier, I say to you genuinely that you are a good person and you set the standard for this state. Yet, already today we have seen this counterplay of undermining and personal attempts to make light of really serious issues.

What would I expect then? When I was making the difficult decision to join this place and that sometime in the future, I hoped that I could develop my skills so when we are in government I can be a minister of this state. I always in every element of my life ask, who do I use and go to as a mentor? Who do I watch from afar that I would like to be like, the very best at what they do? Is there anyone in this place who holds a position in the Government and who is setting a ministerial standard that I would be like, that I would want to be like? Right now, after a year, I can absolutely say no. I can absolutely say that I am disappointed in the qualities. I am disappointed in the standards, in the behaviours, of so many of the ways that different issues are represented in this place for Tasmanians.

Tasmanians expect absolute excellence, they expect absolute determination, they expect relentless effort to solve those complex - sometimes unsolvable problems - but at least a willingness to come together to ask, what can we do?

How can we today, take a step forward that progresses us further into a positive place for the people of Tasmania? How can we address and consider and unpack the difficult and complex situations to make things a bit better if we are not going to do that and if the ministers

of this state cannot demonstrate in this place and to us and or cannot demonstrate to their electorates or their constituencies or to the entire state that they are willing to make things better for everybody. This morning we had people representing positions that just are not correct. That then, somehow, gets put in the media and the media then shares those stories with the community and the community thinks that must be right. It then takes effort to unpack and unwind and create the correct story so that Tasmanians really know what is going on.

This morning we have heard about many important issues. For Tasmanian Labor, our focus is on the community, our focus is on supporting Tasmanians who are under great distress, are anxious, are often nauseated with the pressures of the rising cost of living. We are out here supporting Tasmanians who are sharing their stories, who are being vulnerable with us about the realities of their circumstances. There are people in our community making choices about whether they actually have their power on at the meter or whether they are lighting and heating their home right now. They are making choices, as a family, many families, to go to bed early at 5 p.m. or 6 p.m. so they do not have to heat and light their homes. That is the level of pressure and distress in our community.

In this place it feels like ministers think that they can talk about something else or distract or not actually focus on the realities of the hardships. We have services and people in our community doing the work with families to support them through these very difficult times. The Government says - and these are the words of the Government - the most vulnerable, the people on a concession or a pension - I am trying to remember the description used this morning; it was a weird description of people who are struggling.

What I can tell is that this Government is not yet out of its bubble. It is not connected to the realities of Tasmanians. It is not just the most vulnerable who maybe have been vulnerable for some time in their communities, but it is all Tasmanians who are feeling the pressure right now and the pressures of cost of living. I do not accept the standards that are being presented and I know Tasmanians expect better.

Time expired.

Matter noted.

HOMES TASMANIA BILL 2022 (No. 35)

Second Reading

[11.45 a.m.]

Mr BARNETT (Lyons - Minister for State Development, Construction and Housing) - Mr Speaker, I move -

That the bill be now read the second time.

The Homes Tasmania Bill 2022 delivers on the commitment made by this Government in February this year to create a dedicated housing authority. This authority will be responsible for delivering improved housing services and increasing the supply of social and affordable homes in Tasmania.

Following consultation and feedback, the authority will be called Homes Tasmania. This reflects the importance of having not just a roof over your head, but also a place to call home and the broader role that the authority will play in ensuring the wellbeing of those in need of housing and homelessness services, as well as in building livable communities.

Housing is a basic human need and is critical to our community's health, wellbeing and financial stability. Every Tasmanian deserves a roof over their head. The Rockliff government has a plan to achieve this. We need the right structures in place to address the increasing need for housing solutions. This Homes Tasmania bill establishes a framework, the right framework, to futureproof housing for many decades to come.

This bill represents a historic change in our approach to delivering housing for Tasmanians in this state. No-one in this House can deny that we do not need to do things differently. The need in our community is critical. We must be innovative, agile and responsive and we need to change the way we have been doing things to be more contemporary, to prepare for the next decade and beyond.

Housing is a whole of community need. Where and what we build determines the fabric of our communities, the services and supports we need to ensure our wellbeing, our culture and connection to each other and the world around us. Urban design and renewal is integral to this and is what makes livable communities.

This legislation creates a role for Homes Tasmania in broader housing considerations beyond what the current department has historically held. This means that it can consider our community housing needs and how our vulnerable are supported within this. It also means it can play a role in key worker accommodation and how that fits within a broader housing need, particularly in regional areas or areas of high demand.

Homes Tasmania is established to promote the development of affordable housing to enable the provision of housing assistance to and improve the housing conditions of eligible persons, to support the provision of affordable housing, housing support services, and community support services to persons who require housing or services to assist in developing policy for housing and any other related purposes.

Homes Tasmania will be responsible for delivering the Tasmanian Government's record capital investment of \$1.5 billion to build 10 000 homes by 2032. We know this is an ambitious plan and we know we need to partner with the building and construction industry in order to deliver this record build program. We have started this through the memorandum of understanding Building Tasmania's Future with the industry signed in May this year, which seeks to address challenges in our supply chains, improve processes and build resilience in our industry.

However, we cannot stop there. We must change how we have done things in the past to allow for more innovation, more efficiency and faster development to get houses out of the ground and providing homes for people who need them as quickly as possible.

At the same time, we need to make sure these homes are the right types of homes and are built in the right places to meet the needs of vulnerable Tasmanians, both now and into the future. We also need to make sure they represent value for money and demonstrate a responsible public investment. The Homes Tasmania board will help bring in the expertise

needed to deliver these homes through modern and contemporary partnership models, complemented by the work we are already doing.

While delivering these homes, we must not forget who we are building these homes for and what they need. We must remember that these people need support and a home right now. We must continue to work closely with our community service providers and sector partners in ensuring a cohesive and integrated approach to homelessness and housing services across Tasmania. This means working across all our communities, both in the cities and in the regions, and understanding and meeting their unique and different needs.

This bill will not change that. Homelessness and wraparound services will continue to be a core focus of the authority, and this focus and priority will be enshrined in my statement of expectations. This includes putting a focus on those most in need: our vulnerable youth under 25, women with children, those leaving their homes due to relationship breakdowns or family violence, those with a disability or specific needs, and elderly Tasmanians.

We want the people of Tasmania, our government and non-government partners to work together to build the communities of the future. Our sector partners and businesses will be integrally involved in shaping and partnering on these plans, as well as the Australian and local government.

That is why we have convened a ministerial reference group on housing and homelessness. The first meeting was held in mid-July and attended by 17 community service providers, peak representative bodies and the local government of Tasmania. The reference group is working closely with us to develop a 20-year housing strategy for Tasmania. I expect the strategy to be completed by mid-2023, which will guide Homes Tasmania in ensuring we build the right homes in the right places, and provide the right services to those who need them, when and where they need them.

We will leave no stone unturned in delivering the homes and housing support services Tasmanians deserve. This is the very reason we are establishing Homes Tasmania. This bill establishes the authority and sets the framework for an organisation that will be guided by a board. This allows us to work more closely with expertise from across our community, and leverage our collective knowledge in addressing Tasmania's housing challenges. The board will be supported by committees that will bring in the lived experience and representative knowledge of the relevant sectors, such as homelessness services and the building and construction industry, to help guide and balance the board's decision-making.

The need for these committees was a key piece of feedback we heard through the consultation process. I believe it will only work to improve and enhance decision-making. This will bring more representative views into housing and homelessness decisions than ever before in Tasmania.

The board will be directed through a statement of ministerial expectations, which sets the direction from me, as minister, on the priorities and focus of Homes Tasmania. I have tabled a draft statement with the bill to demonstrate the function of this document, and how I intend it to drive transparency of the authority and community outcomes. I intend to hold the board and the executive management of Homes Tasmania to account in delivering against my expectations, which will be tabled in parliament once finalised.

Mr Speaker, the Homes Tasmania Bill replaces the Homes Act 1935 in its entirety. It provides a new structure and new governance arrangements that will enable the delivery of more homes for Tasmanians, especially those in need. There has been criticism over many years about the limitations of the Homes Act in providing the right framework for a broader, more strategic legal setting in fitting with the diversity of housing needs in the Tasmanian community. I applaud the efforts of the former housing minister, Jacquie Petrusma, who ushered through a series of changes in 2016. These were key changes that have been reviewed in their operation and improved on in the Homes Tasmania Bill.

However, it is important to note that we have continued to face many barriers, given the structural difficulties in the operation of the Homes Act. As you well know, laudable attempts to modernise old laws over time can overcomplicate and even render unworkable many of their provisions. While ever we rely on the Homes Act, there will continue to be many constraints on the provision of more homes for Tasmanians, especially those more vulnerable members of the Tasmanian community.

The bill provides substantial clarity about the roles and functions of the new housing authority in the modern context. It retains the best features of recent improvements, and builds on these to ensure Tasmania has the most integrated whole-of-system approach to developing land, building, procuring, maintaining, modifying and disposing of homes that may have passed their use-by date.

This new legislative framework provides the right underpinnings to consolidate effort across government to increase the supply of homes, deliver more affordable homes, and ensure housing and support services are as integrated as possible.

The purpose of the bill is to:

- increase the opportunities for vulnerable Tasmanians and people on low or moderate incomes to live in safe, secure and appropriate housing;
- enable the provision of housing assistance and housing support services;
- encourage the development and implementation of short-term, medium-term and long-term housing strategies;
- facilitate the ownership, leasehold or occupation of residential premises by vulnerable Tasmanians and people on low or moderate incomes;
- encourage the development of flexible and innovative financial arrangements to improve housing outcomes;
- enable the strategic acquisition of land, and land and premises, primarily for the development of housing;
- promote an efficient and effective system of administration of housing services, housing support services, and community support services;
- assist in ensuring the existence of a viable and diversified sector for the provision of housing assistance and housing support services; and
- ensure appropriate transparency, scrutiny and direction of the performance and exercise of the functions and powers of Homes Tasmania.

Homes Tasmania will perform and exercise the functions and powers currently assigned to the Director of Housing under the Homes Act, with relevant new functions and powers added under the new structure of Homes Tasmania.

The functions and powers conferred under the bill provide the foundation for Homes Tasmania to effectively plan for and manage the housing and homelessness system, as well as to acquire, develop or redevelop and manage homes in line with the purposes set out. A key feature of the bill is the strategic focus on building communities, so that our housing developments are planned and coordinated with our communities as they grow and change.

This bill represents the first step in establishing an authority with the necessary powers and remit to deliver the homes Tasmanians will need into the future. We believe there is more work to do to provide new residential development to house our growing population, and reduce wait times for those on our housing register. To do this, we will work closely with our stakeholders, the ministerial reference group, and across government agencies to achieve the right balance between protections and progress.

There is also further work to be done in how tenancy laws apply to social housing, so that vulnerable tenants are appropriately protected. Our Government has made a strong commitment for further work to be undertaken to improve housing outcomes for Tasmanians. We want to be able to work with the board of Homes Tasmania on this, meaning it is important that we establish the authority as a first step.

In addition, I want to make it clear that this Government is committed to pulling all possible levers to address our housing challenges. This includes our ambitious planning reform agenda. We are delivering our Tasmanian Planning Scheme which, while taking longer than anticipated, is already in effect in 15 local government areas. We are drafting Tasmanian planning policies and updating our regional land use strategies to allow more proposals for the rezoning of land to residential purposes to be considered on their merits.

We have also commenced a review of our State Planning Provisions to ensure that we have the settings right and that our planning rules are not standing in the way of appropriate development. These processes are already underway and I look forward to working with my colleague, the Minister for Planning, Michael Ferguson, to facilitate their progression to deliver the outcomes we need.

I want to make it very clear that this Government is strongly committed to tackling the current housing challenges being experienced by many Tasmanians. I look forward to working with stakeholders and those in this House to work through these challenges and propose solutions. If required I will bring forward legislative changes to implement reforms back to parliament during 2023.

Mr Speaker, there is a series of amendments contained in the Homes Tasmania (Consequential Amendments) Bill 2022. These amendments are necessary because they interact with the roles and functions of Homes Tasmania. The Homes Tasmania (Consequential Amendments) Bill 2022 repeals the Homes Act and makes the following substitutions where required in all relevant acts. It replaces the Director of Housing with Homes Tasmania; replaces references to the Homes Act 1935 with Homes Tasmania Act 2022; replaces references to the housing agency with the responsible department in relation to Homes Tasmania Act 2022; replaces references to government land with Homes Tasmania Act land;

and replaces references to Homes Act land with housing supply land. Changes have also been made to the State Service Act 2000, adding the role of Homes Tasmania chief executive officer to Schedule 1 of that act.

I would like to thank all those contributors, including peak bodies, our built environment partners, sector stakeholders and community members who made submissions on the draft bill. Many suggestions have been incorporated in the bill and I think the bill in its current form is better as a result. Examples include a stronger focus on housing being a basic human need in the bill's objectives, including a focus on liveable communities and sustainability and including representative views in board decision-making through the advisory committees.

I recognise that the establishment of Homes Tasmania represents a significant structural change in the way housing and housing support services will be delivered into the future. I want to reassure current staff that their employment conditions will not change and there will be no redundancy or job losses associated with the establishment of Homes Tasmania.

I can also reassure sector partners that current funding arrangements will remain in place under Homes Tasmania. I also want to reassure members in this place that their interactions with me and my office as the responsible minister for Housing will remain the same and that I will continue to be actively engaged and drive the Government's agenda to improve housing for all Tasmanians, particularly those most in need.

I would also like to thank all those members who have engaged with me and my office on the consultation on this bill. It has been a productive and positive experience and one that I believe represents the type of bipartisan/tripartisan support we should all be bringing to the table on an issue as fundamental as this.

I look forward to working together constructively with colleagues and remain optimistic we can enact this good law in the interests of all Tasmanians, but particularly those who need our help the most.

Mr Speaker, I commend the bill to the House.

[12.04 p.m.]

Ms HADDAD (Clark) - Mr Deputy Speaker, in his first speech as Premier, Mr Rockliff said himself that every Tasmanian has the fundamental right to a roof over their head and a safe place to call home. Access to safe and secure housing is protected by the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, meaning people experiencing homelessness have had that basic human right violated. Not only that, they also face violations of other fundamental rights, such as the right to an adequate standard of living which affects their right to education and their right to liberty and security as a person. It affects their right to privacy and to social security. It affects their right to freedom of information.

Fundamental human rights are no small matter. These are basic rights protected by international covenants, not a progressive wish list that can be abandoned or ignored. When these fundamental human rights exist, the Government has a responsibility to ensure they are protected, but the Government is a long way from matching the Premier's lofty talk of fundamental rights with real-world action, which means that too many Tasmanians are a long way from having a safe place to call home, a decent house to rent at an affordable price, or a future that includes the possibility of home ownership.

Just look around. Every component of the housing system is letting Tasmanians down. Homelessness today is a visible feature of the Tasmanian landscape, in our cities and towns, in a way that it never was before. Tasmanians are being turned away from emergency shelters in record numbers; 20 000 times people were turned away last year, which was up from 15 000 times the year before, an increase on the previous year before that of 14 000 times. These figures do not include those who have been turned away too many times already who simply give up on the chance of being housed in an emergency shelter, people like Mr Jetson, who we have spoken about here before and in Estimates, who is now spending his third winter living in his car and is still not housed. We have heard on numerous occasions from far too many Tasmanians and families so we know that he is far from alone.

Even those who do have a roof over their heads have told us the unimaginable choices they are having to make every day to keep a roof over their heads, thanks to the cost of living crisis and the housing crisis. They are people like Tiana, who said:

It's difficult and depressing when some fortnights you have to choose between feeding your family, having a roof over your head, putting fuel in your car or buying medication ...

These are real stories of real people choosing between feeding their families or paying their rent, with the ever-present fear that they will not be able to make the next mortgage or rent payment.

As I spoke about yesterday, many people who are being squeezed out of the private rental market do not qualify for social housing. These are working people who are facing the real prospect of homelessness. Too many people are just one payment away from homelessness, or losing that fundamental right for themselves and their families.

Homelessness is now at such serious levels because this Government has de-prioritised housing from the day they were elected. Between 2010 and 2014 Labor built 2200 new social houses and the average wait time for social housing fell to 21 weeks, which is still a long time to wait. Everything ground to a halt when the Liberals were elected. They did very little for four years, a decision that this Premier and Housing minister no doubt contributed to around the Cabinet table, and now we should not be surprised that we are facing a housing crisis that they created. They called a crisis summit after the 2018 election, which they recently reconvened, but in the intervening years almost nothing has progressed. The number of Tasmanians facing housing stress and homelessness continues to grow, as does the number of homeless Tasmanians and the number of Tasmanians on the social housing waitlist.

So where are we after nine years, almost a decade of Liberal government? The sad fact is that we are even more deeply in crisis than we were before. The Housing waitlist, which was around 2100 people and families when Labor left office, now hovers around 4500 people each month. The average wait time for social housing has more than tripled from 21 weeks to an astonishing 68 weeks. Thousands of others face private rental stress as available housing stock falls and rents continue to soar.

Since coming to office, the Liberals have built just 1200 new social housing properties, or about 150 a year, which is not nearly enough to address the existing problem, let alone on the Government's own budget papers, the known problem that the list and the need will continue to rise. Had they simply kept pace with the rate of building under the previous

government there would be around 3000 fewer families on the waitlist today. Instead, all of this inaction and inadequate action has combined to create the perfect storm for Tasmanians struggling with soaring prices and stalled wages, leaving too many Tasmanians to slip into homelessness, or be at risk of slipping into homelessness, sleeping rough, couch-surfing with friends, or trying desperately to get into emergency accommodation.

Put quite simply, it is through the Liberals' failure to plan and act sooner to relieve the housing crisis that they have backed themselves into a corner and we now have no choice but to do something radical.

This is the problem with this Government: they are all about announcements or reannouncements but are very light on delivery when it comes to action. Over many years, an increasing list since 2007, governments have outsourced the delivery of housing to the community services sector, which is a good thing. It opens up increased numbers of options. We support that.

However, it does not in any way reduce the Government's responsibility. The fundamental responsibility to deliver housing and housing support services will always sit firmly with government. Even when they partner with community sector providers, it is a fundamental role and function of government to provide government and social housing.

There is no doubt that with the housing system in the crisis it is that we see that more needs to be done and that change is needed but we have to ask ourselves, is this the change that is needed and is this the solution to the problem we are trying to fix? There is absolutely no doubt that a massive amount of work has gone into the preparation of this bill, from the minister's department, from the sector, no doubt the minister's office and from the Office of Parliamentary Counsel.

Much work has flowed from that short statement from former premier, Peter Gutwein, in his state of the state address in March that this new statutory authority would be established. When I asked about it at Estimates and asked about the master planning and policy intent behind such a big and significant change, I was told that the planning basically began when the words left the former premier's mouth in that speech in March. A big change that was not widely consulted; not within the agency, not within the wider State Service, not within the community housing sector and certainly not with the public.

Further, when the Premier's office was asked about the policy intent and the master planning behind the concept of setting up a statutory authority to replace Housing Tasmania, we were told that it was just simply time to try something new. There is far too much significant structural change in this bill to simply wave it through. There are fundamental questions unanswered about the intent of this new approach: how housing will be delivered in the future and how it will be managed and by whom. There are many risks.

In anyone's book, this was a rushed job. If you were a glass half full type of the person, which I usually am, this would be a good thing. Surely, it means that the Government is rapidly getting on with the job but I am afraid that in this instance, I do not share that optimism. The idea was announced in March for implementation in October: a massive administrative upheaval, hot on the heels of the last major administrative upheaval and change for Housing Tasmania, the implementation of which was still not yet complete. That is, the move from the former DHHS to Communities Tasmania. A big change in itself. Now, everyone will be put

through yet another huge upheaval and change but this time with more uncertainty, more unanswered questions and some big doubts.

This does not just affect agency staff. It affects the funded sector organisations and it affects the public too. Workers have said things like: How do we get on with our jobs when there is a new idea thrust on us every six months? This feels like 'back to the future', this feels like there is no plan. They are just moving the chain. This will not let us do anything differently. This is them wanting to have something to talk about. It seems like the Government want to put it at arms-length so that they have a CEO to blame instead of taking the heat for their own decisions.

Those are some pretty damning words and show a real lack of consultation on this major change. As I said earlier, everyone recognises that major change is needed to fix the housing crisis. Nobody denies that major innovations are required but is this - what is contained in this bill - what is required to fix the problem? The public and the parliament have not been given sufficient comfort that pretty much anything in the proposed new bill to be in scope for this new authority could not be achieved right now by Housing Tasmania inside the State Service.

Worrying as the effect of the change on the State Service, there are even more fundamental questions when it comes to the delivery of housing, the effect on the sector, the effect on people needing housing and homelessness services and Tasmanians in need. As I said, the delivery of housing is a fundamental ethical and moral responsibility of government. While government does this very much in partnership with the sector these days - and for good reason - this does not ever remove the Government's fundamental role as service provider.

That was acknowledged in the Homes Act 1935, which was an old act which needed modernisation and review. In some ways, this bill revises and modernises that act to bring it into scope of some of the current work conducted by Housing Tasmania that is central to the delivery of housing and housing support services but which technically sits outside of the Homes Act.

If this was simply a bill to that, to modernise the Homes Act, to reflect the current work being conducted by Housing Tasmania and in the sector, to make sure it is the best legislation it can be, to ensure the Government continues to deliver housing services to people who need them, then there would be a lot less to be concerned about with the bill. Doing so, modernising the Homes Act, revising it, making sure that it reflects the current delivery of housing, the current need, does not require the entire disbandment of a public sector agency and the establishment of a new statutory authority sitting at arms-length from government with a commercial board.

This move raises fundamental questions and I will go through some of them now.

This bill takes all of the current powers of the Director of Housing and puts them under the control of a board which will be made up of community and private sector commercial interests. This is a fundamental change to the very fabric of the way that government services are delivered. In making this change, creating a commercial sector board to manage public and social housing, there is an expectation that they will be able to do that more quickly. We heard it in the minister's second reading speech - that they will be able to be more innovative, act in a way that is more agile and more responsive, act in a way that is more efficient and allow for the faster development of housing.

In fact, the new structure has the potential to put in place more roadblocks - not fewer - into getting houses out of the ground. It will mean more red tape. It will mean more fragmentation between this new statutory authority, the rest of the State Service and the community sector supporting the public. This will potentially lead to roadblocks in other ways too, in assisting clients who need housing support services and other community services outside of the housing area.

There are no new powers for Homes Tasmania than exist for Housing Tasmania right now, but there is a whole lot of risk that will be put on Tasmanians, on the sector and on the Tasmanian people if these changes go ahead.

One of the fundamental changes contained in this bill, which worries me greatly, is the new definition of 'housing provider'. Currently, housing providers are people, organisations, who provide and manage social and government housing. Therefore, the Government is a housing provider and so are the community sector partners who deliver and manage housing, organisations like Centacare Evolve, Community Housing Ltd, Mission Housing, the Salvos, just to name a few.

The bill expands the definition to clearly include private sector property developers, and building companies, in the definition of housing provider. This means that a company, historically constructing housing, will now be considered a housing provider. I have to ask myself, why? Presumably they will not be managing leases of the properties that they build. Perhaps they will. Maybe that is part of the intention, but I doubt it. There is no doubt that the construction sector is a vital partner. We need building companies to be able to construct homes but why do they need to be included in the definition of 'housing provider'? I will come to some more concerns about that later.

I also want to put on the record some of my concerns or questions about the structure of the board. We heard from the minister that Homes Tasmania will be a statutory authority governed by a board. The board will be made up of community as well as commercial private sector players. One of the amendments from their exposure draft of the bill to the tabled version is that there will be somebody - well, they will seek in their skills-based board to have someone who has experience in the community services housing sector. It is not clear whether that person will be a current person or somebody who has formerly worked in the sector, whether there will be a weighting towards people with sector experience.

Will the board have interstate people on it, or will it be limited to people who work and live in Tasmania? Can a director of the board be a state servant of any agency, including Homes Tasmania? Will it be a paid board? How much will those board directors be paid? In asking that question I will note that, pretty much exclusively, the community sector housing organisation boards are voluntary boards. Will it be a consensus-based board? If not, who has a casting vote? Will the CEO sit on the board? If so, will that person sit in an ex officio capacity, or will they have a vote?

Importantly, why was the advertising for the board conducted before the bill even reached parliament, before the final version of the bill was even tabled? From memory, I saw the ad in a local paper asking for local people to apply to be on the board.

The board will be able to delegate their powers. It is not clear whether they will be able to delegate them just as far as the CEO, or further.

Importantly, how will the board be able to continue, as the minister said, to be agile and responsive - specifically when it comes, for example, to purchasing property?

Right now, Housing Tasmania, as an arm of the state service, can purchase property. They need the Treasurer's permission to do that, but that is something that happens routinely. I used to work in that agency. I did not work in Housing Tasmania, but I did broadly work in the same part of the agency where Housing Tasmania sits. I remember that the agency was able to act very responsively to the market when land became available. I recall instances where land would be advertised on the commercial market, and Housing Tasmania was able to act very swiftly. Yes, they needed the Treasurer's approval, but they were able to act very swiftly to purchase that land for the purposes of building and developing and providing social housing.

However, under this new structure, I fear that instead of being able to be even as 'agile and responsive' - to use minister's words - as they are now, they will in fact be hampered from being even as agile as they are now, because they will be potentially not just waiting on the Treasurer's permission, but also waiting on the decision of a board, which will presumably meet monthly - or I think under the clause dealing with their meetings in the bill, it could potentially be bimonthly.

While I know the minister's intentions are good - and he is right that we should be coming to the table in a bipartisan, tripartisan, cross-party way to deal with the housing crisis - I do have a genuine fear that the structure of having a statutory authority put forward in this bill, as it is, will in fact put in place more red tape and more blockers in the ability for the new organisation to do the work that is currently done by Housing Tasmania, let alone the extra work that we know needs to be done.

Mr Deputy Speaker, some further concerns about the board. In both clauses 5 and 17, the bill deals with what is to happen when a board member or director has a material personal interest in something that the board is deciding. That is a pretty standard thing - that board members would need to disclose conflicts of interest when they sit on a board such as this, or any other board. However, it does not make clear that if a board member does have a material personal interest, they would have to absent themselves from a decision. It just says they would have to disclose that they have a material personal interest in something that is being decided at that meeting.

That is a real worry because it does not make it clear whether the person just has to declare it, or whether they then have to remove themselves from making a decision from which they stand to benefit. It does not talk about how such conflicts of interest will be handled. This is especially relevant because, as I said before, construction companies are now going to be considered housing providers.

It is not impossible to imagine a scenario where a private sector construction company owner sits on the board of Homes Tasmania, provides housing services, builds houses for Housing Tasmania, and is by definition then a housing provider. They could be sitting on that board making a decision about their company being engaged to build those houses. That would not be a conflict if those commercial providers were not defined as housing providers and sitting on the board, but to me, having sat on lots of community sector boards in the past, these are some parts of the bill that really jumped out as potentially having enormous conflicts of interest exposed.

Coming back to that fundamental question I asked earlier: why is it that a commercial building company needs to be defined as a housing provider? Yes, they build houses. There is no question we need them as part of the picture, but it is not clear - perhaps it is tax benefits, I do not know - it is not clear why they need to be defined as a housing provider, when they also have the potential to then be building houses on behalf of Homes Tasmania and sitting on the board. That sounds like a recipe for major conflicts of interest.

Ms O'Connor - And corruption, actually.

Ms HADDAD - Yes, indeed. That really jumped out at me as a particularly big concern, but there are concerns throughout the bill.

If I run out of time I will keep going in the Committee stage. Some of the other things that jumped out of the bill include whether all the current functions of Housing Tasmania will move across to Homes Tasmania, including the delivery and partnering with community service providers.

How will the move of the community support programs parts of Housing Tasmania - such as Youth and Housing, Safe Spaces, supported accommodation, shelter and emergency accommodation - be managed under the new structure? Will the board have roles to play in directing those service arms?

As I said before, there is an expectation that this organisation will be up and running by October, but I know that funding agreements for many community housing providers are set to expire early next year, so there is a bit of worry in some parts of the sector that there might not be time for a new statutory authority to be fully up and running in time to renegotiate those funding agreements.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I also wonder if the board will have a role in negotiating those funding agreements. Having commercial representatives sitting on that board would represent a fundamental departure from the way funding agreements are usually negotiated between government and sector.

Will the policy functions of Housing Tasmania all move across to Homes Tasmania, and if not, where will they sit? What protocols will be in place for information sharing and collaboration with whichever agency those policy functions get moved to? Part of this establishment of Homes Tasmania is the disbandment of the Department of Communities Tasmania where those policy functions currently sit and so there is a question about whether those policy functions will sit within Homes Tasmania - and again, whether the board has a role to play with setting government policy.

Mr Deputy Speaker, noting that the State Service review was all about breaking down silos and about wraparound services, the establishment of a new authority outside of government - or at arm's length, as a statutory authority is - could easily create new and unintended barriers to service delivery and provision that disadvantage clients of housing and support services.

I also wonder who will conduct the administrative functions required by the statutory authority. It may sound like a boring question, but it has major budgetary implications. Will functions such as HR and finance and IT be conducted by a sponsoring agency - for example

DPAC? If not, will those functions need to be re-established within Homes Tasmania? If so, will there be extra funding provided for this? When I asked about funding for Homes Tasmania during Estimates, I was told very clearly that there was not extra funding for Homes Tasmania, but the existing Housing Tasmania budget would be moving across.

There is a question as well about whether there is sufficient funding even to establish a new authority when it was confirmed at Estimates that there would not be any extra money. One of the questions that has come out at me from the bill is, those administrative functions of things like IT, finance, HR - there are others as well - payroll, whether they will have to be re-established in the new authority and if so, how will that be funded?

There are also fundamental questions about how staff at Homes Tasmania will be employed. The minister did give some comfort in his second reading that things would not change and there would not be redundancies and people would still be covered by the State Service Act. As we have seen with other attempts to start up arm's-length bodies, GBEs and statutory authorities, the State Service Act does not always apply. I want to know how long will the State Service Act conditions apply to people employed by Homes Tasmania and also, what award or awards are they likely to find themselves employed under? Will there be a new award established or will there be EBAs?

An important question is what effect the establishment of Homes Tasmania will have on federal/state government relations and the federal funding agreements that Tasmania relies heavily on to deliver the housing programs that they do? Who will be responsible for negotiating the next iterations of the federal/state agreements, such as the National Housing and Homelessness Agreement (NHHA)? Will those negotiations be conducted by Homes Tasmania? If so, is it their CEO or is it their board? Will the minister's office be responsible for conducting the negotiations with the federal government on those federal/state funding agreements?

We need to recognise that if it is the board that has the role of negotiating federal/state funding agreements, that will represent again, a very fundamental shift in operations. For a commercial board or a board with commercial representatives on it to be negotiating funding agreements between the state and federal government would represent a fundamental shift from how things have always been done.

People in the disability sector have also raised questions with me about what effect the establishment of the new authority will have on funding specialist disability accommodation, which members would know is federally funded and delivered under the NDIS? Will that funding from the federal government still flow to the state and who will be responsible for administering it?

Specifically, on behalf of people living with disability, will the properties continue to be managed under the same conditions? The bill and the ministerial statement do not have a focus on disability housing, which is worrying because, as people would know, about one-third of community and government housing tenants live with a disability and approximately the same proportion of people on the waiting list also live with disability. Currently, the director is responsible and is the owner of disability housing, so there are questions as to how this will be transferred? Will this ownership be shifted and transferred to the board? How and when? How would that arm of housing delivery continue to occur?

Access to stable, safe and affordable housing is a vital first step towards personal health and wellbeing. Having a home is not just about having a roof over our heads; it is essential to everything that we value in life. It is the foundation that provides a base on which to build or rebuild our lives. That is why it is so important that we get this fundamental change right.

As I have outlined in my concerns, and I will go into further detail when we reach the Committee stage on the bill, there is a lot of goodwill behind the intention that the minister brings to the table. However, I fear that that goodwill is outweighed by the risks of creating a statutory authority, particularly with a commercial-based board, or a board that will have commercial industry players on it, who will also be defined as housing providers, which carries with it great risk. Similarly, having a statutory authority at arms-length from government carries with it a great risk in terms of the delivery of community support services, community housing support services, but also community support services outside of the housing sector.

As I said before, the State Service review was a lot about breaking down silos but it feels like there is a real risk that the establishment of arms-length statutory authority has the potential to build into the system new silos, particularly when it comes to dealing with people who require community services from a range of different areas of the sector. In the bill, there are several areas where it is clear that Homes Tasmania is expected to have a role in not necessarily delivery of those other community services outside of the housing space, but to have a role in the efficient delivery and funding.

There are big questions as well about whether Homes Tasmania will be expected to become the deliverer or the funder of those services, or whether those parts of the bill that reference Homes Tasmania's role in the delivery of community support services broader than housing is simply about providing accommodation. If that is the case, then we can have that explanation from the minister at a later time.

There is a lot of risk contained in this bill. I know that the minister has the intention to deliver on the Government's big promises of 10 000 houses in 10 years. It has a great ring to it. I for one, really hope that the Government is able to deliver on that promise and more, because we know how badly Tasmanians are suffering in their thousands. Every one of our offices would be hearing from people every day who are sleeping rough, who are on a social housing waiting list in increasing numbers, or who have been priced out of private rental and ineligible for housing support because they are working people.

As I said before, we are in the grips of a serious housing crisis but the conditions that are contained in this bill, the intentions that are contained in this bill, will not increase the powers of this new statutory authority, over and above what it is currently able to be delivered, and is being delivered within the bureaucracy. I agree that we need to find ways to act like the minister said, in a more innovative way, in a more agile way, more responsively, and to allow for faster development but setting up a new statutory authority, particularly with those commercial interest that I talked about will not automatically allow for that to happen.

In fact, it could have a counter effect of putting in place more roadblocks and more red tape, and more delays, particularly when it comes to dealing with other State Service agencies because Homes Tasmania will not be part of a State Service agency any more. They would be a statutory authority at arms-length.

It might do some things that the Government will feel good about, such as moving the housing costs off the Government balance sheet and out of the budget papers, but that does not remove the fact that the Government remains fundamentally responsible for the delivery of housing services for people who need it. It does not remove the fact that they need to find ways that actually fix the housing crisis that they have had a great hand in creating, including the planning system.

I fear the creation of a statutory authority will, in fact, put more distance between the delivery of housing and the other parts of the State Service that are fundamental to that, including the planning system. I conclude my comments there and look forward to asking the Minister some more detailed questions in the committee stage.

[12.39 p.m.]

Ms O'CONNOR (Clark - Leader of the Greens) - Mr Deputy Speaker, we are debating the most fundamental shift to housing policy in this state since the Homes Act was first enacted in 1935. I agree with much of what my colleague, Ms Haddad, has said about this legislation. I also acknowledge it does come from a fundamentally good place.

I do not like this legislation, Mr Deputy Speaker. As a former housing minister, I understand that the Homes Act was clunky, very outdated and quaint. As the minister said yesterday, there are only so many times you can amend an old act before it effectively becomes unworkable. However, the creation of a statutory authority for the delivery of social and affordable and potentially other housing is a neoliberal response to a problem created by neoliberal policy.

Some members who were here in the first term of the Hodgman Liberal government will recall that in the first two Hodgman government state budgets, there was zero attention paid to the need to invest more in the delivery of social and affordable housing. Catch-up was played in the third budget delivered under the Hodgman Liberal government and it has been catch-up ever since.

The original draft of this legislation - and this is a truth that is being highlighted by organisations like Shelter Tasmania and the Tenants' Union of Tasmania - shifted the focus, so where the Homes Act's focus was very clear about the expectation on the Director of Housing to deliver social housing, the original draft of this legislation, which was the one we had the briefing on, in the purposes of the act prioritised development and a broad range of housing policy delivery over the need for social and affordable housing, over the clear social imperative on government to drive the delivery of homes for people on low to moderate incomes and particularly to people in acute housing need.

We very much appreciated the briefing we were given. We made a submission to the draft legislation and made a number of suggestions, some of which have been adopted, so we are pleased to see that in the purposes of the act, the highest order purpose now is to increase the opportunities for eligible persons and persons on low to moderate incomes to satisfy the basic human need for housing by living in safe, secure, appropriate and affordable housing. That was originally a little lower down the list of purposes of the act, but it is still slightly watery language, because it talks about increasing the opportunities for eligible people, and eligible people are people in need of housing or housing support. We have an amendment that simplifies that to state that the purposes of this act include to enable eligible persons and persons on low to moderate incomes to satisfy the basic human need for housing.

It is more than a basic human need: it is a fundamental human right. As it is right now in Tasmania - we do not need to labour the point any more than is necessary - that fundamental right is being denied to an increasing number of Tasmanians. Tasmanians are being priced out of their own paradise, whether it is in trying to purchase a home or to have an affordable rental. Clearly there needs to be a strategic, coordinated, well-resourced response in order to reverse that trend where our own people cannot find a place to call home and too many now are looking to the mainland for affordable housing.

This bill is an attempted response, through a neoliberal, very conservative lens, to sustained under-investment and policy failure in the housing space. We are prepared to give it a chance but I do not like this legislation. I am very worried about unpicking Housing Tasmania, which has given such great service to the people of Tasmania for so long.

I wonder what question time will be like when we want to understand why government is failing to meet targets it set, not targets that were set by what will become the authority, but when government is to be challenged on delivery failures, policy failures.

Will we have the same situation we have when we want to ask the Minister for Resources, for example, about Forestry Tasmania's climate crimes against nature? We are told to wait until Forestry Tasmania arrives at the government business enterprise scrutiny hearings which of course are on a two-year rotation, so every two years we are given an opportunity to ask Forestry Tasmania questions about their administration or their mismanagement of native forests in Tasmania. A similar situation happens with TasWater, another entity that sits somewhat outside government. It certainly does not sit in a government agency, so if we have inquiries from constituents about water infrastructure, water management or water quality, it is very hard to find the minister who is actually responsible.

Ultimately it is probably the Minister for Local Government, but we need some reassurance from the minister here in his second reading response that should a member of the Opposition or crossbench stand up and ask the sorts of questions we have asked before about housing supply, people being squeezed out of their homes, people not being able to find a home, that the minister will answer that question and not point to an unelected board. The transparency and accountability issues here are real, and the minister could deal with that by making an unequivocal statement about his willingness to accept responsibility for housing delivery and housing policy. It is the minister - and I have a copy of the draft statement of expectations here - who articulates government housing policy to this board through the statement of ministerial expectations. We have a draft statement and I understand the minister consulted on that statement.

Given that housing is critical social infrastructure and is an area of public policy that touches on the lives of every Tasmanian person, there has to be a clear line of accountability in this place on failure to deliver, or where improvements can be made. It is always tempting for governments to create an entity that shunts the problem outside government agencies. I am not saying that is the intention here, but it can make life easier for ministers and governments in an area of public policy that is so critical to Tasmania's sense of community and society and to our economy.

There are many people in this House we inhabit who are passionate about housing because we are in close contact with our constituents and we understand that it is the bedrock

of life. If you do not have a secure affordable home, so many of life's opportunities are just denied to you.

As a collective, we really do need to get this right. There has been talk of tripartisanship in here this morning and, in this area of public policy, we should be able to reach that to the greatest extent possible because we all want this minister to be a good minister. We all know he has the energy and the intellect to be a good minister for housing, but he needs to take responsibility for what happens in that portfolio.

Perhaps the minister could address the concern we have about accountability and transparency. As Ms Haddad articulated very well, the shift here is from a Homes Act that was about the broad social responsibility that a government has to a corporatised entity. That is what this is. It is an authority with a board. It will operate along business lines as a corporation which is a massive shift in the way we think of housing policy in this state.

We should all remind ourselves that before funding for public housing was so squeezed, and so directed at only those most in need, our state housing department agency built things. It built communities. Sure, it made some mistakes. It placed people too far, in certain examples, from services, employment, education or transport, but it was successive governments investing in public housing that created communities.

It is not just about building houses. It cannot just be about building houses. It has to be about creating liveable communities. I know the minister has taken that on board, and it was certainly in our submission to the Government.

We have gone from a situation where public housing was quite broadly available to people on low to moderate to reasonable incomes to very targeted housing now.

We do not want to end up having enacted legislation that establishes an authority that in any way weakens that social responsibility and the social compact between government and people to deliver secure, affordable social housing. It is very, very important that we do not move away from that, and corporatise housing as just another product, because it is not just another product. It is the foundation for life and wellbeing. It is an absolutely critical social infrastructure.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I still drive past Queens Walk, and feel glad I had an opportunity, as minister, to not do what my predecessor in the job suggested, and that is flatten it, because this is a complex of buildings that was made in the time when governments built stuff. It is built like the proverbial brick outhouse. It is excellent construction, good materials and, with some design tweaks through the marvellous people I was working with in Housing Tasmania, we have created a community. We have strengthened a community, and now Queens Walk is a place where people want to live. I am a semi-regular visitor there because I have two friends there who are tenants, and the feel of it is very different from how it was when it was Stainforth Court. That is because government recognised it had a social responsibility to create liveable communities - places where people want to live, where they can afford to live, and where they feel secure. We do not want to move away from that.

When the minister talked in his second reading speech about modern and contemporary partnership models, I got a little shudder inside, because what we will see is developers lining up to come to the authority and make a case for taxpayer support to construct some housing.

Clause 7 is a real concern: a housing provider could be a developer. This is a question that we raised in the briefing, and we were reassured that was not the intent, but it is potentially the effect - in fact, it is the effect - that a developer could be termed a housing provider.

Ms Haddad - They are. They are defined as a housing provider.

Ms O'CONNOR - Yes, or could have themselves recognised as a housing provider. I think in the Shelter submission - I do not have it at my fingertips right now - their suggestion was that the terminology be 'social housing provider'. That has not happened so we are about to capture a whole range of corporate interests within the housing space. Perhaps the minister could address that question. Two members have now raised a concern with clause 7.

The other concern - which we have tried to deal with in an amendment - is the fact that, at the moment there is no reference to the Public Works Committee oversight of expenditure made through the authority. We are talking here about expenditure of public money. We have sought to fix that up for the minister, and hope he will take it on board. I believe it would be wise. It would give the minister and this House that extra level of reassurance.

One of our amendments ensures that sections 15 and 16 of the Public Works Committee Act - which relate to the functions and powers of the Homes Tasmania board and the power to enter into partnerships and joint ventures, et cetera - apply to building or construction works undertaken by a partnership, trust or joint venture entered into under this section, as if the building or construction works are a public work for the purposes of the Public Works Committee Act.

You need to have oversight mechanisms in place when you are dealing with vast sums of money - and we are. The Government's own intended policy is to spend more than \$1 billion delivering 10 000 new homes within the next 10 years. These are vast sums of money. If you are going to have a board of an authority that is external to government negotiating with private companies on contracts that will involve the outlay of public funds, the Public Works Committee needs to have some oversight. You cannot let public-private partnerships in the social and affordable housing space just sail through on trust. That amendment certainly matters very much to us - and we obviously have a number of amendments.

One of the issues we raised in the briefing was the need for there to be reference to liveability, and creating liveable communities. We are an island community and it is one of the things that makes living here so great and such a privilege in a crazy world. We are connected, and we need to make sure that when we embark on providing homes for people, we are creating communities.

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

HOMES TASMANIA BILL 2022 (No. 35)

Second Reading

Resumed from above.

Ms O'CONNOR (Clark - Leader of the Greens) - Mr Speaker, one of the questions that comes to mind when you examine this bill because of the provisions there that enable the new

authority to enter into partnerships, joint ventures, et cetera, is how would that be any different from what happens currently? The Housing Innovation Unit, certainly when I was minister, was able to commission works, negotiate contracts and enter into partnerships, and it did, so there is already the capacity there within the HIU.

I do not know what has happened to the HIU exactly, except the capacity to do these very things and the major works that were undertaken by the agency were coordinated through the Housing Innovation Unit, which was able to deliver the two Common Ground facilities here in nipaluna/Hobart, a new facility in Devonport, the Thyne House upgrade in Launceston, Trinity Hill youth accommodation here in Hobart and the refurbishment of Queen's Walk, so the capacity is already there. Perhaps the minister could address whether these provisions in this legislation mirror what is already possible to achieve through the Housing Innovation Unit.

As I flagged earlier, we have a range of amendments that we hope the minister will be somewhat receptive to, remembering, however, that these amendments have been drawn from submissions including ours, but also the Shelter Tasmania and Tenants' Union of Tasmania submissions. They are an attempt to more strongly weight this bill towards social housing needs and supports.

We would like to see it as a very clear objective of the authority, Homes Tasmania, to decrease the proportion of Tasmanians experiencing housing stress or homelessness, so that effectively becomes a key performance indicator for the authority, to achieve housing equity for Tasmanian Aboriginal people, who certainly do not have housing equity now, and to improve the safety and wellbeing of women and children escaping family violence. These are all objectives that Housing Tasmania already has a focus on and there is no reason not to make sure that the focus is prescribed in the act we are dealing with right now.

We want to support and have drafted the amendment put forward by Shelter Tasmania which amends the meaning of 'eligible person'. There is in this legislation for the first time - it is not in the Homes Act as I understand it - a capacity for Homes Tasmania to demand from a person - seeking housing support, presumably - evidence as to whether a person is an eligible person, or evidence of the kind specified in the notice as to whether the person is an eligible person. Then, if the person, having been given a notice under the previous subsection, fails within the period specified to provide to Homes Tasmania the evidence of the persons required by the notice to provide, Homes Tasmania may, in its discretion, assume that the person is not an eligible person.

As far as I understand it, these are additions to the powers and functions of the new iteration of Housing Tasmania as a statutory authority. We are proposing that this be changed to:

- "(5) Homes Tasmania may, by notice to a person, require a person to provide to Homes Tasmania, within a reasonable period specified in the notice, evidence as to whether the person is an eligible person.
- (6) If a person, after having been given a notice under subsection (5), fails, within the period specified in the notice to provide to Homes Tasmania evidence that the person is an eligible person, Homes Tasmania may, in its discretion, assume that the person is not an eligible person, unless

there is evidence before Homes Tasmania that there were reasonable grounds for the failure."

I do not have at my fingertips the argument for that exact wording, but when we go into Committee I will do that.

We like to understand the connection between the ministerial statement of expectations in terms of how Homes Tasmania operates. What legal weight does a ministerial statement of expectations have, given that it will change over a period of time and it will also change to reflect the changing policies of the government of the day? Perhaps the minister could talk us through the ministerial statement of expectations and what weight that has for Homes Tasmania as well as for the board.

We would also like to see the proposed board membership increased. At the moment, I think it is a maximum of six and a minimum of four. We think, for the portfolio responsibilities we are asking this board to administer from a business point of view the larger your skills-based board the better.

We would also note that the minister has made reference to a reference group of people with lived experience. The legislation's wording is quite loose around that because it says that the board 'may' have reference to a specialist group. I wonder if the minister agrees that it is better that the structure is embedded in the legislation and is not just an optional extra for the board, when they might have time to consult with a group of stakeholders in the housing and homelessness space. Some of them will be organisations with long lived experience, like Shelter Tasmania or the Tenants' Union of Tasmania. Presumably, there will be other people on that stakeholder reference group who have lived experience of homelessness and broader life experience of what it is like to live at the margins of society.

Could the minister address that issue? Perhaps just a really simple statement, minister, a clear statement about why this structure will make the difference that we need. It is still an unresolved question from the Greens' point of view. We want it to make a difference, do not get us wrong here, but we want to understand why you think it will make a difference given that Housing Tasmania already has many of these powers and functions to make sure housing is delivered, and that specialist homelessness services and housing support services are delivered. What is it about having a statutory authority overseen by a board that will make the difference to the delivery of more social and affordable housing in Tasmania?

[2.40 p.m.]

Mr O'BYRNE (Franklin) - Mr Speaker, I will echo many of the sentiments already put on the record by the shadow spokesperson for housing from Labor, Ms Haddad, the member for Clark, and also the Leader of the Greens, Ms O'Connor, the member for Clark.

We need to be really clear what we are doing and what this bill does. This is the biggest change to public housing in Tasmania since World War II, since the establishment of the Homes Act. This is not an insignificant thing we are doing. I make the point that this was an announcement by a previous premier and a previous minister in February with little or no detail about what a new housing authority was or what it would do. When the new minister came to the portfolio he was very clear about his - and, I think, genuine - intent to deal with what is one of the key issues facing Tasmania. However, here we are, we had an exposure bill or a draft bill put on the table during Estimates only a matter of weeks ago and this bill hit the table on

Tuesday. Here we are on Thursday debating a bill which is and will mean the most significant restructure of the role of government - the public sector - in providing housing and housing-related services to Tasmanians, particularly those Tasmanians who need it most.

I put on the record my concern with the time frames, which are not of this minister's doing but of this Government's doing, that by 1 October they needed this in place. We are being asked to respond to a wicked, significant social problem but a major restructure which will be very difficult to unscramble by any future government if it does not work.

Ms O'Connor - Not impossible.

Mr O'BYRNE - Not impossible but the amount of resources and time it will take if this is a significant - and I believe it is - error in public policy. It will take time, resources and money to reverse and to rebuild. To me, the argument has not been made in my mind for the change in this policy area in the way that it has been proposed.

I thank the minister for the time he allowed. I have had two briefings from his staff and the departmental staff on this. Many questions could not be answered because, effectively, the questions that I have are more philosophical. It goes to the heart and the role of government in what is an essential community service and that is the provision of housing for those people who need it most. This is, as I have said and I will repeat, a massive change.

Again, the minister, and I take him at face value and I know he is genuine in wanting to respond to the challenge of the housing crisis in Tasmania but I think, in some respects, he has been given a narrow lane to run in. He has not been given an opportunity to put his own stamp on this. He has inherited a decision from a previous minister and a previous premier. Also, I think this Government has a view that the public sector cannot do these things so we hive it off to other people and hive off the direct responsibility. That is a flawed philosophy. There are times when you have a hybrid model - you have a model where you engage in the not-for-profit and the corporate community - but the fundamental services to our community should not be.

Effectively, why are we here? I understand why the Government feels like they need to do something. They just clutched at straws on this. I understand why they think they need to do something because this is a major problem facing Tasmania. We have an absolute housing crisis and it has been a crisis for a number of years; I have said it a number of times. In 2018, straight after the election, the then premier, Will Hodgman, convened a crisis summit saying we need an immediate response to deal with the housing situation in Tasmania, and it has gotten worse. It has not gotten better so I can understand why the Government feels they need to do something radical. However, I think they are pulling the wrong rein. This is not the response to resolve such a wicked problem.

Why are we here then? In the 12 months to February of this year, Hobart property prices have increased by 28 per cent, and regional Tasmanian prices by 30 per cent. A house in Hobart costs more than in Adelaide, Brisbane, Darwin and Perth, with the median price now being more than \$700 000. That is as of earlier this year. We know the price growth has slowed recently but further substantial increases are more than likely. House prices are now nearly 10 times average incomes. It is putting home ownership out of the reach of many younger Tasmanians. Whilst there have been some increases in interest rates, the abnormally

low interest rates over a period of time masks the longer-term financial stress that will likely be experienced by already established homeowners servicing larger mortgages.

The Tasmanian rental market is now the most expensive in Australia. Earlier this year, Hobart rents averaged \$521 per week, which is a 13 per cent increase in the last year. Launceston had an even bigger increase of 14 per cent. Rental vacancy rates are the worst in Australia, with Hobart at the time at 0.9 per cent; Launceston at 0.8 per cent and the north-west at 1.3 per cent. Tasmanians in the private rental market are typically spending close to 40 per cent of their income on housing. That is what the market looks like.

The role of government in providing housing to those in need - the average waiting time for a priority listed social housing applicant is now approximately 70 weeks and the waiting list is now nearly 5000 people. That is a 75 per cent increase since this Government took office in 2014.

That is sobering data. Whilst they are statistics, we know that behind each individual, behind each person who has a public housing application, there are families, immediate and connected, and friendships that are under enormous stress. Every one of us across the state in our electorate offices have been dealing with people who are in the direst of circumstances, in many cases through no fault of their own. At the end of the day, it is not about fault.

If you are in a circumstance where you need a roof over your head to be able to get your life back together, in this country it has always been the role of the state to say, 'We will help you back on your feet. We will provide a form of housing that will allow you to live a life with dignity, that will allow you to make decisions to get your life back on track. We will not, like other countries do, accept the fact that you will need to sleep in the streets, in parks, in bushland, in cars, couch surfing and in very precarious situations'.

Over the last eight years, the Government has clearly struggled with a response. They have effectively relied on the market to provide that response which, as the Leader of the Greens, Ms O'Connor, referred to, is a neoliberal approach. It is a failed approach. The market has clearly failed and providing more market-based measures, as the Government has done, will not resolve it, in and of itself.

Increasing the supply of private housing stock can play a role in moderating the price and rent increases but there are limits to this approach, given the structure and dynamics of the private housing market. Not all demand from housing comes from would-be owner-occupiers, with a significant segment demand driven by investors seeking capital gains or rental yields. Amongst the \$6.2 billion in Tasmanian home sales over the last 12 months, there were around 1800 first home purchasers but there were more than 2300 investment purchasers, and it is often a competition between the interests of these distinct buyer groups.

The history of the housing market cycle suggests that the market will retain the price level increases achieved in each boom as a step increase, even in the face of increases in private housing supply.

The recent and now expanded initiatives by this Government and others - cash incentives for first home buyers, stamp duty concessions, low income rental subsidies, land tax reductions, and shared equity and private home purchases - are and will continue to fail to moderate rising prices for first home buyers and low-income renters, who are the people to whom we are given

the responsibility of providing support. While they are beneficial for those who received and will receive them, these continuing initiatives will paradoxically continue to add to rising prices in the private market. For a number of years, the Government has relied on the market to provide a response, but the market has clearly failed.

In some respects, the motivation for a decision like this is right. There needs to be radical change. There needs to be a change in approach on the role of government.

In my view, handing off or creating an authority at arm's length from government is completely the wrong answer, because you are actually losing direct control. You are pushing it away to, yes, a statutory authority. I get all of that, and I am not doubting the intentions of those people who will put their hand up to be on that authority. The minister's office has quite kindly circulated to me today the checks and balances for the Home Tasmania board. I am not going to doubt the intent of the people who will be involved in this endeavour, but structurally they have misdiagnosed the problem, and this is the wrong answer. It is the wrong answer for the wicked problem.

I have said this before on the record, that if it was a wicked problem and I was in government, and if good policy and better outcomes for the state is our legacy, I would want greater control over the solution. I would want to get deeper into the challenge, and be able to control and move all the pieces on the chessboard to try to resolve this wicked problem.

The creation of the statutory authority essentially pushes it away from government. We are going through this exercise, and in the briefing, and in discussions, in all of my readings, but I cannot see one new power, one new initiative, or element of work, or authority, or responsibility that is not already available to the Government under the existing system.

The Leader of the Greens raised a good point around the problem with the current bill. It is a 1930s bill that has been added on to like a Frankenstein's monster: right, you have a problem here; well, we need a quick amendment bill to see if we can fix this. As it sort of works forward, it has built this kind of zombie approach.

The answer is not just to walk away from it completely and hand it off to a body outside of government - and it is outside of government. It is not a full privatisation, I understand that, but the property value - \$3.5 billion worth of assets are being moved off the government books onto a statutory authority. The answer is not to give it away. The answer is to come up with a new bill, and actually say, this is how we respond. This is our responsibility as legislators, as a government.

Having a statutory authority, good people will come on, and they will do their best. I have no doubt of their intent. They will try to do their best with this. The only argument that has been given to me is that we need some more corporate expertise on that board. I am paraphrasing; that is not a direct quote. Surely that can be done under the existing powers the minister has, and the Government has, if that means we have a new contemporary act to respond and create those structures, but it still maintains control of not only the assets, but all of the solutions.

One of the questions we have is when government makes decisions around housing. It is not just 'we have identified some land, let's build a house'. You are actually building communities. There is a whole range of things at play when you do that: schools, commercial

services, retail services, public transport, building infrastructure, roads and all of the things associated across the whole of government that need to be brought to bear to make that kind of development work.

We have all seen the best of intentions - those broad-acre housing commissions, those large suburbs that we all spent a lot of time in. We know that was a flawed model. We know that was not ideal - but the intent in trying to build communities was there and the government had a responsibility to make sure all of the government services were all lining up to ensure they could be the best they could be.

In 2022, we now know broad-acre housing is a flawed model with difficulties but the powers still remain, and the intent still remains, to try to build communities and provide a range and mix and housing for people, so they can build a better and a more productive life.

We have an obligation as leaders in our community to ensure that every person in the community, every Tasmanian and every person who wants to live in our state has an opportunity to live a life with dignity - and housing is fundamental to that.

My concern is that there is nothing in this bill that gives the housing authority more power than what is not currently available to the government in dealing with housing policy and the challenge that is before us. That is a major concern to me, and unless the minister in his response will identify something for me, then I am yet to be convinced. I fundamentally believe it is the role of government to provide housing - and having as much control as you possibly can on that is important.

Ministerial accountability is important. I understand that this will not be subject to GBEs, that it will be subject to questions in Estimates, like other statutory authorities but we have seen, for example - and it was a good point raised by the Leader of the Greens - if there is an issue that we find out about in housing, we ask the minister in question time, what will be the response? Well, we have seen a response with the Macquarie Point issue. It has taken a whole range of members over a number of years raising concerns and issues and questions - and still we get the response from the minister, 'Well, it is a matter for the board. I will seek a briefing from the board' - it is essentially at arm's length from the government.

I am hoping that will not be the response, but it is effectively the structure you have set up, minister. I know - I am sure as day follows night - that there will be another housing minister, and it will not be you. We do not know when that will be. The record might predict that it be sooner rather than later, but who knows. There will be a new minister, and while you may give a personal guarantee, that is not something you can bind a future minister or a future government to, because this is not a change just for your term as a minister. This is a change that will be embedded and cemented into public policy for years and years to come.

That, to me, in terms of the issues around accountability, will be crucial. Despite your best intentions, minister, I am not convinced that will be resolved. There will still be great concerns around transparency of the activities within Housing and the actions of the board. I know there is an annual report, and you are dealing with general conflicts of interest and use of information, financial management, and statement of expectations. All of those things are very important, but the plans are what they are.

I have been a minister, and I know some of the tensions that build between the statement of expectations from the minister and the GBE or the state-owned corporation that has the responsibility of implementing them. The tensions that build there from time to time further illustrates my point that, at a time when you want government in control to try to find solutions, you are pushing it away, and you are losing an element of control over the solution because you are pushing it out to other people. That is of great concern to the Tasmanian people.

I know there is a number of amendments - and I am sure the minister will consider those in his inimitable way - but I believe that, even with amendment, this bill is not something that I can personally support. I believe there is a genuine concern from the community about that and I have read a number of the submissions. Whilst there is a whole range of not-for-profit organisations that have provided comment and suggestions, and I know you have taken a number of those on board, they do not get into the ideology. Many of them do not form a judgment on whether this is a good decision or not. They would provide a comment on the board, but I know there is deep concern about this massive change in public policy.

People are desperate because there is such a crisis, because they are dealing with so many people in tough circumstances. They are just hopeful that something might change, that this bill might be the thing that does it. I do not have that kind of hope in this bill. It is fundamentally the wrong decision for government to make: to push it away. Given the sheer scale and impact of the housing crisis, I would think you would want to play a bigger role in the management of social housing. I know previous Labor governments that have worked with not-for-profit organisations and there have been transfers of property and Tasmania is the state that has done that the most. Whilst there are many good things about that, there is still a massive lack of transparency regarding what actually happens.

I have been trying for close to nine months to try to get some figures on what is actually spent on maintenance on public and some of those houses that -

Ms O'Connor - That should not be hard. That information would be readily available in the department.

Mr O'BYRNE - Well, you would think so. I have a Right to Information request come back where two of the providers have asked not to share their liability in terms of their ongoing liability for their maintenance. As a member of parliament who represents people who have broken windows, broken toilets, tiles, flooring, roof issues, a whole lot of maintenance; as local members we all receive complaints about the state of some of their houses. Trying to get the most basic information, it is so difficult to be able to advocate.

Again, this is not just this government. Historically, the maintenance issue is a growing issue over a long period of time, I acknowledge that, and I am not Pollyanna. I am not going to assume that no previous government has found this to be a challenge, but you would think as a local member of parliament, someone with a level of privilege in this place could get some of the most basic pieces of information to try to get their head around what is spent, what is the size of the problem in maintenance is but I cannot. I cannot see that getting better under a statutory authority. In fact, given my experience in dealing with a whole range of organisations that are arm's-length from government, it just makes it harder.

The track and the form of state-owned corporations, of government business enterprise and statutory authorities in terms of provision of some crucial and somewhat controversial

information is nigh on impossible. I have little faith that a statutory authority will improve that circumstance. It will just make it harder, and therein, increases the level of cynicism of the community and me in having Homes Tasmania as a statutory authority separate from government.

I predict there will be moments where you will be frustrated, minister, in terms of the actions of the authority. I have read the statement of expectations and there is a whole lot of good stuff in there. However, words can be interpreted in different ways and intent can be interpreted in different ways and, in my mind, that creates a level of concern and doubt as to the importance of having greater control over this policy area.

The remuneration for the board: no-one begrudges people being paid remuneration for being on a statutory authority. In the scheme of things, in terms of housing, it is a small amount of money, but again, it is money that could have been spent on the provision of services. In the eye of the storm of a crisis, having departmental people go through drafting, go through policy changes, actually focusing their work away from dealing with the immediate challenge will mean that the solutions to the housing crisis in Tasmania are being pushed down because people are very busy doing stuff for the minister and the government of the day to create a new authority. At the end of the day they are not focusing and they are not directing outward, out from government. They are looking inward. I am not saying it all, but there are fantastic people in housing, there are good people with good hearts who care deeply about the issue but that does not mean that they are perfect. That does not mean that they do not need more resources, or better direction, or better leadership from the government of the day. That is where I would be starting.

No doubt there will be a number of issues to be dealt with as we go through Committee. I know that there are a number of motions that will be moved in an attempt to put lipstick on this. I would support any improvement in this and it will be welcome, but fundamentally I am philosophically opposed to the creation of Homes Tasmania. You have misdiagnosed the problem. You are pulling the wrong rein.

I understand why you are doing it. You are trying something radical in terms of the role of government in the provision of housing. It is the wrong thing to do. I do not support it and I urge other members to join with those people who have already indicated their opposition to this to follow suit. There is nothing like having a minister in full control of a portfolio with the intent and, as the Leader of the Greens, Ms O'Connor said, with the energy to try to find - I genuinely do not agree with you on a whole range of things in some of your other portfolios, you would expect that, but I absolutely do not doubt your intent in wanting to provide people with safe and secure homes, minister.

I do not doubt your intent, but I respectfully disagree with the Government's approach on this. I do not think it will work. I believe we are kicking the can down the road and we need to go to ground zero on the current bill and start again.

[3.08 p.m.]

Ms JOHNSTON (Clark) - Mr Speaker, I do not intend to go over the ins and outs of the housing crisis we are facing. Others in this place have done more than enough in this particular debate. However, I want to reiterate how important it is that whatever action we take to address the crisis is the right action. If we do not there will be catastrophic consequences for people who are already doing it incredibly tough.

I begin by acknowledging that everyone in this place, including the Government, is trying their best to make things better. I genuinely believe that is the intent of the bill that has been put forward by this minister. I recognise, as others have done, that the Homes Act 1935 has become clunky and is in need of reform. It is not necessarily serving us well in its current form and we want to be agile and responsive to the challenges that face us when we are trying to put a roof over the heads of Tasmanians in an increasingly crazy property and building market. I thank the officers who gave me a briefing, both on the exposure bill and on the one tabled. Much work has gone into its preparation in a very short amount of time and I recognise that.

I want a better way of delivering good housing outcomes for Tasmanians and I went into thinking about this bill with a really open mind. In fact, I probably thought that surely, given our circumstances at the moment, that anything put up could only be an improvement on what we have now. However, I did not get very far through the bill before alarm bells started ringing, and those alarm bells really started when I got to the clauses about the structure of this new entity that we would be creating. Maybe I am getting cynical in my old age, but when I see entities being created at arm's-length from government, not to monitor government to hold it to account, but instead to be responsible for delivering core government services, in this case a basic human right, I get really nervous. For me, when it comes to the delivery of government services, I want the buck to stop with the minister. I want the minister to be accountable for decision-making and delivery of services. I want a direct line of sight in this Chamber. It worries me when entities are established that are one step removed from ministerial accountability.

In my first briefing I asked questions about the nature of the entity being established. It was described to me as a public non-financial corporation. I believe it was Mr Limkin who, in order to assist me in my understanding, likened it to similar public non-financial corporations such as the Macquarie Point Development Corporation and Metro. I acknowledge that Mr O'Byrne has probably stolen my thunder here but it should come as no surprise to members of the House that likening this new entity to the Macquarie Point Development Corporation gave me no comfort whatsoever. In fact, it did the complete opposite.

Over a few months now I have been trying to get answers and hold the minister and the Premier to account over the serious governance performance failings of the Macquarie Point Development Corporation (MPDC), only to be told that it is the board's responsibility and the minister would have to seek guidance from the board. That did not wash with me and it does not wash with the public. How can the expenditure of tens of millions of dollars of public money and the use and development of public land be a matter for the board? As it turns out, there is every reason to be concerned about the operations of MPDC but it is taking a long time to uncover the wrongdoings. I suspect it will take even longer to fix, once again because the relationship between the minister and the board is at arm's length.

The establishment of entities such as Macquarie Point Development Corporation and Homes Tasmania provides the perfect vehicle for the abrogation of ministerial and government responsibilities and makes it much harder for those in this place to scrutinise. I am not suggesting for a moment that this is the intention of minister Barnett. I will acknowledge his assurances during his second reading speech that the channels of communication and our ability to question him will remain the same as it currently is. I believe that is the true intent. However, quite frankly, we have had a revolving door of ministers in this portfolio and whilst minister Barnett is committed to conducting himself in this way, there is definitely no compulsion on

the next minister to do so, or the one after that. We are creating, through this bill, an entity that will be around for many years and many ministers to come.

Whilst this iteration of the draft ministerial statement might have considerable rigour around it - and I note that the minister circulated the draft ministerial statement of expectations - there is no compulsion on future iterations being so explicit about accountability. Again, experience tells me when it came to the previous versions of Macquarie Point Development Corporations' statement of expectations, they were barely worth the paper they were written on. I acknowledge that there is a new one for 2022 and there is much more rigour in that, so that is good to see, but it has taken some time to get there.

I also want to acknowledge and wholeheartedly agree with the governance and structural concerns with the board that Ms Haddad raised earlier. These are serious and real and we have to remember we are tasking the board with the responsibility of housing Tasmanians. It is not a trifling matter. I would also like to hear from the minister about how this entity would be available to be scrutinised by committees of this parliament. I want it to be on the record in the minister's own words. Is it the minister's expectation that Homes Tasmania would be available for scrutiny through the Estimates committee process or would it be, like similar entities Metro and Macquarie Point Development Corporation, which have been likened to this entity, only through GBEs on a two-yearly rotation? If I could get some clarification I would appreciate that.

In conclusion, in considering whether to lend my support to this bill, I ask myself whether the loss of accountability could be outweighed by the benefits. I cannot honestly see that it will be. If the reason we are doing this is for reasons of commerciality, I worry that we are putting the ease of business transactions ahead of providing accountability for a basic human need. That does not sit at all comfortably with me.

I will continue to listen to the debate. In particular I am interested to hear more detailed consideration of the clauses about the establishment of the structure of the board. I have to say it is going to take something pretty special to make me change my mind that this bill is the right way we should be going about securing homes for Tasmania.

I note the amendments proposed by the Greens and I will be supporting those because any improvement of this bill is worthwhile. I do have very serious concerns about the structure, the entity we will be creating, and whether this is the right vehicle to put roofs over the heads of more and more Tasmanians.

[3.15 p.m.]

Mrs ALEXANDER (Bass) - Mr Speaker, I have thoroughly enjoyed listening to the various arguments and discussions that have occurred around this very important bill. It has been very stimulating to hear the many viewpoints and the way in which the debate has occurred is encouraging. Wearing my hat from previous roles as a service provider, some of the things I have heard are very interesting and very good points have been made.

When I reflect on my previous years outside this Chamber I have been extremely frustrated in my role working in a not-for-profit sector many times at the lack of direct support or customer service provision. At times you felt that you were in one of those episodes of *Little Britain* where the computer says 'No'. I can also understand for the people out there, the public that we all represent and the public servants who are providing a service to the public, how

frustrating it is because it is so convoluted and complicated. I have worked very closely with the member for Bass, Ms Finlay, on a few homelessness cases and many times they have said, 'I don't know where I am in the queue', because the queue is not one queue, the queue is several queues. It is so complicated.

Anglicare and Colony 47 provide the entry points and the referral points but they do not necessarily have the ability to provide feedback to the person awaiting placement in social housing. They do not have visibility to the particular point where they are in the queue, because it is not one queue, it is several queues depending on the choice of suburb they have made. There is a lot of customer dissatisfaction and issues associated with the way in which we have delivered this particular service to the people. Somehow this machinery of transitioning people in need into their home has become very complicated and complex. There is absolutely no doubt in my mind that a change needs to occur.

Sometimes it has to be quite an earth-shattering change and it comes with risks which have been clearly identified here. There are risks in terms of the governance and how the governance is going to be set up, the transparency, the accountability and all that. There are very genuine questions and considerations that come with any such big change but sometimes you think continuing doing things the way we have always done it and expecting a different outcome is becoming very complicated. Yes, there needs to be government control, but to what point and where do we get to a point where we say too much government control creates an issue?

Yes, there is a minister unless there are secretaries and directors in the department, but ultimately down to the bottom level, communication back to the customers, the people waiting for an outcome, does not happen and it is because the infrastructure is not functioning any more. The IT communication is not functioning anymore, the database, the people answering those phones are not trained or are not providing the right service. The question is, having a different mechanism and a different body that will potentially deliver a service to the community - the trick is in its set-up and the quality of the customer service.

When we are talking about the statutory authority, we should consider mainly the services and the capacity for the services to be a bit more transparent to the clients, as well as back to the Government. It is not just transparency towards us. It has to be transparency to the outer world as well, who are the beneficiaries, who are the people who are looking up to us to find a solution to deliver our service in a different way.

Sometimes change is scary. I will quickly digress here. Back in 2018-19, when I was sitting on the board of the Health Consumers forum, we were discussing how to better roll out flu vaccination, especially to remote and regional Australia, and come up with solutions. We looked around the world and found out that in the United Kingdom and America, pharmacies were allowed to deliver vaccines. We said, right, that is a good idea, let us try that because a lot of the rural and regional people do not have access to a GP, and we want the flu vaccinations to be done, et cetera. The argument that came back that prevented this really good idea going forward was the Medicare item. The idea that no, you cannot really do it, because you will need to have a different Medicare item, it will have to be classified under a different thing - so at that time we were having discussions at a federal level about that. Lo and behold, in 2020 COVID-19 came and what happened? We have had vaccinations through pharmacies. Sometimes there are ideas that are quite like, 'The computer says no', but then later on you find that they would have helped us.

The statutory authority is a scary thought because of what it involves, but ultimately, are we at a point where we need to do things slightly differently? In so doing, ensure that the governance of the new body is the right governance, and ensure that the culture in the new statutory authority is the right culture because over the last couple of days we have been talking about culture in various other settings. We talked about culture at the LGH and other places.

The paramount thing for delivering good customer service with the new statutory authority is having it set up so that it has a good culture of customer service. That has to be supported also by good technology and good infrastructure - a good way in which communication happens quickly, swiftly and responds to the public demand.

Ultimately, I come back to the fact that each and every one of us here - including people working in a bureaucracy - we are all public servants, and the definition is, we are to serve the public. We owe it to look at a number of solutions, and to make sure that the solutions we land on are the right solutions for what we are trying to achieve.

It is an interesting discussion because of all the complexities that a statutory authority involves. Governance is the key, as I said, and a culture is absolutely paramount. That will be for how it is being set up, and this is where the contribution today from everybody has been very valuable, because it is considered -

Ms O'Connor - As has yours, Mrs Alexander. It is great.

Ms White - Hear, hear.

Mrs ALEXANDER - Thank you. Ultimately, when we look at the housing issue, it is so complex. If we are to describe it, we have three different categories of need in Australia, in Tasmania. Basically we have the homeless people who require a massive amount of support services. You cannot just put them in a home. Then you have people in the middle who are losing a home because of rental, because of homes being sold - so they may not actually be homeless, they still have employment of some sort, but they are on the cusp of falling into that category. Then you have the third category - the young people who are ready to move into a home, but do not have quite enough money saved. This is where HomeShare has been quite a good formula. This is where HomeShare also sitting within the statutory authority will help that particular cohort of people.

As we progressed through those three categories, we realised that the amount of support services decreases, whether not-for-profit, and the Department of Communities Tasmania through their funding comes into account. That decreases and so they start from the beginning where their needs are immense, the wraparound services, and then it decreases as we move to the third category.

This is where it is expected that the housing authority will have to work hand-in-hand with that level of support services. If we look at the Finnish model of housing, which has been the most successful model in the world in resolving the homelessness issue, they put people in homes, but they support them adequately.

It is almost bringing the two things - which at the moment for us in Tasmania and across Australia sit in two separate departments. You have the housing, but then you have got the funding that comes from Communities in Tasmania and also federal funding for the charities.

They all come together from different sources, and eventually, hopefully, they support people to retain a home.

This is where it is becoming very difficult, because having a different mechanism - which is the housing authority - could help. This is, I think, where we need to look at it with an open mind. Scrutinise it by all means, but come to this concept with an open mind, because we are at a point where we have such a different and fragmented approach to a very complex issue that ultimately has to support people to retain that roof over their head, for the first and second category of people.

Recently I talked to a lady who has been in a Safe Space. We have been working with her. She has a home, and I met her at the funeral of Christopher, who was the homeless man who died in Launceston. I am not going to name her, but she went to have a look at a house, and I said, 'How are you going, you are ready to move in?' She said to me she was petrified, and I asked why. She said, 'I have been out of home such a long time. I am not sure if I am going to cope being back in a home.' I said, 'Look, whatever you do, do not sit on your own there, wondering how you are going to cope. Share your anxiety with people.' We talked about services and I said, 'Ring me, ring Ms Finlay. Ring somebody, but whatever you do, do not come out of that house. You want to stay in that home. Give it a go.'

This is a perfect example where you give up. You put somebody in a home, but what happens next is equally as important, if not more, to actually ensure they do not end up out of that home and more traumatised than they were before.

It is important to look at the statutory authority from the perspective of its intention, what it is trying to achieve - but at the same time, at looking at the governance and that accountability process, which is paramount.

Government control of the capacity to deliver housing is very varied across the world. An OECD report produced in 2020, called *Social Housing: A Key Part of Past and Future Housing Policy*, did an analysis of the OECD countries and the European Union. Basically, they found that on average, across the OECD and the EU, the regional and municipal authorities account for around half of the social housing provision. The rest was not-for-profit, limited profit, or cooperative housing associations, to the extent of about 15 per cent. National governments only accounted for about 14 per cent of that housing delivery, and the for-profit providers 11 per cent.

The level of government involvement in this important part of our society is somehow limited outside the Anglo-Saxon world. We tend to have a lot more intervention, from my observation and from what I have read, in countries like Australia, New Zealand, the United Kingdom and, funnily enough, America sits a bit outside with a lot more private intervention.

From my perspective, I am not that hung up about the fact that government needs to have a great level of control. There has to be a level of supervision, of making sure that things do not go in the wrong direction, but not to be physically and completely delving into all the nitty-gritty of the delivery of this housing component. We are at a point where it will be quite a difficult process because our world and our lives have become so complex that sometimes allowing a bit of corporate intervention and a little bit more from the commercial world to have some input and work alongside government and not social service providers actually brings an extra level of efficiency. I am not saying this in a disrespectful way, but in some areas of

government we are lacking that level of efficiency and that capacity to respond quickly and be nimble about it. If there is something we have learnt over the last couple of years it is that being nimble and having the capacity to respond quickly to things that are changing in our environment is paramount.

My view around the statutory authority is that it is a scary thought, it is a major change. However, sometimes we need to explore things that are being done slightly differently and have the courage but, in doing that, by all means look at it with critical eyes but embrace new ideas. Sometimes looking forward to something that is different can help us find a solution.

I know that the sector is looking forward to see what comes out of it. Obviously, as has been discussed here, the sector has not made a decision on whether it is a good or bad thing, but they are very supportive of something to change, because there is a frustration in the way in which communication happens and the way in which they have visibility, and it has become a very convoluted maze-like approach to housing. We are growing and as we develop and build more and there are more partners and more tier-1 and tier-2 stuff happening, it becomes more and more complex and we are relying more and more on the heavy machinery of government to control this. Having a statutory authority with a board that comes from a mix of representation in the community will be of benefit.

Points have been made about what if the minister changes, but why is it that something has to depend on one person? Why is it that we cannot have an organisation or a body that functions really solidly and healthily without depending on who is in charge? That is the crux of the issue. Many successful places, organisations and businesses around the world do not centre around people. They centre, fundamentally, around their governance and how they have been set up and their culture. Once you have all of that set up properly, it should not be a worry that Mr Barnett is not going to be the minister in a few years' time.

It always comes down to how it is being set up. Asking all these questions and getting clarity is very important, but ultimately I do not think we should discard the idea. Personally, I believe it is time for a change because we need to be able to provide a more nimble and commercial service to people, so when they pick up the phone and say, 'Hey, can you give me an answer?', they do not have to go back to their local member who then writes to Housing Connect which then says, 'Well, we've got 12 or 13 or 14 requests from various members of parliament', and it is time-consuming for them as well. It takes them away from the work they do, to answer all the requests they are getting from us.

We need to do it differently. That is what I personally believe and why I support the housing authority. I have generally been a person who, being from an accounting perspective, is a bit risk-averse, so if there is an initiative I look at it and try to satisfy myself of all the risks regarding any change and any decision they make. Looking at the housing authority I believe that the devil is in the detail. As long as the governance is set up properly and everything else, it should work and it should not be depending on the people who are running it or ultimately who the minister it is. It should function in years to come if it is set up the right way.

I believe this is a good idea, obviously not just because I am in the Liberal Government but also from a professional viewpoint. I believe it is a good idea and something that should not be thrown away and dismissed.

[3.37 p.m.]

Mr WOOD (Bass) - Mr Speaker, every Tasmanian deserves a roof over their head and we know some Tasmanians are doing it tough and that there is more to do in this space. I know from hearing from Tasmanians in my electorate of Bass that housing and housing affordability is touching all families in some way. Increasing supply is the way we can address the challenge and this bill will play a pivotal role in achieving this objective.

I have had people speak to me about their circumstances and difficulties in providing suitable and secure homes for themselves and their children, and the struggle is real. This issue is affecting all different walks of life. It is a family that needs to purchase a bigger home due to their expanding size. It is a student moving here from the mainland to study in our university. It is a separated couple who need to find a new way forward as they navigate split custody. It is individuals who need a safe space to escape.

Homes Tasmania will be responsible for delivery the Tasmanian Government's record capital investment of \$1.5 billion to build 10 000 new homes by 2032. The Government knows that this is an ambitious plan. We know that we need to partner with the building and construction industry in order to deliver this record building program. The 2022-23 Tasmanian Budget committed \$204 million in capital funding towards building new homes for Tasmanians in the coming year, building to \$538 million over the forward Estimates. This shows the Government's commitment to the plan of 10 000 homes and the bill gives Homes Tasmania the powers to go ahead and construct through partnerships in innovative ways to meet this target.

The Homes Tasmania Bill replaces the Homes Act 1935 in its entirety and provides a new structure and new governance arrangements that will enable the Government to deliver more homes for Tasmanians, especially those in need.

This bill includes new governance arrangement, greater collaboration with the sector and community representatives, a stronger focus on urban renewal and greater involvement in the renewal and development of key urban areas and different financial arrangements. It will also have a greater research focus to inform strategic policy development.

Importantly, the provision of services will be the same, namely the new authority will continue to deliver affordable housing solutions across the entire housing continuum, prioritising those most in need. This includes providing or enabling the provision of homes accommodation, supported accommodation, social housing, affordable private rentals and affordable home ownership options.

I also welcome and note the minister's statement of expectations. The purpose of the bill is to increase the opportunities for vulnerable Tasmanians and persons on low to moderate incomes to live in safe, secure and appropriate affordable housing; enable the provision of housing assistance and housing support services to encourage the development and implementation of short-term, medium and long-term housing strategies to facilitate the ownership, leasehold, or occupation of residential premises by vulnerable Tasmanians and persons on low or moderate incomes. Also, to encourage the development of flexible and innovative financial arrangements to improve housing outcomes. Furthermore, to promote an efficient and effective system of administration of housing support services and community support services.

I pause here to say that these wraparound services are absolutely essential to the Government's commitment to housing. Groups such as the City Mission, Salvos, Anglicare, they are already doing a power load of work in this space, but they need more physical roofs over their heads. We need them.

The purpose of this bill is also to assist in ensuring the existence of a viable and diversified sector for the provision of housing assistance and housing support services to ensure appropriate transparency, scrutiny and direction of the performance and exercise of the functions and powers of Homes Tasmania.

We must not forget the Tasmanians who we are building these homes for and what they need. We must remember that these people need support and a home right now. Homes Tasmania is responsible for delivering the Tasmanian government's housing commitment with a key requirement to build or acquire 10 000 new social and affordable homes by 2032 under our \$1.5 billion housing package. Further, Homes Tasmania must continue to deliver all targets under the Affordable Housing Action Plan 2019-2023.

It is important to note that the Tasmanian government is developing a 20-year Tasmanian Housing Strategy. Once complete, the strategy will set our strategic directions to improve housing and homelessness challenges in Tasmania. The strategy is expected to guide the Homes Tasmania capital investment, including what type of housing is built and where. It is also expected to guide Homes Tasmania's housing and homelessness programs and projects to ensure those in need receive the appropriate support that best aligns with their needs.

Furthermore, the Tasmanian government is developing a Tasmanian Women's Strategy 2022-2027 and I expect that Homes Tasmania will ensure its programs and projects align with the Women's Strategy to improve women's economic security, safety, health and wellbeing, and to deliberately manage and address bias that may inadvertently reinforce disadvantage in programs and services.

Homes Tasmania will work collaboratively with the Department of Education to provide appropriate accommodation, manage tenancies and support transitions for young people, consistent with their needs and the department's obligations under the Children, Young Persons and Their Families Act of 1997 and the Youth Justice Act of 1997. To the best of their ability Homes Tasmania will also work with the department to develop new tenancy support through care models for youth accommodation facilities and services that reflect the intent of the Government's Strong Families, Safe Kids and Youth Justice reforms.

Creating an authority with complete responsibility for housing in Tasmania will help us to better address our housing challenges. It will create the most cohesive and integrated housing and homelessness service in the country, from housing supply, all the way through to services like health support for our homeless.

Our plan to create a housing authority has received strong support from across the sector and industry, showing that we are on the right track. It also provides for a much closer relationship with the sector, including representatives' views to inform decision-making.

Modern partnerships and delivery models for both capital projects and services need flexibility and creating an authority provides for this. For example, community service

providers are already contracted to provide services in their area of expertise to deliver these services to meet local areas' needs and demands.

Housing is a whole of community need. Where and what we build determines the fabric of our community, the services and supports we need to ensure our wellbeing, our culture and connection to each other and the world around us. Urban design and renewal is integral to this and is what makes livable communities. This legislation creates a role for Homes Tasmania in broader housing considerations beyond what the current department has held historically. This means it can consider our community housing needs and how our vulnerable are supported within this. It also means it can play a role in key worker accommodation and how that fits within the broader housing need, particularly in regional areas or areas of high demand.

Mr Speaker, I thank the minister and the department for all their hard work on this bill and I am fully supportive.

[3.47 p.m.]

Ms DOW (Braddon - Deputy Leader of the Opposition) - Mr Speaker, I rise this afternoon to speak on the Homes bill. From the outset, this feels a lot like the discussions we had in this place about TAFE and the changes to TAFE, that hands-off approach from this Government in looking to do something about a significant issue, which to date, they have failed to do little about.

That is where I want to start because the housing crisis in Tasmania has been ongoing now for years. This Government has had nearly a decade to get those basics right for Tasmanians and now at this point in time, to be looking at doing a 20-year housing strategy after the fact of this governance and bill going through the parliament, it is a bit short-sighted. To my mind, that strategic work could have been done and should have been done earlier to guide the formation of this bill and then the work that is undertaken in the community.

It would be remiss of me not to talk about my planning portfolio in relation to this bill because this Government has failed when it comes to planning reform. We know that planning is intrinsically linked to the housing crisis and this Government's inability to undertake planning reform in the manner that they said that they would; that has been delayed significantly right across the state. There have not been the updates to the regional land use strategies that were required to do future planning across communities for residential growth. That work is still not done across communities. That is due, in part, to a lack of resourcing being provided by this Government and the lack of work, together with local government across the state, to achieve the planning reform that is required and what has been promised by this Government.

Much has been said today about the impact of the housing crisis on Tasmanians. You do not have to look too far to see that: whether that be Tasmanians living in tents, not being able to get a rental property; or whether that be people not being able to own their own home or even get in to get a mortgage to be able to have their own home. It is multi-faceted and it is not confined to the cities; it is right across Tasmania.

It is also an economic problem in Tasmania. It has economic consequences. I only have to look to my electorate and the likes of the west coast and Circular Head, where there is large industrial expansion planned that will require housing for workers to come to those communities to live and raise their families, which is really positive for those regional

economies. There has not been that forward planning undertaken by this Government to plan for that residential growth. Those communities are already heavily compromised when it comes to housing stock as it is, whether that be social and affordable housing or more general housing options in those communities.

There needs to be more done by this Government to work with our key industries across the state. I understand that Mr Barnett is the minister for Resources and Housing so there is a unique opportunity for you to work really closely with that sector around the housing demand that is required in our rural and regional areas. That work has not been done. I have met with some of those businesses and heard their concerns about what that means for their future expansion in those areas for their start-ups. It is significant and it is holding back economic growth.

The other point I want to make is that housing and the housing crisis is not confined to one portfolio of government. It is a whole-of-community approach but it is also a whole-of-government approach. It is every key portfolio area. It has an impact on people's health and wellbeing. It has an impact when we look at the portfolios of Women and the Prevention of Family Violence, Police, Fire and Emergency Management, Infrastructure and Planning, which I have alluded to, and Local Government, building and Consumer Affairs, Education and Skills. It is about having the workforce to do the construction work that is required across this state. It also impacts Justice and Corrections and of course Treasury and how we are going to pay for all of this.

The ones I wanted to highlight again, and they do relate to rural and regional areas, are Police, Fire and Emergency Management and Health. I know this Government has done some work around improving housing in rural and regional areas for essential services but not enough, and it is a barrier to attracting professionals to work across rural and regional Tasmania. That means we are not able to provide essential services in some communities and that is not good enough.

You can see from my contribution today that we are not sure about this bill and whether it actually does what the Government says it does, or whether it is just a distraction for a government that has not done much and has not done the planning that is so important. I alluded to that through my planning responsibilities and the fact that the strategic planning that is being required across the state simply has not been done. It is a shame the Planning minister, Mr Ferguson, is not here to speak on this because these two areas are very closely linked.

In conclusion, we have some concerns about this bill. We are not sure that it does what you think it is going to do. We think it is a distraction for a government that wants to be seen to be doing something because they have failed to do anything up to this point. There are significant issues around not only the community and social impacts of the housing crisis but the economic impacts of that crisis as well. Planning and planning reform is fundamental to ensuring that there is the land supply available across Tasmania and that land supply is looked at and allocated strategically so we do not see issues, as others have spoken about in here today, with large-scale public and social housing developments which we know are not in the best interests of our community. That work really needs to be done by this Government. It is a bit too little too late, really.

[3.54.p.m.]

Mr TUCKER (Lyons) - Mr Speaker, I am going to make a brief comment about this bill. I am going to talk a bit about my personal experience with housing and what I have seen in my own community. I heard what Ms Dow said about planning and she is correct that planning is a big part of this, but also with housing, it has to come from the community. It is the community that has to drive this. I believe this with a lot of things with government. Governments provide money but if the community does not want it you cannot deliver.

I have seen that in my community with housing. There were two developments put forward, one in Scamander and one in Cameron Street in St Helens. Both developments were knocked back by the community, much to my and the council's disgust, but it was the community that did not want them.

As my colleague, Lara Alexander, was saying, we have to unpiece this puzzle and bring the community with us to bring this all together, also with councils and with planning, integrating these people into the communities and getting people to be more accepting of their brothers and sisters. That is who these people are. They are not denigrating these people because they need housing because that is disgusting in my opinion.

I said that I was going to make a very brief comment on this because I can see the time ticking away. I believe we need to work at this as a community and across all levels of government to make this work, but it also has to particularly come from the communities. If you want to fix your housing issues, you are the ones that have to drive this.

Ms O'Connor - Presumably, then, you would support the community rejecting a cable car up kunanyi because if the community doesn't want it - and they've driven the protests - then that's okay?

Mr TUCKER - Some of the community want it.

[3.56 p.m.]

Ms FINLAY (Bass) - Mr Speaker, I have multiple areas of interest but three areas I would like to make comment on. I want to open by reflecting on the contribution of my fellow member for Bass, Lara Alexander. As was noted at the time in the Chamber, her contribution clearly came from a place of passion and deep, genuine care for many Tasmanians, and particularly those she served in previous roles. She has had some quiet moments to sit down with constituents in our electorate. It is really refreshing that someone stands and speaks passionately and delivers from the heart their genuine reflection on what is before us. I wanted to put that on the record. We have worked together with a few constituents and we come together and agree on a few things but I do have a different approach, I suppose, or come to some of these concerns from a different position.

I note that another member of this place reflected on the now minister and said they expect that he has genuine intention with what he is hoping to achieve here. We have had a bit of a funny week and we have had a funny day today. We have been talking about ministerial standards, expectations, quality of service and care and respect for our community. It seems to me that when you try to fix something by picking it up and moving it somewhere else and then hoping it is going to be better, there needs to be moments where we reflect and are critical about the work we are already delivering.

We have heard in the contributions that have been made so far, phrases like, 'We need to be nimble', 'We need to be efficient', 'We need to be responsive', 'The system does not currently work', 'Organisations need to be solid and healthy' and 'We need to make sure that we work together'. To my mind - a bit like the contribution I made this morning - these things should all be possible from within government, government departments and as a parliament in the way that we support our community. If those things are not true now then we need to ask why, not just say, 'Okay, we will try to fix it by putting it here and maybe they will do better, maybe they will have a good culture, maybe they will have good systems, maybe they will have good governance'. They should already be the things that we deliver.

The gigantic scale of the teams within the department that are tasked with the delivery who, for so many within that system, go to work day on day to deliver an incredible, overwhelming workload, but the system should be setup to already deliver that. I am not a big believer in duplicating broken systems by hoping that a new system will magically fix it.

That was my first contribution and it feels a little bit like, if I put it over there in a box and make them responsible for it, I am not responsible for it anymore. Therefore I might not be responsible for the outcomes or the culture or the quality or for their efficiency or for the behaviours, for the outcomes and the deliveries. It feels like, 'Well, if we put it over there, it is not on our balance sheet anymore. We do not have to be financially responsible for it, maybe we are also a little more removed from the tasks that are delivered and the financial results and the responsibility to ensure that there is good work and quality work that is done, because that is their job now'.

I want to illustrate that in a couple of reflections. One is in the statement of ministerial expectations and I want to make a couple of comments about that and put those on the record. Then I want to bring an electorate example to my concerns about this separation of responsibility and accountability.

Making a couple of reflections on the statement of ministerial expectations, on page 3, under strategic expectations, the first statement in 'Housing' is a fundamental need that supports people to reach their goals. There has been a massive missed opportunity to say that housing is a human right and it has missed the opportunity to define housing as a human right. I also put on the record that I am sharing these comments and the comments that have been identified and shared with me through our shadow spokesperson and our team here.

On page 4 in the second set of dot points under the introductory comment in undertaking its functions and purpose, I expect the Homes Tasmania board to, under the second dot point, it says 'maximise the supply of affordable housing targeted to those in need', but with consideration, this should perhaps read, 'maximise the supply of affordable and social housing to those in need'. That is a recommendation also by Shelter Tasmania.

In the next set of dot points, under 'give consideration to social, economic and environmental sustainability', under a sub-dot point it says, 'efficiently manage and maintain its core assets'. We have to be careful about how we refer and categorise things and perhaps that should read, 'through reducing the maintenance liability and bringing assets up to their current building and environmental standards'. As we have heard from so many today there are people in our community who are concerned to raise the basic fundamental levels of living standards for fear there will be some sort of repercussion. It is really important: a recognition that things should be brought up to their basic standards.

Further over in a statement, and this goes to the comment that I was saying before, on page 6, under section 3, under 3.4, 'relationship with service providers and industry', the statement says: 'I expect that these committees will include representation from relevant sector and organisations'. We note that that has to include Housing Tasmania tenants and those who have lived experience, and that the board will consider their advice in its decision-making.

As I said, we had heard about how this new entity is supposedly somehow going to operate differently under a different culture and behaviour and set of outcomes than the current system. Then it goes on to say, 'I expect these committees to meet at least three times per calendar year'. Now, if you are hoping to be nimble and agile, quarterly meetings of feedback and providing that level of representation is not going to provide the outcome that is intended.

Under section 4, under 4.3, under the heading of delivering on the overarching expectations I expect Homes Tasmania to, the sixth dot point says, 'deliver affordable and secure social housing with effective tenancy management services to achieve positive outcomes for tenants across the social housing system'. We trust that this will be reconsidered to include tenants exiting the expiring National Rental Affordability Scheme (NRAS), including NRAS tenants who are ineligible for the Private Rental Incentives Program (PRIS).

On page 8, under 4.4, 'I expect Homes Tasmania to maintain capital structure and debt levels that is consistent with the overall strategic portfolio objectives'. It is really important that debt should remain low and only be used for the provision of social and affordable housing, including housing support, homelessness services and crisis accommodation. We have all seen the outcome of the exploding debt levels in other areas.

They are the comments on the statement of ministerial expectation. I want to take this through to what I can see - and there are lots of risks that have been identified and people have spoken to other things so I will not repeat that contribution, but I am really concerned about the separation of accountability and the separation of responsibility. I am concerned that in the current structure there is a poor line of sight across the ever-extended links between where money starts and money finishes.

For instance, if the Government grants funds to an entity to deliver social housing and then the entity that is delivering that social housing engages sub-contractors, where there is a concern between the entity and the sub-contractors and there may be disputes that are unresolved, the Government now has wiped its hands of that in delivering these social housing outcomes because they have delivered it via a third party. There is already a current concern with that in the system. To me, this separation allows that to be even further lost and further grey in who is actually responsible.

I have a real time case, minister, that I have brought to your attention of some seven tradies who have worked on a project in Launceston. They collectively took the contracts because they believed them to be government contracts and in an environment of really difficult operating circumstances for tradies in terms of supply and payments and all sorts of things they felt confident that this was a secure engagement. They delivered all their work. They are tilers and painters and all sorts of tradies on these social housing properties that were delivered in the northern suburbs. To this day, months and months later, despite repeated requests, they have completed their work, it is a great outcome, and the provider has not paid them and they have not been paid. They now have seemingly a really difficult pathway to have anyone listen to them and take seriously their concerns for a lack of a payment of what would have been seen

to them as a government contract, when government say, 'We will pay our small businesses within a short period of time. We will be sure to ensure that our tradies who are working on behalf of Tasmanians to deliver social housing are looked after.' That is not the case in this scenario, to the point where these tradies have been put under quite serious duress from the third party if they continue to raise the need to be paid.

It concerns me that this entity is being established because the current system does not work. That in itself is not good enough. However, where it actually further breaks down that direct relationship of accountability, either in social outcomes, emotional, community outcomes for people, is that accountability on the financial outcomes for people in our community. I only had those three areas that I want to make a contribution on but it is really important. If something is not right, if it is not serving the needs of our community, if it is not nimble enough, it is not efficient enough, does not have good culture and it is not delivering the outcomes that our community need in a way that actually serves them, then do not just pick it all up and move it somewhere else and hope for the best. Dive in and do the hard work -

Ms O'Connor - Yes, but it is not that Housing Tasmania was not delivering. It was government that was not delivering. We just have to be -

Ms FINLAY - That is right and when things are broken and not working do not pack them off to somewhere else. Do the hard work and address the issues that need addressing.

[4.10 p.m.]

Mr BARNETT (Lyons - Minister for State Development, Construction and Housing) - Mr Speaker, I thank all members for their contributions on this very important and historic debate. I appreciate the feedback and the goodwill in this place to try to make a difference for the people of Tasmania when it comes to housing and homelessness.

I came to the role in April. I was not expecting this role, but I am pleased and honoured to have it. It is very special indeed. It is a privilege to work with the sector, and I have been really honoured to be able to engage with them. I thank them for their input and contribution and feedback to me since becoming minister. I say thank you to Lara Alexander as parliamentary secretary. We had roundtables. We met with the community straight-up and got that feedback, and I believe we made a difference right from the get-go in dealing with the here and now, and Safe Spaces and supporting an expansion of that.

The feedback has been very positive. I want to thank those in the community and those in this parliament for the manner in which you put forward your thoughts, views and remarks, which I would like to respond to - but as I say, the goodwill is palpable. It is a privilege to be a minister in this space and to know that the case has been made for change. Their case has been made that we need to do better as a community to address our housing and homelessness needs.

We are not alone. Housing and homelessness issues are part of a national concern. I went to a ministerial council meeting some weeks ago. We have another one coming up soon. I say thanks to minister Julie Collins for her contribution and leadership. We have had a good working relationship to date and I expect that to continue.

Ms O'Connor - Does the Commonwealth know we are doing this?

Mr BARNETT - Yes, they are aware, Julie Collins in particular. My point is that we are not alone in Tassie in addressing the very serious challenges in the housing and homelessness space. It is fair to say they are very complex, and very challenging - not only interest rates and property prices that have been going up. Rental affordability is very challenging. Record property prices in recent times, and of course we have had COVID-19 on top of that in the last couple of years. Much work needs to be done, and we need to improve. We need to do better. We acknowledge all that.

Housing is complex, but it is a whole of community concern. We all need to work together to address that, and we are doing this off the back of the Homes Act, which is 87 years old, going back all those years to 1935. It has become dysfunctional. It is archaic. It is no longer fit for purpose. We need change. It is no longer allowing the department to respond to the needs in the way that it should - and the way we in this place, and in the community, would expect them to do. That is why we are creating the authority.

To be very clear, it is not about shifting responsibility. I can assure the House that the role of the minister - and in my case, while minister, I will remain responsible and accountable to this House, and will continue to take my responsibilities very seriously and maintain that leadership role. That level of accountability and transparency will remain. I can confirm that members in this place can continue to raise questions in question time, motions in whatever parliamentary debates are required, and I will respond as best I can.

There has been reference to the board. The board is accountable for delivering on my expectations as minister and on behalf of all of us. I have tabled the draft ministerial statement of expectations. Bear in mind that it is not the final ministerial statement of expectations. If it can be improved between now and when the board is established, and is then presented to the board, it then comes back to the minister. It is then tabled as an official ministerial statement of expectations, so bear that in mind.

I can also confirm that the scrutiny of the authority, Homes Tasmania, will be through the Estimates process. It is not a GBE, so it will be scrutinised each time through the Budget Estimates process each year, as with other relevant government statutory authorities.

To address why we need this authority, Homes Tasmania, I have mentioned already that the Homes Act 1937 is antiquated and out of date. Being in a department, as it is at the moment, it brings in outside views, so there is a need to access skills that can propose approaches that are innovative and creative to address the housing issues. We need a contemporary approach to the issues of today, next year and 10 years hence.

Homes Tasmania will have a separate balance sheet, which allows the authority to leverage this in a way that a department simply cannot. This is a really important point.

Earlier in the parliament today, I shared a \$3.5 billion estimate of the assets on the balance sheet. This is very substantial. It will be one of the most substantial, significant entities in Tasmania. Hydro is around \$5 billion; TasNetworks is around \$3 billion - so we are talking a very substantial asset being managed for and on behalf of the Tasmanian people. It will obviously operate commercially, but in accordance with this legislation, and will bring in expertise from the private sector and from the community sector to support how it can operate in an optimal way. I will address the commerciality concerns raised shortly, as well as some remarks by members that were shared during the second reading debate.

The board will have valuable expertise and skills. It is a skills-based board. I am sure we will talk more about that in the committee. I know there are some references to the board, including the size of the board, which I am happy to respond to very shortly as well.

There is that opportunity to establish those advisory committees to help guide and inform the housing decisions. In the ministerial statement of expectations, you would have noticed the expectation that there will be two streams - at a minimum - that may be established by the board. One relates to building and construction, and the other relates to housing and homelessness community sector expertise.

Of course, the whole objective here is to ensure that Tasmanians achieve their full potential. As Lara Alexander very eloquently said, Tasmanians need a roof over their head, but they need more than that. They need those wraparound services that support. It is a community that raises a child, as it is said, so this is a whole lot more than just providing the housing. Yes, that is very important, those 10 000 through to 2032, but we are talking about the wraparound services. Whether it be health and welfare, there is a whole range of services in terms of mental health and wellbeing, drug and alcohol services, helping them with their finances and other areas of vulnerability. Those issues, concerns and challenges need to be addressed. It is a complex issue, but there is a whole lot more work to do.

In terms of the housing structures in other jurisdictions, I have just had a heads-up, having been to the housing ministers' meeting, with another on the way very soon, and being made aware through my department and office, other jurisdictions have certainly recognised the need to bring in more contemporary approaches to housing and homelessness. Doing this and delivering the housing supply, working in partnership with the community service providers, in partnership with the private sector is important. We have taken this into account. We have looked at some of those other jurisdictions and we have structured Homes Tasmania in the way that we believe is best suited to Tasmania and the needs of Tasmanians to help them reach their potential as individuals, as families, as a community. We want to ensure that we can continue to have the most cohesive approach to homelessness and housing services in the country. That is the vision, that is the plan.

I acknowledge and thank the efforts of the department and their partners in all they do each and every day for building housing and supporting those in need. They have delivered exceptionally well under challenging circumstances. I put on record, I think on behalf of all of us, serious acknowledgement and thanks to the department and their team and say thank you for their service under difficult circumstances.

In relation to our performance, I indicate that the Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute shows that in the last five years our social housing numbers actually increased more than other jurisdictions. I found it interesting when I was advised that social housing dwelling growth was 1.2 per cent higher than population growth over the past four years. All other jurisdictions experienced lower social housing growth compared to population growth, and this is set to increase with our plan to deliver 10 000 new social and affordable homes by 2032.

As outlined in my second reading speech, creating an authority is just the first step in our plan to address housing in Tasmania and it includes using that expertise, knowledge and skills of the board and their advisory committee to ensure further reforms allow for the developments we need. I think it was Anita Dow who asked about other challenges and other reforms, and there was a reference to planning. In my second reading speech I made reference to the fact

that there needs to be more work in that space. The Premier, myself and Lara Alexander met with the key stakeholders just a month or so ago and one of the key outcomes of our reference group was that planning needs to be addressed. Of course there is a lot that is already underway but we know there is a challenge in the housing space and we look forward to addressing that with the key stakeholders and the community to get the job done. I draw that to members' attention. The other issue was residential tenancy reforms. That was brought forward by the reference committee and will be considered as well, as will many other challenges that we will need to address going forward.

In terms of the changes, I am happy to deal with the proposed amendments in Committee. I have no problems with that. I was expecting that. I thank the Leader of the Greens for giving me a heads-up on those proposed amendments. In terms of changes to 'eligible person' submitted by Shelter Tasmania, that has been included in the final bill from the exposure draft and this is reflected in clause 6(6).

In terms of the increased board membership, I will have more to say on that with the Leader of the Greens and others when that amendment is put forward.

In terms of transparency and accountability in relation to the commercial focus over those in need, the needs and demands are the focus of the authority and provided with all its powers, including those to deliver supply and partner with private sector entities.

Affordable housing, including public and social housing, is part of the broader housing market and system. It is important that the authority maintains a whole-of-housing system and a whole-of-housing market focus. This will ensure it remains informed about the state of housing in Tasmania and is well positioned to conduct its activities and respond to the changes in the market. We need to be flexible but it is guided by the purposes in the act. The purposes are there. We got feedback from not just the stakeholders but others in this place, including the Greens, and we responded to that and have made some changes during that public consultation process or as a result of feedback from that, with some 19 submissions that were received, for which I am very grateful.

I want to be clear that the needs of the client has to be the centre focus for this authority, which will drive the decisions of Homes Tasmania.

Ms O'Connor - Sorry, the client?

Mr BARNETT - The customer, the Tasmanian person, the individual.

Ms O'Connor - The client. Like I said, it is a neoliberal approach to call a Tasmanian who needs a home a client.

Mr BARNETT - I have talked about Tasmanians, individuals, families and communities. Let us just make that clear. Thank you for your interjection.

That will drive the decisions of Homes Tasmania, so my point is the objective sets the parameters in which those decisions are made and actions then flow. You have the functions and powers of the bill, you have the statement of expectations, but the objectives are really important. I know the Leader of the Greens has an amendment there and I will share about that shortly.

Bringing a more commercial lens to the strategic management of our housing asset base will allow it to start with the needs of the person or the family and then build those assets to meet that demand. This aligns with best-practice management - that is what we are talking about - and bring better returns and that can flow on to better homelessness and housing support services.

The bill outlines several principles that the authority must consider when performing its function or exercising its powers. These principles include that housing is a basic human need. That has been referred to in a range of contributions from various members. It is a basic human need and it is desirable that housing assistance and support services be provided to those who need it most. Every Tasmanian deserves a roof over their head and an opportunity to thrive to be the best they can be. It will efficiently and effectively manage the housing register, prioritising appropriate housing for those who need it most.

I want to reflect on the consistent and current delivery programs to assist low and moderate income earners, like the MyHome shared equity program and building developments that are inclusive. Our Government and I know the community support Tasmanians owning their own home wherever possible, so supporting that is part of our objective and is absolutely a priority for our Government. We want to increase the resilience and diversity of our communities, improve integration and urban renewal and provide affordable housing opportunities for all Tasmanians into the future.

I talked about urban renewal and I will segue to the Greater Hobart Plan, a 30-year plan, and part of that plan includes more infill. It means doing things a little bit differently; it means providing housing in the places where you need it for the people that need it most.

When I was in Melbourne at a housing ministers conference I took time out to meet with the Labor housing minister and we had a very good discussion. I learnt more about what they are doing in Victoria. I visited the Nightingale housing development in Brunswick, a community-based housing development. It is not just a unit or a house: there are dozens and dozens, all in the one unit, where they share. It is a community-based arrangement. You can check it out - Nightingale housing development in Brunswick. It is doing it differently. That is the way we have to look at it going forward. We need to do things differently and have an innovative approach and have a contemporary arrangement to respond to the needs and challenges we have.

The board will keep account through a range of public transparency measures. Broader transparency to the public in this place is very important. I expect the board to exhibit the highest level of integrity and professionalism in undertaking their duties and to comply with and uphold the State Service principles and the code of conduct.

The bill contains a range of transparency and accountability measures to ensure the board will act responsibly. Each director of the board, for example, will be required to disclose the nature of any material or personal interest in matters being considered or about to be considered by the board and this applies in all matters, except where the interest only arises because the director is a State Service officer or employee, or where the matter relates to a contract for goods and services ordinarily supplied by the authority. The duty is enforceable by the way of a fine.

The bill also contains serious consequences where a director of the board, or the CEO or an employee of the authority, is found to have improperly used information acquired by virtue of their role or improperly used their position to gain personal advantage. Directors will have a duty to act in the best interests of the authority and be held accountable to do so. The board must prepare a corporate plan which outlines the authority's policies, programs, objectives, strategies and targets to help achieve those objectives and the financial plans of the authority.

The board must ensure the authority's business affairs are conducted in a manner that achieves the objectives in the corporate plan in accordance with sound business practice and the ministerial statement of expectations. The board will also be required to notify the minister of matters or circumstances that could significantly affect the functioning or financial viability of the authority, prepare annual financial statements in accordance with the Audit Act 2008, and prepare an annual report to be tabled in parliament.

Yes, powers are increasing but that is the point. We need more powers to allow the flexibility and innovation that I have been referring to. It is important that these very broad powers are fettered by the purposes and functions of the bill which are set out in the bill.

The bill is in two parts, as I have said. There will be broad powers and they are only broad enough to deliver on the purposes of the bill. While concerns have been raised about these powers it is critical to note that the powers are only applicable when they are being used for the purposes and functions set out in the bill if, for example, developments must relate back to providing for eligible persons.

Changes to allow Homes Tasmania to partner with developers has been raised during the second reading debate. This is an important change captured in the definition of 'housing provider'. The reason this is important is to allow flexibility for a program such as the National Rental Affordability Scheme (NRAS) which worked with private sector developers to build affordable homes.

Some of the remarks I shared during the second reading debate related to how we connect with and relate to the federal government or indeed other governments across Australia. We will continue to do that similar to the way in which it operates at the moment. Entities and programs like NRAS, although coming to an end, other similar entities will of course be allowed. For example, the incoming Australian Government has a housing affordability future fund. They have plans and that is very important. We want to ensure that we get our fair share of that affordability future fund. I have already had discussions with the honourable minister, Julie Collins, about that and we are progressing positively on addressing some of the particular needs that Tasmania has. I look forward to those concluding in the not too distant future.

The recognition that we need to be flexible to partner with the private and not-for-profit sector is important. They do it at the federal level; we need to do it at the state level. We need to have that flexibility and agility to do that. Working together, we can achieve more than working alone.

Also, the powers of delegations were raised by a number of members and how this would work. The board does have the power to delegate to the CEO and to others. The board is ultimately responsible for the operation of those powers and accountable for their use. This is not dissimilar to how delegations at either a ministerial or department secretary level currently operate. That is, in terms of policy development, Government continues to set government

policy. I think I shared that earlier. It will do so, informed by and in collaboration with Homes Tasmania. Homes Tasmania will have a role there as well and they will undertake important research that will be available for Homes Tasmania and will be available to inform the Government with respect to government policy and the direction of their objectives going forward.

In terms of Government, we will be seeking advice from relevant government agencies. I believe there was a question about the Department of Premier and Cabinet, for example, and in particular, but also the Department of Treasury and Finance in determining whole-of-government policy priorities and the direction for Homes Tasmania. I have said in terms of the ballot sheet, a \$3.5 million asset, under certain circumstances and conditions being able to borrow against that for the purposes set out in the bill.

There was a question about staff from Ms Haddad and I will cover that. In terms of staff, in the authority, they will remain public servants employed under the State Service Act 2000. No one will lose their jobs as we transition to the new authority.

Ms O'Connor - What about after the transition?

Mr BARNETT - I will finish this. Transitional arrangements are being worked through in relation to awards as raised by Ms Haddad. However, these are not a matter for legislation and are occurring for all staff transitioning either into the new authority or indeed other government departments. I made very clear towards the end in my second reading speech and I will recap that for the Leader for the Greens, and Ms Haddad, who I think have a special interest in that.

I want to reassure current staff that their employment conditions will not change and there will be no redundancy or job losses associated with the establishment of Homes Tasmania. I can also reassure sector partners that current funding arrangements will remain in place until Homes Tasmania. Transitional arrangements will be in place. Ms Haddad asked a question about what happens next year, so I am making clear on the public record that those current arrangements are in place. The authority will continue with those, ensuring that they continue going forward. That is with respect to current arrangements, current contracts, and there will be a transition with the board established, all being well, subject to the passing of this legislation. We always said that we wanted to establish this entity, the authority, by the end of September.

There was a question about the consultation process. Yes, that went from 7 June to 5 July, and during that consultation process 19 submissions were received and, based on the feedback, many suggestions that were made were incorporated into the bill. I can outline that further in Committee if members are interested.

I appreciate all those contributions made, including those from parliament, and I thank them for that contribution. Likewise, my office, through my department, has been able to offer briefings to members of parliament and we will continue to offer briefings and try to support the better understanding of the bill and how it would operate.

Mr Speaker, as I started saying at the beginning of my remarks, there is a lot of good will, there is a case for change and this is the change that needs to be made. I am convinced of that. We can do this. We can make a real difference in the lives of Tasmanians, both now and well

into the future, and we can also address the here and now, where there is a whole lot more work that needs to be done to support vulnerable Tasmanians and provide a vision for the future which is more caring, kinder, but also has a sustainable approach.

Mr Speaker, I commend the bill to the House.

Bill read the second time.

HOMES TASMANIA BILL 2022 (No. 35)

In Committee

Clauses 1 and 2 agreed to.

Clause 3 -

Purposes of Act

[4.39 p.m.]

Ms O'CONNOR - Chair, I move two amendments to this clause. The first amendment is to clause 3 before proposed paragraph (a), to insert the following paragraphs:

Insert the following paragraphs:

- (A) to decrease the proportion of Tasmanians experiencing housing stress or homelessness;
- (B) to achieve housing equity for Tasmanian Aboriginal people;
- (C) to improve the safety and wellbeing of women and children escaping family violence;

What we are talking about there, of course, Chair, is not clients. We are talking about human beings who need some help.

I want to note that earlier when I talked about this approach to dealing with the housing shortage and the affordability crisis as a neoliberal approach, it is terms like 'client' applied to Tasmanians in need that reinforce that and make me shudder. This creep of managerial language into the delivery of government services is insidious. Even when I was a minister, I remember a then secretary coming to me so excited because there was a new framework for how the department was going to deal with the minister's office and we would be the department's client and I said, 'No, we will never be your client, I am your minister.'

We have to stop referring to human beings in management speak. We need to recognise that government is here to serve the people. It is not a business or a service provider that has clients. I know it just slipped out of the minister's mouth so I am not specifically having a crack at the minister here, but it is an odious way of referring to the people of Tasmania, people who are experiencing housing stress or homelessness, Aboriginal people and women and children escaping family violence.

This amendment adds three new objects to the act and is informed by recommendations from both Shelter Tasmania and the Tenants' Union of Tasmania. In some ways it humanises

the purposes of this act and takes it back to the core of what it has to be all about. TasCOSS wanted to make sure there was a focus on reducing homelessness, reducing housing stress, improving access to housing assistance and support for Tasmanians on low incomes. As I said earlier, the original first paragraph in this clause was paragraph (c) and that was about the development and implementation of short-term, medium-term, long-term strategies - blah, blah, blah - when really the focus has to be on enabling eligible people and people on low and moderate incomes to find homes.

I commend this amendment to the House and I hope the minister understands that it has for 87 years been a core objective of the state's housing agency, although in recent years the focus has been narrower and - because of resources almost more than anything else - much more on those most in need, but decreasing the proportion of Tasmanians experiencing housing stress or homelessness has to be a bedrock purpose of this new housing authority. I strongly commend this amendment to the House.

Madam CHAIR - Ms O'Connor, are you just going to move the first amendment?

Ms O'CONNOR - Yes, and then I will move the second one.

Mr BARNETT - I thank the Leader of the Greens for her eloquent support for her amendment to clause 3, the purposes of the act, which is really fundamental to where this bill is at. This amendment is in three parts - (1) to decrease the proportion of Tasmanians experiencing housing stress or homelessness; (2) achieving housing equity for Tasmanian Aboriginal people; and (3) to improve the safety and wellbeing of women and children escaping family violence.

Of course those objectives are understandable and amenable in some ways, but it takes away from the objectives that are set out in the bill itself in clause 3(a) because we have a whole range of cohorts. We do know, for example, it is not just Tasmanian Aboriginal people, not just the safety and well-being of women and children escaping family violence. I have seen, and become aware, of younger Tasmanians who are in need of support, in need of encouragement, or in need of not just a roof over their head, but the wraparound services to provide education, skills, training, mentoring.

When I was in Devonport, having a tour of the Anglicare facility, and adjacent to Loaves and Fishes, I had a tour of the Loaves and Fishes, as well. The services that are provided are terrific. It is not just a roof over a head. It is much more than that. Those young people deserve that support. They deserve that encouragement. They deserve that mentoring.

I have been to Thyne House in Launceston, a special, direct connection to me. My grandfather was Sinclair Thyne, mayor of Launceston, and he worked at Thyne House with his brother. I really appreciated the opportunity to walk around and understand the importance of mentoring, of training, of skills, going forward, and I wanted to acknowledge that.

At Magnolia House in Launceston, where I visited, we are now doubling the facilities from 15, I think it is, to 30 units. That development is well underway and very well progressed. It is so encouraging to see the smile on the faces of those who know that that is going to deliver valuable protection not just for women and children but for women escaping family violence.

Ms O'Connor - You are a lawyer. Have a look at (A). That captures everyone. The whole range of cohorts that you are talking about now.

Mr BARNETT - I am glad you concede that, and that is why it is really important.

Ms O'CONNOR - No (A) in this amendment.

Mr BARNETT - My (a) that is in the bill, I think, with (b), and the other parts to clause 3 cover all the cohorts that I am referring to. I do not think you can just pick out one or two examples.

The amendment that is introduced by the Leader for the Greens, 'targets for assistance', but it does not reflect the purpose of the bill. The purpose as drafted will address the three items listed in your amendment, and specific directions are included in the statement of expectations to target assistance for women and children escaping domestic violence.

Just a heads up. I met with the Minister for Women. I met with the minister for Family Violence, the former minister, at least, Jacqui Petrusma. We had an excellent meeting talking about the importance of providing that support for women and children including escaping family violence. We were all of one accord. We met with our department and we met with a key community service provider. I will not go into the details but we are at one. Through you, Chair, to the Leader for the Greens, this is a key focus, and it is in my statement of expectations, specifically making reference to women and children including those escaping family violence and domestic violence.

This has been very clear during the lived experiences that were shared during Homelessness Week: a very confronting experience and presentation in Launceston, in particular, at the breakfast or at the morning tea session. I can assure you those objectives outlined in (A), (B) and (C) put forward by the Greens are covered in the purposes of the legislation. They are covered in the statement of expectations that the minister released a few days ago in the public space in this parliament and I circulated it directly to members in advance on the day before. I want to provide a level of assurance to the member that this is clearly front and centre but there is more than just what is written there. We have the young people, we have the old people, we have the women alone, we have the women escaping domestic violence, we have people with disabilities.

Ms Haddad, you made a reference to people with disabilities. That is covered in my second reading speech; it is covered in my statement of expectations.

Be assured these cohorts are very important. These groups in the community need our support. They will get it. It is covered by the purposes of the bill set out in clause 3(a) which is well expressed; it is broad enough and it links with clause 3(b) which for clarity purposes says:

- (a) to increase the opportunities for eligible persons, and persons on low or moderate incomes, to satisfy the basic human need for housing by living in safe, secure, appropriate and affordable housing;

(b) to -

- (i) enable the provision of housing assistance and housing support services; and
- (ii) facilitate the provision of community support services ...

And it goes on. There is a (c) and a (d), and I will not go through that but it is really important. It goes further. The purposes of the act are a pivotal part of the legislation. I draw that to your attention. I really appreciate where you are coming from with this amendment. It is one we cannot support as written but I draw that to the attention of members.

Ms O'CONNOR - I will respond on the amendment, thank you, Chair.

With respect, minister, this clause is written as if people in need are clients. It is dry and uninspiring but the law does not need to inspire.

I will simply say there is nothing in our amendment that takes away from anything you said before. If we cannot have in this legislation a foundational expectation on Homes Tasmania and the board that runs it, that their job is to decrease the proportion of Tasmanians experiencing housing stress or homelessness then I worry that the focus will be diffused because a ministerial statement of expectations is an ephemeral thing. It changes from minister to minister. It is not the law. It is what a minister tells the board that is set up by statute what their expectations are but it is not the law.

If the board or anyone at Homes Tasmania failed to live up to the ministerial expectations there is no sanction in here, none whatsoever so I do not buy that having something in the ministerial statement of expectations covers off on it enough but I understand that this does not have support. I say that on the amendment and then after Ms Haddad I will move the second part of this amendment.

Ms HADDAD - I am happy to speak on the amendment but I also have questions to ask, not amendments to move but questions about clause 3. I want to seek some advice from the Clerks about how many speaking opportunities we have in Committee on each clause.

CHAIR - We will just go through the amendment, vote and then after that.

Ms HADDAD - I can speak on clause 3 again? Great. Thank you, Chair, for that clarification.

I do not have any problem with this amendment and Labor will be happy to support it. I agree with Ms O'Connor that there is no harm in naming up those specific cohorts. There are several different cohorts of people who face homelessness and the minister went through this as well - who need, if you like, specific tailored approaches. That does include the cohorts named in the amendment, but it also includes the cohorts named by the minister - namely young people, older people, and particularly older women, who we know is the fastest growing cohort of people entering homelessness. Significantly high numbers of older men are homeless as well.

I always find myself trying to be a bit of a peacemaker. It does not need to be an exhaustive list, but you could simply add in a (d) for young people and an (e) for older people - because while the minister is correct in that he has dealt with some of these issues in the ministerial statement and in the second reading speech, those things do not have the same legal and legislative weight that the actual act of parliament will have once enacted. I do think there is value in being prescriptive, giving guidance to the new statutory authority in terms of how the parliament's expectations are set, about how they will approach the important work addressing each of those cohorts of homelessness.

The second reading speech is, of course, a legislative interpretation tool. If there were ever any questions within Homes Tasmania about whether they needed to weight their approach differently between different cohorts of people facing homelessness, the second reading speech would certainly give that clarity.

However, the ministerial statement, as was made very clear in the bill, is not a static document. It can change; it can be revoked; it can be changed potentially several times. There does not seem to be a limitation on how many times that ministerial statement can change. While some of those cohorts might be named in this current first draft of the ministerial statement, I cannot see any danger in supporting an amendment that names the cohorts that Ms O'Connor has named, but potentially also young people, older people and people with disability.

Mr BARNETT - Thanks very much to the members for their contributions on this first amendment by Ms O'Connor.

I think in a way we are agreeing to disagree, but we also agree those cohorts, as we refer to them at the moment, are very important. That really makes the case that Ms Haddad was talking about, and acknowledging the other cohorts that I have referred to, in terms of younger people, in terms of older people. But guess what? The cohorts might change over time.

What we are doing is establishing legislation which sets up the framework in which the objectives are understood. If you are an eligible person, you are covered under this legislation. All of those cohorts are eligible people, and that is why it has been designed this way. The framework has been designed so you can put forward a statement of expectations. The minister at the time can set that out and highlight the importance of those various cohorts because over time that will change.

Inserting into the legislation specific reference to a specific cohort that may be relevant today - but what about in five years' time, 10 years, 20 years? This is the whole point. We are designing a bill that is in two parts, which is designed to ensure that the objectives are met, and that the objectives are implemented. By being too specific, it can easily become clunky, which is a description referred to in the 1935 Homes Act, which is out of date, antiquated.

That is why we cannot, unfortunately, support this amendment, but I do want to give you a heads-up. I understand where you are coming from. If you read my second reading speech and my ministerial statement of expectations, you will see that those various groups are referred to, or at least acknowledged.

By the way, I am keen for any further feedback on the ministerial statement of expectations. I have tabled a draft. If, during the course of this debate or upstairs, there are

references or additions or amendments that you recommend to the statement of ministerial expectations, please sing out, make a reference to that during the debate or directly to me and it will be considered constructively. Just a heads-up, because we are going through a process now. I have tabled it - keen for the feedback.

I did take onboard, during the consultation process, the feedback from various stakeholders in drafting the ministerial statement, and I do think we need to have that agility and flexibility to be able to address the various cohorts that are relevant now, and that may be relevant in the months, years or decades ahead.

I appreciate the goodwill. I appreciate where you are coming from. Be assured that we want to ensure those various cohorts are covered and those objectives are met. The objectives are set up in the legislation. It is designed for that purpose and for those objectives to be met.

Amendment negatived.

Ms O'CONNOR - The second amendment to clause 3, proposed paragraph (a) as it stands, to:

Leave out "increase the opportunities for".

Insert instead "enable".

This is really a plain English amendment, but it is also a word that has more forward motion behind it. If you increase the opportunities for something, it is pretty broad and fuzzy. However, if you are an enabler, then you are basically working hard to make sure that you are enabling people to find secure, affordable housing.

I know parliamentary draftspeople are highly skilled at drafting and it is a particular way of approaching the English language, but I would love to hear the minister explain why you would not put the word 'enable' there. Surely it would be the role of Homes Tasmania, through its actions and allocation of funding, to enable people in need to find a home. It is an enabling agency, and I really think the minister should just accept this amendment because it is a bit mealy-mouthed, the way it reads now.

I commend the amendment to the House.

Mr BARNETT - Thanks very much for the remarks regarding the second amendment. The Government cannot support this particular amendment, and I will explain why.

Ms O'Connor - Because it is a Greens' amendment?

Mr BARNETT - No, it is because of the way the bill is drafted. The needs of eligible people are complex, and the authority needs to be established with purposes for which it can be held accountable. It is a really important point.

Ms O'Connor - We cannot hold them accountable for enabling provision of housing?

Mr BARNETT - Let me finish - for which they can be held accountable. By increasing the opportunities for eligible people, the authority is given a clear mandate, a clear purpose, to

increase supply and support services within the resources it can control. Putting it another way, your preference is to remove 'increase the opportunities for' and insert 'enable'. It is almost - I am not saying it is - but it is almost ensuring you are putting an obligation onto the authority to require, to ensure.

I know where you are coming from and it is coming from a good heart, but you cannot force an authority or an entity to do something for which it cannot be accountable. It can be accountable for the purposes set out in this legislation, which, I think we have the balance right, in clause 3. It can be accountable for ensuring that there is an increase in the opportunities for eligible persons and that mandate is clear to increase the supply, to increase those support services.

We have to be a little careful as legislators and, yes, I am a lawyer but I do not want to split hairs. It is important to make sure that we get this balance right and get the wording right because you cannot set up an authority to fail. You have to set them up to achieve the purpose upon which they are to deliver. Yes, they will have their \$3.5 billion asset on their ballot sheet and we will be able to act on that.

I believe the purpose, as defined, at the moment, is well worded. I acknowledge where you are coming from but I think the wording is carefully drafted and we support the current drafting on the legislation and cannot support this particular amendment.

Madam CHAIR - Ms Haddad?

Ms Haddad - I think I need to save my turn for my questions.

Madam CHAIR - You need to do what?

Ms HADDAD - I have only one more go on this clause, and I have questions to ask -

Ms O'Connor - You are the key spokesperson so you do not have the same time restrictions.

Ms HADDAD - Oh, I do not have the same time restrictions? Why would I not know about Committee processes?

Thank you, Chair. I thought I only had one more go on this clause and so I was saving up.

I do not object to this amendment, using the word 'enable' instead of the word 'increase opportunities for'. I note that the word 'enable' is actually used throughout the section elsewhere. In the second section, clause 3(b)(i) 'enable the provision'. Also, in clause 3(f), 'to enable the strategic acquisition of land'. The parliament is clearly instructing Homes Tasmania or making it clear that our intention is that they enable these things to happen rather than increasing opportunities for. It could be seen as a bit of wordsmithing but I can understand the intent behind it. As it is used throughout the bill in other areas I do not have a problem with supporting it.

Ms O'Connor - Do you have any questions on that clause?

Ms HADDAD - Yes, but do I do them now?

Madam CHAIR - Yes.

Ms HADDAD - Oh my goodness, one day I will learn the Committee process.

I have a lot of questions about clause 3. I will start in that clause that I was just in, which is clause 3(f):

- (f) to enable the strategic acquisition of land, and land and premises, primarily for the development of housing ...

I wondered what is in the minister's mind in terms of that scope. What scope? Subclause (f), which reads, 'to enable the strategic acquisition of land and land and premises primarily for the development of house, for the provision of housing' et cetera. I am wondering, what is your thinking in terms of 'other things?' If it is primarily for those purposes, what else is potentially in scope?

I have questions relating to other parts of clause 3. Clause 3(b)(ii), Homes Tasmania will have a role in facilitating the provision of community services. This relates also to a question I have with a later clause. Homes Tasmania will have a role to play in facilitating the provision of community services, as the clause reads:

... so as to assist in the economic and social participation of persons who, without such provision, may be restricted, in whole or in part, from economic or social participation in society;

Mr Barnett - Which clause are you on again?

Ms HADDAD - This is clause 3(b)(ii). I wholeheartedly agree that Homes Tasmania or that Housing Tasmania, as they currently are, have a role in performing that function and have a responsibility in performing that function. It actually goes to a lot of what Mrs Alexander was saying in her second reading contribution, that for many housing tenants, providing a key in the hand is not sufficient. There are much greater areas of need where people need community services beyond the scope of what you might think of as community housing services in order to maintain that tenancy.

Minister, you have referred to them in your summing up comments: things like mental health support, alcohol and drug support, financial management, a whole range of community services that are currently funded mostly by the Department of Communities Tasmania, but by other areas of government as well.

Right now, there is a relationship as 'funder' between Housing Tasmania and the other parts of the Department of Communities Tasmania in terms of the broader suite of community services which are funded by government, which will be somewhat at arm's length from the rest of the State Service once Homes Tasmania is established and they are operating as a statutory authority at arm's length from government. I know, and you did say very clearly before, that the intent of the bill, and you as minister, is that everybody will continue to work together and I know that that is what we all want. I know it is what everybody in the sector wants. People do work very closely together across the sector and across agencies but there

are also administrative requirements for information sharing, for drafting of funding agreements, of management of funding agreements, which will be fundamentally altered when Homes Tasmania is a separate statutory authority.

That was a long preamble, but please stay with me, because I know you will understand my question. If Homes Tasmania is to have a role to play in facilitating the provision of community support services and, as the section reads, it is a role to play in the provision of community support services across that whole suite of community support services that support tenants, how will they actually exercise that function when they are not the funder, or the manager of the contracts that fund those services anymore? Or they do not have a direct connection with the funder anymore? Does that make sense?

Mr Barnett - Not exactly. Explain a little more for me.

Ms HADDAD - Basically, I had that preamble about how we all agree that there are people who require multiple community supports in order to maintain tenancies. From the wording of the bill it is the expectation of Government that Homes Tasmania will have a role to play in the delivery and the provision of those services.

Mr Barnett - Yes.

Ms HADDAD - However, once they are a statutory authority and outside the Department of Communities Tasmania they will not have a direct relationship with the parts of the agency that currently fund that broader suite of community services. I am wondering how a Homes Tasmania can fulfil that requirement of facilitating the provision of a broad suite of community services, only some of which they are responsible for funding and delivering?

Mr BARNETT - Through you, Chair, and I thank the member for her queries with respect to two parts of clause 3.

First to deal with 3(f). I can give you a very good example because I think you asked about the provision of strategic acquisition of land and land and premises primarily for the development of housing for, and the provision of housing to eligible persons. It is a fair question, no problem at all.

A very good example in this part of the world is Huntingfield where it is a major development and it is primarily for housing but they do other things as well. For example, the member for Franklin looking attentively would probably know better than me the plans and approach down there in community access, roads, gardens, open green space areas. There may be an example of playgrounds. I was recently in Melbourne and there was a community space where kids could play in an outdoor area - it was primarily housing - but there were other services and developments that were beneficial to the housing and housing support that was provided. That is essentially why that has been drafted in 3(f) in the way that it has been. I hope that assists the member.

In terms of clause 3(b)(ii):

- (ii) facilitate the provision of community support services ...

the first part is 'enable the provision of housing assistance and housing support services and facilitate the provision of community support services'. In that regard, I am advised that the community support services could include neighbourhood houses and the services that are provided through neighbourhood houses. The definition of 'community support' is in part two of the bill so that might assist the member. I am happy to assist further if that does not provide enough understanding.

Ms Haddad - Does that mean that neighbourhood houses funding agreements will be managed by Homes Tasmania but the other kind of community supports like financial counselling, mental health, alcohol and drugs will not be managed by Homes Tasmania?

Mr BARNETT - I am acting on advice and the advice is they are still owned by the neighbourhood houses. The Minister for Community Services and Development would continue to provide support and funding through the normal processes. In terms of the homes that may be provided through Homes Tasmania, that would be funded through Homes Tasmania. It would be a separate funding arrangement. They are leased rather than funded by a separate leasing arrangement.

Ms HADDAD - I do not mean to be a pedant about it - and I promise that I am not going through every single clause to this level of detail - but I just know that in the Homes Act, the similar provision reads, 'to facilitate the provision of community housing support services' and I wonder if that is maybe how that should read. Without it, I am worried that there will be an expectation on Homes Tasmania to deliver something that they just cannot. They will not be able to facilitate the provision of the broad suite of community support services that are funded by government.

Mr BARNETT - This might assist. On page 13:

community support services means services or facilities provided for the benefit of members of the community and includes, but is not limited to including, the following services and facilities:

- (a) counselling services;
- (b) health services and mental health services;
- (c) premises in which socially isolated persons may socialise with other persons;
- (d) any prescribed services or facilities that are for the benefit of the community;

That is funded, can be funded. The asset is provided through Homes Tasmania but funding of those assets, it might be through the minister, Mr Nic Street, or another part of government or elsewhere.

Ms O'CONNOR - Minister, just back to our second amendment. The purposes of the Homes Act are to, compared to the eight purposes, which have been re-written into this legislation, and the first is, to provide - or to enable - the provision of housing assistance to

eligible persons, and (b) to assist in the provision of housing support services to eligible persons.

One way of looking at it, is that the new legislation lowers the expectations on the housing authority, because for 87 years it has been enough for the original, or the foundational act to require Housing Tasmania to enable the facilitation of housing for people in need. I draw that to your attention.

You have obviously made your mind up on this clause, but we did not pull this one out of nowhere. It actually has a purpose and it is a much stronger word than to 'increase the opportunities for' which, to me, that is a pretty weak expectation on the housing authority at a time when arguably we need them to do more and better, working with more people, better. I draw that to your attention.

Amendment negatived.

Clause 3 agreed to.

Clauses 4 and 5 agreed to.

Clause 6 -

Meaning of eligible person

Ms O'CONNOR - This is the point in the bill where the definition matters so much. Who is an eligible person to receive housing or housing or community supports in this state going forward? We are a bit worried that the clause here in relation to Homes Tasmania's capacity to require a person to provide information to demonstrate that they are eligible for support could be unnecessarily punitive on a person who is in distress, and potentially preclude them from receiving support, because even though they are in crisis, Housing Tasmania says you need to show us this, you need to show us that, you need to demonstrate this way that you are an eligible person.

We propose an amendment to clause 6, proposed subsections (5) and (6):

Leave out the subsections.

Insert instead the following subsections -

- (5) Homes Tasmania may, by notice to a person, require a person to provide to Homes Tasmania, within a reasonable period specified in the notice, evidence as to whether the person is an eligible person.
- (6) If a person, after having been given a notice under subsection (5), fails, within the period specified in the notice, to provide to Homes Tasmania evidence that the person is an eligible person, Homes Tasmania may, in its discretion, assume that the person is not an eligible person, unless there is evidence before Homes Tasmania that there were reasonable grounds for the failure.

We believe this provides just that little extra protection for someone who may be in crisis. Our amendment requires the time frames provided by Homes Tasmania to be reasonable, and it removes the ability of Homes Tasmania to stipulate specific evidence that must be provided. This is to prevent Homes Tasmania from requiring specific documentation from persons who may be in a crisis and unable to obtain it. Any evidence of being an eligible person should be sufficient.

You have to be very careful, Madam Chair, if we are making it so prescriptive for a person to demonstrate that they are living in poverty, homeless, staying with their entire family at a friend's place, living on Commonwealth income support or very low incomes, unable to afford rentals in the private rental market. Let us make sure we are not creating a situation where someone who clearly is eligible, by a 'reasonable person test', for housing or housing services support, and that there is maximum flexibility in how the new authority responds to their need.

I hope the minister sees that this is an improvement on the current wording in the bill, and that it provides that little extra layer of protection to people in need, by acknowledging that any evidence of being an eligible person should be sufficient.

Mr BARNETT - Thank you very much for your amendment.

Ms O'Connor - Do you like it?

Mr BARNETT - It is very similar to Shelter Tasmania's recommendation and feedback that we received. Let us do the second part first - subclause (6). We might be on the same page. That would be terrific. Let us read subclause (6), because we are on the same page in the sense that we got that feedback through you, Chair, and have responded to Shelter Tasmania and have it here in the bill. To clarify, it says:

If a person, after having been given a notice under subsection (5), fails, within the period specified in the notice, to provide to Homes Tasmania the evidence that the person is required by the notice to provide, Homes Tasmania may, in its discretion, assume that the person is not an eligible person, unless there is evidence before Homes Tasmania that there were reasonable grounds for the failure.

It seems to me, that reads the same as yours, which means we are on the same page and we can tick that. You do not have to do it, because we have already done it. That is how good we are. We are ahead of the game. We can shake hands on that.

With subclause (5), I think we are very close. Let us look at that, bearing in mind your amendment, which talks about:

within a reasonable period specified in the notice, evidence as to whether the person is an eligible person.

If you just draw your attention to subclause (5) in the bill:

Homes Tasmania may, by notice to a person, require a person to provide to Homes Tasmania, within a period specified in the notice –

- (a) evidence as to whether the person is an eligible person; or
- (b) evidence, of a kind specified in the notice, as to whether the person is an eligible person.

That seems to be very similar to your amendment but slightly different. As I shared in my second reading and my summing up, I really appreciated the feedback from various stakeholders, including Shelter Tas. I have a lot of time for Pattie Chugg; she does a terrific job. We were there at a Homelessness Tasmania event and various events. She is a great advocate and I have met with her on a number of occasions, and communicate with her. I have taken this onboard, thanks to the department's support and my office support.

I think we can shake hands on both those amendments if you are willing to do so.

Ms O'CONNOR - Chair, I will withdraw the amendment.

Amendment withdrawn by leave.

Clause 6 agreed to.

Clause 7 -

Meaning of *housing provider*

Ms HADDAD - Minister, I went to this in my second reading contribution as well. It is very clear from the drafting of clause 7 - both clause 7(1) and clause 7(2) - that it is the intention of the Government to expand the meaning of 'housing provider' to include private sector building and construction companies, and also real estate agencies.

There is no question that those commercial entities have a role to play in housing in Tasmania, including in the construction and delivery of social housing dwellings on behalf of government and on behalf of the sector. Also, I know government has a role to play in supporting tenants of private rental properties in the private sector.

I can understand that building and construction companies and real estate agents have a role. They are part of the entire housing system, if you like.

I would like some further clarification from the minister on this debate around the policy intent behind expanding the definition of 'housing provider' to include those corporate players. As I said, there is no question that they have a role to play in delivery - including delivery of social housing - but it does seem to be a fundamental philosophical shift to include them in the definition of a housing provider.

I suppose my question is in two parts. One: is it the expectation that those commercial players will also manage housing in the way that community housing providers do? At the moment when we think about what a community housing provider is, we think of those community housing support providers like the Salvos, Community Housing Limited, Mission Housing, and so on. They also manage leases. Will these commercial entities who will now, by virtue of this change, be classed as housing providers? Will they also have that role of managing tenancies?

Second: what benefit is it to those commercial providers to be classified as housing providers now? There is nothing preventing them at the moment from having a role to play in delivery and partnering with the sector and with government. That already happens; there is no objection to that. Are there other benefits that those commercial entities, as defined now, will gain from being included in that definition of housing provider? Will there be different tax regimes that might apply to them? Will they be eligible for different kinds of government assistance that might not be available to them at the moment?

Could the minister talk me through the policy intent and the thinking behind expanding that definition? It does represent a fundamental shift away from what I spoke about in my second reading contribution about the fundamental and moral obligation of government to be the provider of housing albeit that we partner with others to deliver that. This in itself demonstrates a strong departure from that ethos. I know that we are from different political parties and we probably have different value sets, and that might be the answer to my question. I am just very genuinely interested in the policy intent and thinking behind that change.

Mr BARNETT - I am very happy to respond to that. I understand where the member is coming from. I draw your mind back to my summing up where I indicated that the bill is in two parts. One part is the purposes of the act, and all the powers, functions, responsibilities of the authority are constrained by the purposes of the act. The purposes of the act are really important, so yes, the definition is broad. I am conceding and agreeing with you and I will note the explanation that says, 'this clause provides a definition of housing provider that captures providers who construct, alter, enlarge, repair, or improve residential premises for purposes stated in this provision as well as providers who manage residential premises for purposes stated in this provision'.

I can also draw your attention to the federal government and NRAS, which I know we have all become very familiar with in the last months and years. Those properties were built by private developers, private sector entities for a purpose: to provide rental affordability for Tasmanians and across the country, so I did make reference to that.

The national housing future fund: again, I have raised that with Julie Collins, the federal minister, and exactly how that will roll out. I believe she needs legislation by the end of this year, but exactly how that will roll out, I do not know. There may be a bill to rent, but again the private sector can, and quite fairly should be involved in making that happen. They are housing providers.

The point is that those housing providers and what they can do is fettered, restrained, constrained, their terms and conditions with respect to their objectives, and that is the objective of caring for, supporting, of meeting the objectives set out in this legislation. I mentioned those examples to try to assist the member. Again, it is going back to the primary purpose of the legislation.

There is nothing philosophical. Yes, we come from different parties, but I think there is the goodwill to get the job done, to care for our community, to support vulnerable Tasmanians. As the legislation makes clear, we have just been debating the purposes in clause 3. It is all set out in clause 3 in terms of the purposes of the legislation. I think it is well drafted.

If you are an eligible person, and those persons on low and moderate incomes, to satisfy the basic human need for housing by living in safe, secure, appropriate and affordable housing.

That is the purpose with the other parts of clause 3. That is what I want to draw to your attention to. Yes, the private sector can and should be involved to help rollout the work that needs to be done to meet that purpose. That is what is driving it.

Ms O'CONNOR - Off the back of Ms Haddad's question and your answer, minister, are you saying that by having this definition here of a housing provider that captures building and construction companies and developers, it is placing some constraints on how they operate as a housing provider for the purposes of this act? It was not clear to me what the purpose is of describing developers or building and construction companies as 'housing providers' when what they are are developers and building and construction companies.

Is it to be quite prescriptive about the role of these entities or these companies? Are we giving them a name, 'housing provider', in order that they may operate or that Homes Tasmania may commission them or enter into an agreement with them, that is, only to operate under the purposes of this act? Calling them a 'housing provider', are you saying that it tightens it up a bit? I am not quite sure.

Ms Butler - So they can do commercial as well.

Ms O'CONNOR - One more time?

Ms Butler - No, it is all right. I am just chatting away.

Ms O'CONNOR - No, we can have a conversation in the Committee stage. Sometimes it is better than -

Mr BARNETT - That is okay. I am happy to have the conversation and just to say the purposes of the act is designed in one parallel path and then the other part of the legislation opens up the functions, powers and responsibilities. They are very broad but they must meet the purposes of the act. This is to allow for agility, for flexibility. Homes Tasmania may want to partner with a housing provider. Of course, we already have wonderful housing providers in Mission Tasmania, Housing Choices -

Ms O'Connor - They are the not-for-profits so that it is different. They are from the not-for-profit sector.

Mr BARNETT - Yes, Centacare Evolve, Anglicare and so on. We need a building construction industry to get these homes out of the ground. We cannot just click our fingers; they need to be part of the solution.

Ms O'Connor - Of course, but why do you call them a 'housing provider'?

Ms Haddad - They are doing it now without being defined in that way.

Mr BARNETT - Sorry?

Ms Haddad - With respect and by interjection, they are already able to partner with government, commercial companies, to construct houses. We do need them to construct houses, absolutely. They can and do already partner with government and with the sector to

do that. They do not need to be defined as housing providers under a piece of legislation to continue to do that commercial work.

I wonder are there other benefits to them? Maybe they can access government money in a new way or tax breaks. I am not sure. I am not an expert in tax but are there other kickbacks, if you like, or benefits to those commercial providers coming their way as a result of being defined as a 'housing provider'?

Mr BARNETT - My understanding of the advice from the department is that it is defined broadly to allow the department to partner, to come into legal agreements to ensure they can get the job done. My understanding from the advice I received is that the current powers are currently quite limited in terms of what commercial work can be undertaken. That is why this bill is new, it is necessary and it is different from the 1935 legislation.

I can make it clear that there are no special benefits that are going to be provided. No kickbacks or whatever for the providers. They have to do the job in accordance with the contract. Terms and conditions would apply, and it is designed to meet the purposes of the legislation, to meet the needs of low- and medium-income Tasmanians, to provide social and affordable housing, put roofs over people's heads and provide those wraparound services and housing support services that people need.

The Homes Act did not contemplate arrangements for developments that we currently need. That is the previous legislation. That is why it is quite broad, and that is the advice I have.

Clause 7 agreed to.

Clauses 8 and 9 agreed to.

Clause 10 -

Application of purposes of Act and housing principles

Ms O'CONNOR - Our amendment to clause 10 adds the principle that all tenants under this act should be protected under the Residential Tenancy Act. This was recommended by a range of submitters, including the Tenants' Union of Tasmania, and Shelter.

Our amendment is:

Page 27, clause 10, proposed subsection (2), before paragraph (a).

Insert the following paragraph:

(A) all tenants under this Act should be protected under the
Residential Tenancy Act 1997;

When talking about subleasing, for example, in their submission to the Government, the Tenants' Union says -

Pursuant to section 16A of the Residential Tenancy Act 1997, social housing tenants who are subject to a 'residential management agreement' are currently protected against limited sub-tenancy protections. The insertion of clause

51(2) of the draft bill and its broad powers to lease or sublease 'on the terms and conditions that Housing Tasmania thinks fit or Homes Tasmania thinks fit' means that the two provisions may be in conflict.

To ensure that Housing Tasmania or Homes Tasmania continues to enter into residential tenancy agreements and the same level of protection as other residential tenancies, we strongly recommend that clause 10 is amended to make it clear that all tenants will be protected by the Residential Tenancy Act 1997.

There is another whole discussion and debate about whether the Residential Tenancy Act adequately protects the interests of tenants. The Greens strongly argue that in its current form it does not, and Ms Johnston has strongly advocated for reform this week.

I know the Opposition is interested in reform and improvements to the Residential Tenancy Act. Yesterday we heard the minister and Attorney-General flag that she had an open mind on some improvements to the Residential Tenancy Act.

I will remind the House that we have a bill coming through private members' time next week that seeks to reform the Residential Tenancy Act, to put a fairer rent control system in place to allow for reasonable grounds for refusing pets, energy efficiency standards for households, and another one that just escapes my mind at the moment.

There is very good reason to be extremely clear about the protections that are afforded to tenants in properties owned and managed by Homes Tasmania, as well as properties that are managed, or owned and managed, by community housing providers.

Could the minister address the Tenants' Union's concern that there is a conflict in those subleasing provisions that require the legislation to be specific about the protections provided to tenants under the Residential Tenancy Act.

Did you just say 'cool'?

Mr BARNETT - Sorry?

Ms O'Connor - I thought you just said 'cool.'

Mr BARNETT - Cool? Well, we are going all right. We have shaken hands on a couple of clauses. Let us see if we can get this one out, because we did have a look at this and we have actually made a change, but you are not on the right clause.

I will draw your attention to clause 49 -

Ms O'Connor - That is the one that is referred to in the Tenants' Union, I am pretty sure. Okay, so clause 49 -

Mr BARNETT - Clause 49. Again, I have just covered that -

power the lease or sublease to eligible persons on terms the authority thinks fit may conflict with the Residential Tenancy Act, leasing and subleasing

section amended to explicitly state residential premises are to be leased subject to the Residential Tenancy Act 1997.

In clause 49, I think you have, with good intent, probably got the wrong section here. You have clause 10, which is at the wrong part of the act for making this amendment.

Ms O'Connor - I am not sure about that.

Mr BARNETT - Well, that is my advice and I am just sharing that with you. Your clause 10 is about the application of purposes of the act and housing principles -

Ms O'Connor - Yes.

Mr BARNETT - whereas clause 49 deals specifically with leasing and subleasing by Homes Tasmania of residential premises to eligible persons. Subsection (2) of that makes it clear, and I will read it:

Subject to the Residential Tenancy Act 1997, residential premises that are leased, or subleased, to an eligible person by Homes Tasmania in accordance with this section are to be leased, or subleased, to the eligible person on the terms and conditions that Homes Tasmania thinks fit.

Ms O'Connor - Yes.

Mr BARNETT - I think that addresses at least part of your concern, and hopefully potentially all of your concerns.

Subsections (3) and (4) of clause 49 are also relevant, so I will draw that to your attention. As I say, we have that feedback, and we have responded to it as best we can. It is better to be in that part of the act than the purposes of the act because we want to make it relevant to leasing and subleasing by Homes Tasmania. Again, I draw that to your attention.

Ms O'CONNOR - Thank you, minister. As you are aware, the suggestion that it be put in clause 10 came from the Tenants' Union of Tasmania. If you read it as we propose, it is:

Application of purposes of Act and housing principles in performing a function, or exercising a power under this Act, Homes Tasmania must also have regard to the following principles -

- (a) all tenants under this Act should be protected under the Residential Tenancy Act 1997.

I think it does fit in there. We can have a disagreement about that, but it is an affirmation of protection. I am so pleased there has been an acceptance of the point made by the Tenants' Union of Tasmania and an adjustment, but what has changed is that rather than having in the act a broad statement of protection under the Residential Tenancy Act 1997, what we have here in clause 49 is something that is much more qualified. It says, subject -

Mr Barnett - Not really.

Ms O'CONNOR - Well it is, subject to the Residential Tenancy Act 1997:

Residential premises that are leased or subleased to an eligible person by Homes Tasmania in accordance with this section are to be leased or subleased to the eligible person on the terms and conditions that Homes Tasmania thinks fit.

That is specific only to the leasing and subleasing - whereas, if it went into clause 10, it would provide that stronger statement of reassurance that all tenants are protected but we, of course, must operate in the belief that all tenants of Housing Tasmania are protected by the Residential Tenancy Act 1997.

Mr BARNETT - You are just not covering off emergency shelters and the like because they are not deemed so, is my understanding. We are broadly on the same page, but that is why it is in clause 49 and not as an overarching - because it could get messy - for emergency relief, emergency accommodation.

Ms O'Connor - Thank you, minister. We will just deal with that amendment.

Mr BARNETT - I cannot support that because we have already -

Ms O'Connor - No, that is fine. We will just do the ayes and the noes and then move on.

Mr BARNETT - But we are nearly shaking hands. That is the thing.

Ms Haddad - There are positives here. We are all after the same thing.

Ms O'Connor - It is a rare moment.

Mr BARNETT - Well, enjoy it while it lasts. I want to make sure that is on the record for people in the other place. I appreciate the intent and I think it is covered in clause 49. I am concerned that if it was put into clause 10, then it would mean all tenants, including meaning crisis shelters could not operate, so that is the advice that I have. I can understand that that could become complex, problematic. We do not want that. That is why it is in clause 49, not clause 10.

Again, I appreciate where you are coming from, the intent of it. We did take on board the feedback from the Tenants' Union, Ben Bartl and the team over there, and also Shelter Tasmania and we have thought about that carefully. That is why I want to put that on the record, for people in the other place, so that they know where we are coming from and that is why it is in clause 49.

Amendment negatived.

Ms O'CONNOR - I have a second amendment to this clause. Madam Chair, I move -

Page 27, clause 10, proposed subsection (2), paragraph (b), subparagraph (i).

Leave out the subparagraph.

Insert instead the following subparagraph:

- (i) to all persons in need of such assistance and services, with priority afforded to the persons most in need of such assistance and services;

This potentially broadens the scope of this clause and acknowledges that if a person is in need, they are in need and we should not be waiting necessarily until someone is right up against the wall or sleeping at the rivulet until we acknowledge that there is a need there. The current principle and the legislation reads that housing should be provided to the person most in need and -

Mr Barnett - Your amendment repeats itself. Anyway, I will respond in a moment.

Ms O'CONNOR - I do not know that it does but anyway, that is pretty interesting coming from you, minister, when we sit here and listen to you in question time. You do a lot of tedious repetition.

We are trying to change this to the principle that housing should be provided to all people in need and priority given to those most in need. As housing - we think it should operate particularly under a housing first model, where you provide housing to people and you wrap the supports around them once they have a secure home. I know we are not there yet but hopefully, we will be there one day because that is the best housing policy that any government can institute.

Mr BARNETT - Madam Chair, we are going pretty well overall. I will not accuse the member of splitting hairs but it is going close to it because it is repeating something that is already in the act, with our bill as drafted saying that it is to the person most in need of such assistance and services.

Ms O'Connor - We are done for now.

Debate adjourned.

ADJOURNMENT

Vietnam Veterans Day

[6.01 p.m.]

Ms BUTLER (Lyons) - Mr Speaker, tonight I rise on the adjournment to place on the record that today is Vietnam Veterans Day. It is a day to remember the brave sacrifices made in the Vietnam War and to take time to listen and learn of the experiences of those who served.

Today is also the 56th anniversary of the Battle of Long Tan fought by the men of D Company, 6th Battalion. The battle is one of the most significant conflicts for Australian service personnel who fought in the war. Sixty thousand Australians served in the Vietnam War between 1962 and 1975. Remembering these brave people and talking about their experiences is very important. Many of the people who fought in Vietnam returned to a hostile

Australia and we should never forget the sacrifice of our service people and the scars that many of them still carry today.

Five hundred and twenty-one Australians died in the Vietnam War; 3000 were wounded. On behalf of the Tasmanian Labor Party today we honour their service and sacrifice.

Premaydena Hill

[6.02 p.m.]

Mr TUCKER (Lyons) - Mr Speaker, on Thursday 11 August I had the privilege of being accompanied by Jane Howlett on a visit to Premaydena Hill, situated on the Tasman Peninsula, to a first-generation family farm.

Ms O'Connor - Hear, hear.

Mr TUCKER - I know, you are one of my constituents, Ms O'Connor.

This farm widely spreads across the hills between Premaydena and Nubeena with spectacular views of Norfolk Bay and Maria Island, Storm Bay, Wedge Island and Bruny Island. The farm produces premium Black Angus cattle, award-winning garlic and cool-climate wine. There is a very interesting story behind Premaydena Hill which is not your typical family farm as, unlike many Australian farms, the owner was not born into the farming life, as you would be aware, Mr Speaker.

In 2013, Daniel Kelleher had an ambition to start a new life and a career as a farmer after 15 years in management roles around Australia and overseas. He searched for almost two years across some of the best farmlands in southern Australia. Along his journey he started to understand that not all farms are created equally. Patience, persistence and understanding eventually paid off and a property on the Tasman Peninsula caught his eye.

With his new-found knowledge he realised that this property stood out from all the others with its carrying capacity, the consistent rainfall records within the area, its excellent history of fertiliser and management of the property and the soil, being loamy, was excellent for pasture growth.

With every box on his list ticked, Daniel took the leap, leaving his corporate career and relocating to a new life at Premaydena Hill. Yes, Daniel faced challenges and a steep learning curve in farming, machinery, pasture management, fencing, animal husbandry and maintenance - just to list a few. Six months into his new venture, he met Ella, a medical research scientist. A year later they married and Ella joined Daniel on the farm working together towards his vision.

With Daniel having a powerful ambition - I will say, as an eternal optimist, after talking to him - and Ella's meticulous attention detail, it was nothing short of a winning combination. Since their beginning they have built a herd of 100 Angus breeding cows, established a three-hectare vineyard and invested time and resources on the property by planting native vegetation and increasing water storages. In 2019 they transitioned into direct-to-consumer beef sales - professionally-butchered, grass-fed Black Angus yearlings to your specifications, packaged and delivered.

The story is far from over for this newly established family farm, now with two young boys and producing their first vintage in 2021. It all started in November 2018 once Daniel acknowledged he needed to give up his best hay paddock and plant his first 3250 young vines. This paddock was north-facing, gentle-sloping, and sheltered from winds and having well-drained soil, it was the best option and an opportunity too good to pass up on.

In 2019 came the second vineyard block, consisting of pinot noir, shiraz and pinot noir, all for their sparkling wine production. 2020 saw them plant their third and final vineyard block, including chardonnay and pinot gris wines.

They plan now for a cellar door, with spectacular views producing premium single vineyard wines, whilst focusing on high quality over a high volume. Just a little on the side, the family started commercially growing garlic in 2017. This was predominantly due to getting involved with the Koonya Garlic Festival. Due to the increase in the vineyard and expanding their beef business, garlic growing has reduced in size and become more of a passion. I sincerely wish Daniel and Ella continued success and growth. I found their story an inspiration and such a legacy for their children.

Endometriosis - Impact

[6.06 p.m.]

Ms O'BYRNE (Bass) - Mr Speaker, I was originally going to come up and talk about periods, because it is always fun when I get explanations from male MPs and departmental people about how periods affect woman. That is always very helpful. The reason I was going to raise it is that Scotland has recently made an initiative whereby period products will be freely accessible, which is a phenomenally exciting thing.

As I was planning to come and talk about that and what that might mean and the things that we could do, I am reminded that that is simply a factor of the gendered nature of health care and that the health care that women access is often more expensive than the health care that men access. It is no secret that being a woman is more expensive than being a man. There are so many things that women use that are more expensive to use.

In particular today, I wanted to talk about the impact of things such as endometriosis. This is a chronic condition that is painful, that affects fertility, leads to reduced participation in school, work and sporting activities and cost about \$7.4 billion in Australia from between 2017 and 2018, mostly through reduced quality of life and productivity losses. That is a significant underestimate from the data that was originally done back then. I wanted to read this letter by a woman journalist and her story about accessing services and the cost of endometriosis. This is Rachael Burke:

This week my rechargeable heat pack, otherwise known as my trusty sidekick, broke. I immediately rushed out to get a new one. I am in lockdown. Thankfully, a chemist in my local government area stocked it. While I was waiting at the chemist to pay, I started to think about all the money I have spent on endo and managing this insidious disease since my diagnosis. The sums are not pretty.

A report released in 2019, one year after the data I have already given, estimated that endometriosis costs Australian society \$9.7 billion annually. Two-thirds of those costs are attributed to a loss in productivity, with the remainder - \$2.5 billion - attributed to direct healthcare costs. The figures are hard to compute and while my heat pack was not anywhere in the realm of billions, or hundreds, of dollars, the money I spend on endo really does add up.

Since my diagnosis, I have been a regular at my GP and various other specialists. It is not cheap. My specialist appointments cost anywhere between \$200 to \$400 per appointment and my GP does not bulk bill, so I end up paying \$40 to \$60 out of pocket each time. At the peak of my illness, I hit the Medicare safety net. Once you reach the threshold, you start to receive more money back than when you make a Medicare claim and whilst that depreciated, I was spending money like there was no tomorrow.

As the 2019 report indicated, one of my main endo costs has been from a loss of productivity. Due to the severity of my disease and frequency of my surgeries, I was forced to take a year off work to recover and that is a fair bit of lost income. Even now, I have accepted a lower paying job than I perhaps otherwise would have, preferencing a work-from-home flexible arrangement so that I am able to manage my health.

Other costs associated with my endo include internal ultrasounds, x-rays, pain and anti-nausea medications, vitamins, acupuncture, blood tests and pathology costs, iron infusions, TENS machines and private health insurance. I have had three surgeries, each of these alone has cost thousands of dollars in out-of-pocket expenses. I have calculated that I typically spend around \$300 to \$400 per month on endo and this figure includes a portion of my private health cover, medications, doctor and specialist appointments and other endo related treatments. It varies from month to month.

The financial burden of endo can be pretty stressful. For some, just getting diagnosed can cost upward of \$5000 in medical and hospital fees. Taken together with the fact that it takes between 7 to 12 years to get a diagnosis the cost of the person with endo endures in medical appointments prior to their diagnosis, loss of work through illness, medical emergency and hospital stays all need to be factored in.

The reason that I go to that is that there are some 200 million people worldwide diagnosed with this disease; 830 000 in Australia. It is time that we deal with, not only better treatments and better diagnosis but a better understanding of the impact that it has for women.

Endometriosis occurs when endometrial-like tissues similar to the tissue normally found lining the uterus is found in other body parts such as the ovaries, fallopian tubes, peritoneum - which is the membrane lining the abdominal and pelvic cavities and outside the uterus. These tissues are collectively known as endometriosis and like the tissue lining the uterus, they respond to hormones released by ovaries causing bleeding, which leads to inflammation and scarring which causes painful adhesions joining together pelvic organs which are normally separate. The causes are unclear.

Some people experience no symptoms, others experience pain, heavy menstrual bleeding, bleeding between periods, lethargy and reduced fertility amongst other symptoms.

The recommended method of diagnosing is via examination specimens collected by a laparoscopy, so it is keyhole surgery. You would not want to be on the waiting list at a public hospital for it. However, the diagnosis of endometriosis is often delayed with an average of seven years between onset of symptoms and diagnosis. There is no known cure and though it can be managed somewhat with medical and surgical treatments and use of pain killers, hormonal contraceptives or other hormonal treatments and the removal of lesions via laparoscopy or laparotomy, in some case the uterus has to be removed - a hysterectomy. However, symptoms can still occur.

I raise this today because the cost of this falls absolutely on women, whether it is women with their time out of the workforce or women with their time with health costs. I remind you that somehow, inexplicably, the ultrasound of a scrotum attracts a higher government rebate than the ultrasound of a breast.

Misquote by Leader of the Opposition

[6.12 p.m.]

Mr ROCKLIFF (Braddon - Premier) - Mr Speaker, I take note of the member, Ms O'Byrne's contribution.

Today in question time I was concerned that Ms White, Leader of the Opposition, misquoted me when referring to the \$5 million cost of living package. Ms White claimed in her question to me that I was encouraging Tasmanians to take out a loan if they could not afford their power bills. She said she was quoting me.

Mr Speaker, I have checked the *Hansard* and her quote is not accurate. Ms White asked me on Tuesday about cost of living and I provided examples of our cost of living initiatives, including the winter bill busting payment, the extension of the No Interest Loans Scheme (NILS) and the support we are providing through Aurora to people who are finding it difficult to pay their power bills. It is perfectly clear on *Hansard* on Tuesday. Of course, I will give Ms White the benefit of the doubt. However, I did not advocate for people to take out loans to pay power bills and the *Hansard* reflects that. I will say that NILS is a very important organisation in our state that protects people from predatory lending institutions and does not deserve Labor's politicking.

Use of NILS to pay Power Bills

[6.13 p.m.]

Mr WINTER (Franklin) - Mr Speaker, I do not have the *Hansard* in front of me but I did read the *Hansard* from Tuesday and the insinuation that I understood from the Premier's answer to the question was that he believed that NILS loans could be used to pay power bills. Today when the Leader of the Opposition asked the question of the Premier about how NILS loans could be used to pay power bills he did not appear to know the answer.

It is good that he went and researched it and looked it up. Hopefully, now he is aware that you cannot use the NILS facility to pay power bills unless you are a victim of domestic

violence so it is not available to the vast majority of Tasmanians. The point is that the reason that people need NILS loans is because of the extremely high cost of living.

Trumpeting the availability of NILS loans during a cost of living crisis is not something to celebrate. It is actually a short-term solution to alleviate a pain that Tasmanian households are feeling. It would be much better if Tasmanians did not need to apply for NILS loans to pay for the essentials: to pay for bonds, to pay for power bills - if you are able to do that - or for anything at all. It is a mechanism of last resort. Yes, the NILS program is great as a last resort mechanism. It stops people from using payday lenders. Yes, it is a good program but it should not be needed to pay for power bills.

The reason that Tasmanians are so concerned about power bills is because they are going up. The Premier, in question time this week, continues to say that power bills have been going down. They have not. The Premier came in and made that correction but there were two occasions during question time this morning where he did make errors. On one occasion he said that between 2010 and 2014 power bills went up by 65 per cent. That is not true. I expected when he just stood up then that he would have corrected the record. He has not and that is disappointing.

He also said words to the effect, I think it was \$11.7 million or \$11.3 million would be spent on health over four years. He meant to say billion. I did suggest to him at the time that he could have corrected the record, but he did not.

Mr Speaker, the reason he is making these mistakes is because he is struggling. He is struggling so much and so is that side of the House. Have you ever seen a flatter backbench than this morning's question time? They are still flat. I remember when I came here 12 months ago, premier Peter Gutwein was standing up there and they were into us. They were loud. They were aggressive. They were supporting their premier. This morning: flat as a tack. Not a word from the backbench. Not a word from some of the ministers. It did not look like the Deputy Premier wanted to even look at the Premier. That is the state that this Government is in.

The House adjourned at 6.16 p.m.