

# PARLIAMENT OF TASMANIA

# **HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY**

# REPORT OF DEBATES

**Tuesday 8 November 2022** 

# **REVISED EDITION**

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# **Tuesday 8 November 2022**

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

## **QUESTIONS**

#### **State Service Pay Negotiations**

# Ms WHITE question to PREMIER, Mr ROCKLIFF

[10.01 a.m.]

Average real wages are lower today than when you came to office in 2014. In addition, inflation in Tasmania is now running at 8.6 per cent and recent forecasts from the Reserve Bank suggest the cost of living is set to rise faster than wages under your current policy until at least 2025. A record number of teachers quit the profession last year, more than one for every school in the state. Health workers are at breaking point and child safety workers are so distressed they are walking out of the job in the middle of the day. Public sector workers are leaving in droves and the best you can offer is a real pay cut of more than 5 per cent. How is that going to help address the recruitment and retention problems that have led to a number of strikes already, including another planned for tomorrow?

### **ANSWER**

Mr Speaker, I thank the member for her question. I encourage our unions that are representing our highly valued public service to continue to negotiate in good faith. That is what our clear intention is as a government.

The member mentioned a number of areas around resourcing and education. I could not be prouder of the investment we have put in to our public school education system over the course of the last eight years, acknowledging that the first year was difficult, given the very difficult decisions we had to make in a budget context in 2014-15. From there on, once stabilising the budget to a trajectory of sustainability, we were able to continue to reinvest into our school system, support our greater resources for our students, a fairer funding model, with Gonski 2 signed, a 10-year bilateral agreement, and investing in continued growth funding when it comes to schools, particularly focusing on trauma-informed practice and supporting our students with disability.

We will continue to negotiate more broadly, in good faith, with all unions. I have met with public sector unions. The head of the State Service has met with them on a number of occasions since 15 September. The head of the State Service provided a final offer to the unions on 28 October in relation to base salary increases and standard conditions. While it will result in a significant cost to the budget, it will deliver public servants a pay rise and a response to the cost-of-living challenges the member articulated in her question.

When it comes to the cost of living, our focus is on recognising the cost-of-living impacts and supporting people in Tasmania on low and fixed incomes who feel the brunt more than any of us, frankly, when it comes to those pressures. That is where we are investing our resources and that targeted support.

The final offer provides for a three-year agreement, with increases to wages by 3.5 per cent in the first year and 3 per cent over the next two years. This is more competitive than most other states and more competitive than what the Australian Government is offering its own workforce, and is 1 per cent above the budget allocation of 2.5 per cent.

We have also offered a revised one-off cost-of-living retention payment each year of \$1000 to all employees in years one and two, and \$500 in year three. In addition, there is a one-off low-income payment of \$1000 for those earning up to the equivalent of general stream band 3, currently \$72 118, with a \$500 flat rate increase to the base salary of those employees. Furthermore, there will be a \$500 one-off payment in years two and three.

Mentioning the one-off payments is very important, particularly in the context of the member's question, because this means that those on incomes of band 3 equivalent and below, would get an equivalent of between 6.97 per cent and 8.83 per cent increase in the first year.

## **Recognition of Visitors**

**Mr SPEAKER** - Honourable members, I welcome delegates from the Parliament of Samoa. Welcome to the Parliament of Tasmania.

I also acknowledge that in the gallery we have members of the AYC netball team under-13 representatives and guests of the Honourable Jane Howlett MLC. Welcome.

Members - Hear, hear.

### **State Service Pay Negotiations - Child Safety Workers**

# Ms WHITE question to PREMIER, Mr ROCKLIFF

[10.07 a.m.]

Mr Speaker, I join with you in welcoming everyone to the Chamber.

Premier, workers in Tasmania's essential public service have been pushed to breaking point due to understaffing and under-resourcing. As one child safety worker recently said:

Every team has numerous children unallocated. Therefore workers are having to make decisions every day about the children they help and the ones they don't. Workers are going home feeling really exhausted and stressed by the fact that they can't help the children that they want to help.

Do you accept that your failure to address the unsustainable working conditions in child safety in our schools, hospitals and other essential public services has resulted already in a number of strikes, including another one planned for tomorrow?

#### **ANSWER**

Mr Speaker, I thank the member for Lyons for her question on what is a critically important matter. I acknowledge the work that has been done by minister Jaensch and his predecessors since 2014. We all recognise that protecting the health, safety and wellbeing of Tasmania's vulnerable children and young people is a clear priority for the Tasmanian Government.

I recognise the pressures of the people at the front line, particularly in the Child Safety Service. I was able to meet with some of them, including their representative union, a month or five weeks ago. I gained a great deal of insight into the challenges on the front line, the resourcing pressures, but also the pressures of recruitment. We are investing in these key areas and have had some success in recent times with recruitment into the Child Safety Service, which is a positive.

I recognise the importance of our Child Safety staff in meeting the needs of some of the most vulnerable in our community and the challenges to meet those needs. We do not underestimate the challenges involved in responding to families who need help and children and young people who are at risk.

I am advised that, to meet the challenges, the Government will work to ensure that the Child Safety Service is appropriately resourced.

That did become very challenging regarding recruitment during the COVID-19 pandemic. I have said that recruitment has vastly improved in recent months. The situation has eased considerably, with the vacancy rate now at around 13 per cent and planned and unplanned leave returning to normal levels. The services are now at, or approaching, full staffing against permanently funded child safety officer positions.

While there have been challenges, they have prompted the service to engage in new and improved ways of working. This is important. The workforce has engaged, through their leaders, in developing new strategies to manage workload and prioritising case work according to need. The service continues to prioritise investigations and assessments of children who need the greatest focus. All children in transition are actively triaged, with oversight provided by senior staff who will escalate the urgency of allocation as required. In all cases, if a child is assessed to be at immediate risk, they are allocated and seen within 24 hours. This continues to be the case.

In the context of your question about wage negotiations, we are listening to people on the front line, acknowledging the challenges of the workforce and are also open to discuss improved conditions. You will appreciate why we are willing to do that. Ideas were presented to me and the head of the department, Tim Bullard, at that meeting. I stand to be corrected, but I believe some of those actions have been actioned or are in the process of actioning.

# **Mental Health Services - Resourcing**

# Dr WOODRUFF question to MINISTER for MENTAL HEALTH and WELLBEING, Mr ROCKLIFF

[10.12 a.m.]

You should know more than anyone the intense pressures compounding on Tasmanians. Tasmanians are facing a cost-of-living and housing crisis, climate heating impacts and the ongoing effects of COVID-19. Young people, and people in insecure housing and work are especially vulnerable.

The Australian Medical Association's report card is damning. It shows the long waits for people to access mental health care at emergency departments. Your investment of \$370 million in the last eight years is tiny, especially next to your half-a-billion-dollar stadium. Tasmania's AMA president is clear: there has not been the community and primary health investment to cover the devastating mental health services gap.

Will you commit to putting half-a-billion dollars into mental health services and community support instead of an unnecessary mega-stadium?

### **ANSWER**

Mr Speaker, I thank the member for her question. I recognise, along with yourself, Dr Woodruff, the importance of mental health and mental health services in our community. We recognise that people are increasingly seeking support and engaging services for mental health issues.

Our Government has comprehensively reviewed all aspects of our public mental health system in Tasmania, including older persons, child and adolescent mental health services and adult services as well. We are very engaged with the expertise on the ground. Last week I met with the Mental Health Council of Tasmania in a leaders' forum roundtable where I was able to listen to and engage with a number of non-government organisations delivering services on the ground, as well as presentations from Statewide Mental Health Services. Professor Brett McDermott engaged in that discussion as well.

We have asked those with the knowledge and expertise to tell us what is needed, including clinicians for in-patient and community mental health services, GPs, peak bodies and, importantly, those with lived experience of the mental health system in Tasmania. I am particularly pleased to invest in the peer workforce aspect and work alongside the Mental Health Council of Tasmania. There was a key workforce strategy released in November 2019. It is the people with lived experience in the mental health sector who are really able to engage and support people in crisis, or who need the support of people who truly understand and are able to walk in the shoes of those experiencing mental health concerns.

We have accepted all recommendations made through the comprehensive review reports. Hard-working mental health staff, consumers of mental health services and their loved ones deserve a contemporary, best-practice mental health system and more community-based care options so that people can get help sooner and stay closer to their support networks at home. We are providing the investment to deliver exactly that.

Of course, there will always be need for acute mental health facilities as well -

**Dr Woodruff -** Premier, will you address the question, please?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - and Mental Health Services has 180 beds across Tasmania to support Tasmanians who require mental health treatment and care.

**Ms O'Connor** - Nowhere near enough obviously. We are going backwards.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - We are not going backwards. I am happy to have a conversation about the AMA report and I offer the AMA a briefing. We are investing some \$370 million which is considerable. That includes -

**Dr Woodruff** - That is pathetically small relative to the need.

Mr ROCKLIFF - You have asked about investment and I am explaining to you. We have committed \$120 million to build two new mental health service precincts in the north and north-west of the state. The Peacock Centre is coming on line. That is a \$20 million investment. The new St Johns Park mental health integration hubs together will provide 27 new mental health short-term recovery beds.

We are reforming the system as well, providing more supports in the community. Funding is very important and we will continue to invest more into our mental health services. Reforming the system is also important. Our Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service, for example, is being reformed and invested in through some \$45 million. I acknowledge the report that was completed a couple of years ago. It painted a very grim picture of child and adolescent mental health services in Tasmania.

**Dr Woodruff** - Do you acknowledge the AMA's report today?

**Mr SPEAKER** - Order, member for Franklin.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - It is a warts-and-all report. I wanted a warts-and-all report in the interests of openness and transparency so we could be held accountable to the needs of further investment. That is why we have been forming a statewide system of child and adolescent mental healh services. That is why we have a police, ambulance and clinician early response when it comes to supporting people with serious mental health episodes in our community.

Mr SPEAKER - If you could wind up please, Premier.

Mr ROCKLIFF - Mr Speaker, I will finish with that. It is a good reform which has supported more than 1000 people in the community since February. Eighty per cent of those people would have gone to an emergency department without that service. This would not only have created pressure on the emergency department environment but, as you would appreciate, given your passion for mental health, and everyone's passion for mental health in this room, an emergency department is no place for a person experiencing seriouis mental illness.

### **Tourism Industry Performance - Tourism Awards**

# Mr WOOD question to MINISTER for TOURISM, Mr ROCKLIFF

[10.19 a.m.]

Can you inform that House of the status of our all-important visitor economy and how our tourism businesses are performing?

#### **ANSWER**

Mr Speaker, I thank the member for his question and interest in a very important industry, our tourism industry in Tasmania. I had the great pleasure of attending the TICT Tasmanian Tourism Awards last Friday evening. I am sure our Attorney-General and the Leader of the Opposition, who were also in attendance, would agree that it was a night of celebration. About 480 people attended to recognise the efforts and commitment of the very best businesses and individuals representing the nucleus of our highly-respected and professional tourism industry.

Twenty-three gold awards were handed out to outstanding businesses that were judged as being the best in their respective categories, including various standards of accommodation, food, tourism, attractions, restaurants, catering services, visitor information services and tour and transport operators. These winners will now go on to compete in the national tourism awards which are to be held in Sydney early next year.

I had the great pleasure of attending the national tourism awards this year on the Sunshine Coast, representing the Minister for Tourism. It was fantastic to see so many national gold awards awarded to our Tasmanian tourism businesses, that are excelling not only in Tasmania but on the national stage. Tasmania has shone at the last two national awards events, taking out the biggest swag of gold of all jurisdictions. There is little wonder that demand for all that we have to offer in Tasmania is so high and that visitors are already teeming back to our shores and spending more than they have ever done before.

I also want to mention two individuals who were recognised on the night. Alison Stubbs was awarded Tasmanian Tourism Champion, the highest individual honour awarded each year. Alison has just about done it all in tourism. She is an award-winning business owner, as well as the youngest ever member of the Tourism Tasmania board. Alison is undoubtedly a deserved winner of this fantastic accolade. I personally congratulate her.

The other individual recognition was one that I had the honour of awarding in my role as Minister for Tourism. Each year the industry identifies an emerging industry star. This year the recipient of a Tourism minister's Young Achiever Award was Nunami Sculthorpe-Green. Nunami is a proud palawa woman and the founder of Blak Led Tours, an Aboriginal tourism business that is passionate about truth-telling and the representation of Tasmanian Aboriginal stories. Blak Led Tours' first tour of takara nipaluna walking Hobart premiered at the 2021 Ten Days on the Island festival. Since then close to 1200 people have experienced this fantastic product. We have much to do in bringing the stories of our Aboriginal people to the fore. Nunami, together with the operators of the nipaluna walk - another award winner on the night - is showing the way.

As a further indication of the demand for all things tourism in Tasmania, last week we saw Air New Zealand re-introduce its third weekly service between Auckland and Hobart. This

Tuesday service will operate from now until April next year, with the airline reporting above projection performance on the route. Not only does this increase the opportunity for more Kiwis to come to our state, it also provides Tasmanians the opportunity to explore New Zealand and a very attractive option to travel to the USA, Canada and Asia via Auckland with this renowned airline.

The visitor economy is strong and through T21 the Government will continue to invest in it to support its jobs and the economy throughout Tasmania.

### Spirit of Tasmania - Livestock Ban

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

[10.24 a.m.]

When a Government minister claims that there is no one to blame, you know there clearly is. The announcement that TT-Line has recently banned livestock from travelling on the *Spirit of Tasmania* was a major shock, causing massive disruptions to hundreds of businesses and thousands of Tasmanians. The ban was announced with immediate effect on a Friday and came without warning. After a five-day stalemate your Government finally applied a short-term band-aid measure to get livestock moving again.

The events leading up to the recent court decision has been four years in the making. Risk management and contingency strategies should have been developed given the real possibility of an adverse finding. TT-Line has effectively undertaken a capital strike against your Government, using the livelihoods of Tasmanian horse owners, trainers and carriers as collateral. What does this say about your Government's ability to manage government-owned businesses. Given your assistance is only short-term, can you guarantee that this will not happen again?

#### **ANSWER**

Mr Speaker, I thank the member for Franklin for his question. Unfortunately, he has totally misunderstood the judgment handed down by Her Honour. Far from lack of preparedness on TT-Line's behalf and the abusive flagrant language that Mr O'Byrne has just tried to bring to TT-Line management, which is extremely unhelpful, what occured was a new interpretation of the law, which Mr O'Byrne did not foresee. Nor did anybody else.

The guilty judgment, noting that there are still potentially court proceedings under way which I will not dwell on, was not the issue in relation to the decisions that TT-Line necessarily needed to take following legal advice. I hope Mr O'Byrne realises that TT-Line is a state-owned company and as such has responsibilities under the law to take legal advice and to follow it, as a responsible company should.

If Mr O'Byrne is suggesting that somehow, as minister, I should reach into that state-owned company and direct it to do something against its own legal advice, he needs to very carefully reflect on that.

**Mr O'Byrne** - What are the extra resources that you have put in? What are they doing?

Mr SPEAKER - Order.

**Mr FERGUSON** - Mr Speaker, what occurred is something that was not foreseen by anybody. Everybody in this place and in TT-Line need to abide by the judgment handed down by Her Honour. They need to honour it, Mr Speaker. It was not possible for TT-Line to continue with the protocols that had been in place up until that previous Thursday night -

Mr O'Byrne - Why have you put in extra resources and all of a sudden fixed it?

Mr SPEAKER - Order, member for Franklin.

**Mr FERGUSON** - and also be faithful to the judgment that had been handed down by Her Honour.

The Government was acutely aware of the impact of that decision which was taken by TT-Line and announced on that Friday. The decision to suspend livestock transport, which was also taken by Searoad and not just TT-Line, was due to the clear advice that had been taken in relation to these matters.

Because of a huge investment of time and effort by me, by the Premier, by Ms Palmer and Ms Ogilvie, and many public servants over that weekend, we were able to find the interim solution to which Mr O'Byrne has referred. That was a very good outcome for our state, not just for people who want to transport horses -

Mr O'Byrne - Extra resources does not change the legal opinion, does it?

Mr SPEAKER - Order.

**Mr FERGUSON** - but for many people around Tasmania, commercial and non-commercial, horses and other livestock. It was a very good outcome to be able to do that in just four days. It took a huge amount of work. We are very pleased that that teamwork was able to carry the day in those circumstances. We have been very transparent that more work is required -

**Mr O'Byrne** - Why did you not put in the two extra resources on the Friday?

Mr SPEAKER - Order, member for Franklin.

**Mr FERGUSON** - The Monday's expert style that Mr O'Byrne brings to this issue is not helping anybody. We have developed that interim arrangement. It has been an important and necessary collaboration between Natural Resources and Environment Tasmania together with TT-Line. That was a very good outcome in a short space of time.

The substance of the judgment was the issue to which members needed to respond. It is very clear to me from Mr O'Byrne's question that he has not read that judgment. It is very clear to me that Mr O'Byrne is not familiar with the important principles that Her Honour dealt with in bringing forward into this place a question that is clearly uninformed and reaching for base politics.

#### **Local Government Elections - Postal Ballots**

#### Ms JOHNSTON question to MINISTER for LOCAL GOVERNMENT, Mr STREET

[10.29 a.m.]

The local government elections have concluded and I thank the Electoral Commissioner and his staff for doing a great job, but it was not all plain sailing. This is the first time for compulsory voting in local government elections, which caused some concern with voters. For a start, participation was low. For these council elections, participation was around 85 per cent while for state and federal elections we see about 92 per cent. As local government is a postal ballot, we have to suffer the vagaries of Australia Post, which only commits to mail delivery times of up to four business days. How many ballots arrived after closing time, I wonder, or have been lost? I am sure you would have fielded many queries, as I did, from confused voters who wondered why their neighbours received ballots and they did not. The uneven delivery of ballots caused a lot of confusion and concern.

Now that voting for local government is compulsory, should the postal ballot be scrapped and councils brought into line with state and federal elections with a polling day at traditional booths?

### **ANSWER**

Mr Speaker, I thank the member for her question. She is not the first person to raise this with me since the completion of the local government elections. I ran into a couple of recently re-elected members at the Diwali festival on Friday night who raised exactly the same question.

As Local Government minister, I am proud of the 84.79 per cent turnout for the local government elections, particularly as it compares with only 58.7 per cent at the last local government election. For the first local government elections under compulsory voting, that is a massive success and something we can build on for the future.

As to where we go from here, the Electoral Commission will undertake the review that they always undertake after an election. Particularly in this case with the introduction of compulsory voting for the first time, there will be a number of questions I imagine the Electoral Commission will deal with in relation to that review. One of them will be the efficiency of postal voting and postal voting going forward.

I am open to the discussion around having a polling day for local government elections but I am not wedded to the idea either. It is a discussion we need to have. Even if we did go to a polling day we would still have the option of postal voting, like we do with state and federal elections.

I am open to suggestions from members of this place or members of the community. I will make sure that when the Electoral Commission undertakes the review of the recently completed election that the consultation period is made public and everybody is made aware of the fact that they can feed into that review. Once the results of the review have been provided both to me and publicly, I am more than happy to have a conversation about where we go in future with regard to conducting local government elections. If we can make it more efficient, if we can get the 84.79 per cent up to the participation rate we get at state and federal elections, then I am open to any suggestions on how we do that.

# Spirit of Tasmania - Livestock Ban

# Ms WHITE question to MINISTER for INFRASTRUCTURE and TRANSPORT, Mr FERGUSON

[10.32 a.m.]

A little over a week ago animal transport across Bass Strait was thrown into chaos after the Department of Natural Resources and Environment successfully pursued charges against the TT-Line. After your Government spent millions of dollars in court effectively suing itself, NRE, the department that instigated the charges, now needs to have a staff member either end of the journey to check vehicles and check animals are well enough to travel. In other words, the same agency that sued the TT-Line over animal welfare issues is the agency giving TT-Line advice and support to manage animal welfare. The same animal welfare manual developed by NRE that was used before the shock ban on transporting livestock is the same manual still in use today. Why did NRE pursue charges against TT-Line and what benefit did they or the public get from that?

**Ms O'Connor** - Because it has to uphold the act. So animal welfare law doesn't matter? Wow.

Mr SPEAKER - Order, the minister has the call.

#### **ANSWER**

Mr Speaker, I thank the Leader of the Opposition for her question, as ill-informed as it is, as was the previous question I received on this from her predecessor leader of the Labor Party, Mr O'Byrne.

Matters of prosecution are not matters for the minister to stand at the despatch box and give an account for. I hope that the Leader of the Opposition, who wants to be premier of this state, understands that, in respect of the law, the Director of Public Prosecutions would be the accountable person in relation to bringing charges against anybody, whether it be a person or a business in the state of Tasmania before a court. I should not have to tell Ms White this fact.

The matter has been appropriately handled, completely independent of executive government.

Ms Archer - As is appropriate.

Mr FERGUSON - As is appropriate, as the Attorney-General quite correctly points out.

**Ms White** - Where is the public benefit in this?

Mr SPEAKER - Order.

**Mr FERGUSON** - It is totally inappropriate to try to make the appalling case that you just did in your question, Ms White. It shows your level of poor legal literacy on a matter as basic as that.

The Government moved swiftly and with a good deal of teamwork and we were very pleased with the outcome. It seems to me that Ms White is less happy that we were able to resolve a crisis for animal transport in Tasmania in just four days, not as a result of the guilty judgment - that is a misunderstanding again - but as a result of the judgment of Her Honour in relation to delegation and third-party certification. It is very clear that Ms White has not read the judgment, which is available to her. If that were the case, we would have potentially had a more informed question from the Leader of the Opposition.

If the Leader of the Opposition wants to attack the Director of Public Prosecutions, that is a matter for her and the Labor Party. However, if she goes down that path Mr O'Byrne will again be the leader of the Labor Party because Ms White clearly does not have what it takes.

We will continue to work very carefully through this process. I applaud my colleagues, minister Palmer, and the Premier, with whom I have worked closely on this matter. We needed to find a legal pathway to support the transport of animals across Bass Strait. People of goodwill have brought themselves to this task and the approach that has been adopted is based on appropriate advice - let me put it that way.

In relation to the staff who has been provided by NRE, they are not connected to the Director of Public Prosecutions. They are public servants who have agreed to be seconded to TT-Line in order that it might fulfil the requirements, not just of the animal welfare manual but also the act itself, and take account of Her Honour's judgment in relation to delegation and third-party certification. I commend the judgment of Her Honour to the reading of Ms White; she might actually educate herself and bring forward a sensible question to this House.

### **University of Tasmania - Public Confidence**

# Ms O'CONNOR question to PREMIER, Mr ROCKLIFF

[10.37 a.m.]

In the last sitting we asked what you as Premier and your Government would do to help restore public confidence in a university which has cut courses and moved lectures almost entirely online, gutted the Law School, failed to negotiate in good faith with staff and until it pulled its DA for the Sandy Bay campus following locals overwhelmingly rejecting the city move, it seemed deaf to community concern.

In your answer, you said UTAS is a private organisation and suggested there was no role for your Government. That is not quite true, is it? UTAS is administered by an act of this parliament. It receives government funding and is where many of our best and brightest go to further their education. Do you agree that the state does have a role in the future of UTAS? Do you share the concerns of academics, graduates and current students about the corporatisation and decline in the academic quality of UTAS, or is your Government taking a completely hands-off approach to our key tertiary institution?

#### **ANSWER**

Mr Speaker, I thank the member for Clark for her question. I believe, as with everything, that we need to move with the times and provide contemporary models of care within our health

system and contemporary models of education, whether it be in our primary schools, high schools, our tertiary institutions or our highly valued public training provider, TasTAFE.

I am aware of the elector poll result in the Hobart City Council area on the UTAS move. The Government supports the university's response, which was to withdraw the current planning amendment for the Sandy Bay site. The university has made it clear it will now work with the new Hobart City Council as the appropriate planning authority. The Government believes that a collaborative approach to find a sensible compromise is the best way forward for Hobart, the university and to ensure the continued delivery of high-quality education and research, which is what we all want.

I know there are some who think the Tasmanian Government should intervene in the university's plans under the mistaken belief that we have a responsibility for the university. This is incorrect.

**Ms O'Connor** - They are administered by an act of this parliament.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - The University of Tasmania is a statutory corporation governed by the University Council, not the state government. There are formal mechanisms for the public to engage with the university and the Hobart City Council to provide feedback and comment -

Ms O'Connor - Totally hands-off? You're not worried?

Mr SPEAKER - Order.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - on the university's plans. The University of Tasmania has established the Shake Up, which is a panel of up to 80 members across the community to discuss the UTAS proposal.

The Legislative Council has established an inquiry into the University of Tasmania Act 1995 which will offer further opportunity for consultation on matters relating to the University of Tasmania's future. The public is able to engage in this process as well. Any redevelopment plans the university chooses to pursue must also go through the regulated planning approvals process which allow for public consultation. We encourage those interested to participate in the consultation process available, including the established processes already in place under the planning system.

## **Land Use Planning - Reform Agenda Update**

# Mrs ALEXANDER question to MINISTER for PLANNING, Mr FERGUSON

[10.41 a.m.]

I have had several discussions with constituents in Bass. I am interested in getting an update on the Government's reform agenda around the land use planning. I would like the Minister for Planning to update the House.

#### **ANSWER**

Mr Speaker, I am very pleased to receive the question from Mrs Alexander and I thank her for it. The Government has been pursuing planning reform to support development and get things moving, to ensure developers can have certainty and deliver infrastructure that is necessary for our state. Look at the work that is occurring around the state and the record housing boom that we are experiencing at the moment. We inherited a planning system that was a mess. There were 29 councils but 30 planning schemes left behind.

Mr Winter - There are still 30.

Mr SPEAKER - Member for Franklin, order.

**Ms O'Connor** - How long have you been in?

Mr SPEAKER - Order.

**Mr FERGUSON** - There were three completely different regional land use planning strategies. No one knew what the planning rules were. The member who is leading the mockery is the former mayor of Kingborough, which I will come to shortly.

**Mr Winter** - That is right. I had to deal with your mess.

Mr FERGUSON - We committed to the implementation of the Tasmanian Planning Scheme, a single suite of planning rules to be applied consistently across the state. It was what developers were crying out for. These rules were finalised in 2017. Since then councils, at different stages, have been implementing their Local Provision Schedules (LPS) which prescribe how and where the standard provisions apply in their LGA. This has not been a simple process. Unlike Labor, which simply dumped its interim schemes on an unaware public, we are working to ensure that people have plenty of opportunity to be consulted and to have a say about what LPS should apply in their local area and to work with the Planning Commission to determine the most appropriate zoning of land.

I am advised that by the end of this year, 21 local councils, including some of the smallest and least well-resourced, such as West Coast, Flinders and Tasman, will have their Local Provision Schedules approved and in effect. That includes 16 right now and five more by the end of next month.

We have consistently provided guidance and in some cases financial support to help councils with their LPSs, which should be a basic translation and mapping exercise. Again, he is leading with his chin. You can only help those who help themselves.

Many councils have been proactive and got the job done. Burnie, for example, was the first one out of the gate, about two years ago. Of others I am not able to say the same. Like Mr Winter's former council; what was he doing?

**Mr Winter** - I have not been there for 18 months. You know that, right? I have been here.

Mr SPEAKER - Order.

**Mr FERGUSON** - Mr Speaker, even the last few stragglers should have their LPSs in place by the middle of next year. We are supporting them to achieve that. Our ambition of having one set of planning rules applying across every local government area will have been realised. We are also ensuring that our planning system is looking forward.

We recently made amendments to both the southern strategy to soften the urban growth boundary and allow for land that is adjacent to the boundary to be considered by the commission for more residential development. We need to see that happen. In the northern strategy we have made changes to allow land already identified for urban growth to be similarly considered. That has been very strongly supported by stakeholders.

We have also developed a mechanism to allow rezoning for residential development in our southern regional settlements to be considered on their merits, rather than only relying on those scenarios prescribed in the strategy. It is a much more forward-looking approach that is being supported by stakeholders. It is a very different way from the way Labor governed. This Government is continually delivering on planning reforms to make it easier to get things done. In many cases, developers do not even need to apply for a development application as a result of our reforms.

As I close, let us remember, Labor spent a decade on so-called planning reform. It started with 30 planning schemes, and finished with 30. It started with zero planning policies. Guess how many it finished with? Zero. This Government has led the way on major projects reform legislation. It has been a magnificent success to see the Bridgewater bridge receive a planning permit in an assessment process that was faster than some sub-divisions take. It again points to our continued commitment in this place. The noisiest person on the other side of the House right now is the most embarrassed. We will continue to support some of those quite large councils to get over the line mid-next year.

### **Political Donations Reform Bill**

### Ms HADDAD question to the PREMIER, Mr ROCKLIFF

[10.47 a.m.]

Last sitting week the parliament began debate on your Government's long overdue bill to reform Tasmania's political donation laws. It seems that you have stalled debate on this important reform to the disappointment of Tasmanians who want to see trust in politics restored. Meanwhile, you have indicated that debate on a bill to increase the size of the lower House to 35 members will go ahead this week. If you expand the parliament without reforming the donation system, you will just make the existing problems in our system worse.

Will you guarantee that we will return to debate on the political donations reform bill this year? Do you acknowledge that with the House set to expand to 35 seats it is even more imperative that you clean up Tasmania's broken political donation laws?

# **ANSWER**

Mr Speaker, I thank the member for her question. Yes, we will be debating the expansion of the House of Assembly this week. That will take effect in 2025. In 2025 we will have new electoral laws, which will also be debated and passed through both Houses of parliament.

### **Independent Living Units - Charitable Rating Issue**

# Ms DOW question to MINISTER for LOCAL GOVERNMENT, Mr STREET

[10.48 a.m.]

In March 2021, the Local Government Association of Tasmania (LGAT) considered an offer by your Government to resolve the charitable rating issue for independent living units across Tasmania. The offer from the Government was to commence rating of new independent living unit tenants from 1 July 2022. Can you confirm that your Government has now backflipped on this offer to LGAT and to its member councils?

#### **ANSWER**

Mr Speaker, the Tasmanian Government is committed to ensuring we have an equitable rates framework within our state that is both fair for ratepayers and allows our local councils to deliver essential services and infrastructure. Our Government is also acutely aware of the ongoing public concern regarding cost-of-living pressures for all Tasmanians. We recognise the different needs and challenges that exist at this time for many people, including our elderly, and our vulnerable community members. The Government has been working closely with the local government and the not-for-profit aged-care sectors in recent years to explore issues relating to the rating treatment of independent living units (ILUs) owned and operated by not-for-profit and charitable institutions.

I recognise the importance of maintaining the integrity of council revenue bases to ensure that they can provide essential services and infrastructure for their communities. I am committed to continuing to work with the sector through the Local Government Association of Tasmania to understand and address some of the current, and emerging issues. This includes the rating treatment of ILUs. Some of these issues will undoubtedly be relevant to the Future of Local Government Review currently underway and we will continue to work with LGAT and councils through this process.

### **Cost of Living - Targeted Support**

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

[10.50 a.m.]

Can you update the House on the Tasmanian Government's targeted support to help Tasmanians with cost-of-living pressures? Are you aware of any alternatives?

#### **ANSWER**

Mr Speaker, I thank the member for his question and interest in this important matter. One of the most important issues of our day is cost of living. This Government is acutely aware of this. That is why we were very proactive to cushion the impact of Tasmania's electricity price increases with our targeted winter energy relief package. It was multi-pronged and targeted. I wil provide an update on the winter energy relief package, as well as the \$50 million Energy Saver Loan scheme and the aurora+ app.

Aurora has now finished implementing these payments on the customer winter bills. Aurora has provided total payments of more than \$10.4 million to Tasmanian concession card holders. Tasmanian concession card customers and also with other retailers will receive the Winter Bill Buster payment. Centralised arrangements were made for those in an embedded network, which is what we promised to deliver. In total, more than 94 000 concession payments have been made, bringing a total of \$11.2 million. This is the investment we have made; targeted relief for those doing it tough or vulnerable Tasmanians.

In addition, our \$50 million Energy Saver Loan scheme is designed to assist customers and businesses to reduce their energy use and costs, providing no-interest loans of up to \$10 000 for solar support systems, battery systems, double glazing, and reverse-cycle heat pumps; all designed to put downward pressure on electricity prices and reduce energy needs for vulnerable Tasmanians.

Since the launch of the scheme on 17 October, 183 applications have been received and are progressing, with 138 approved. Eighty vendors have registered with Brighte Capital for the scheme to supply the products and services, resulting in excellent competition and choice for Tasmanian consumers. The scheme is very attractive and popular for Tasmanian customers and vendors alike.

The aurora+ app is an important component of the package. It allows customers to manage their own power use and keep their power costs down.

The cost-of-living election commitments by this majority Liberal Government have helped deliver either the lowest, or among the lowest, regulated electricity prices in the country. This is not my say-so: on 10 October this year, the independent Tasmanian Economic Regulator released its comparison of electricity and gas prices available for small customers in Australia. It confirms that the targeted assistance is working and that we have the lowest, or among the lowest, regulated electricity prices in Australia. Our targeted, multi-pronged approach is supporting those Tasmanians in need.

With respect to the second part of the question, it is a big policy vacuum. I encourage those on the other side to make representations to the federal Labor Government on their promise to reduce electricity prices by \$275 by 2025.

### **Elective Surgery Delays**

## Ms DOW question to MINISTER for HEALTH, Mr ROCKLIFF

[10.54 a.m.]

My question is to the Premier and part-time Health minister.

**Mr FERGUSON** - Point of order, Mr Speaker. I ask that you encourage the member to use people's proper titles, as is respectful.

**Mr SPEAKER** - We should always be respectful of each other.

**Ms DOW** - Stacey James was listed as a category one patient to have urgent thyroid surgery in June 2021, meaning she should have received her operation within 30 days but nearly 500 days later, she has heard nothing except that the surgeon is on long-term leave.

Ms James has also been waiting for oesophageal surgery since March 2021, and for an operation on her jaw. Ms James's jaw surgery was outsourced in July this year and an operation was scheduled then cancelled in August. It was only after making her own inquiries that Ms James discovered that she had not been re-added to the waiting list after the outsourced surgery was cancelled. Ms James was then told she would not be re-added to the wait list at the same place she had been before her surgery was outsourced.

When is Ms James going to get the urgent surgeries she so desperately and should have received more than a year ago? What measures are in place to ensure patients whose surgeries are outsourced do not fall through the cracks and actually receive their operations?

#### **ANSWER**

Mr Speaker, I thank the member for her question. You did not need to make a personal attack to explain Ms James's situation to the House because that is well-explained in terms of complications and Ms James's experience with our health system. If you want people to take you seriously, you do not have to engage in personal attacks. The impact of the individual you speak about is enough.

I am sorry about Ms James's experience. As Health minister, I will not comment on individual circumstances but I note the experience and say sorry that has happened.

We are investing in transforming our information technology, which will assist our patient transformation, outpatient transformation program, as well as investing in our elective surgery waiting lists. We have done an enormous amount of the work and more is required to bring down our elective surgery waiting lists. They have fallen to some 8700 - the first time below 9000 since 2018.

My focus as Health minister is to ensure people have their elective surgery within the clinically recommended time frames. If people do not get their elective surgery within the clinically recommended time frame, they become more unwell and often require other support from the health system as well.

I note the circumstances you raised today in the House. I am sorry for Ms James's experience. We are doing everything we possibly can to improve our systems to ensure that no one falls through the cracks. There are gaps. Our investment in our budget was a clear indication of that system improvement.

## **King Island Slip Closure**

### Ms FINLAY question to PREMIER, Mr ROCKLIFF

[10.59 a.m.]

The King Island slip is essential infrastructure for the island's fishers. They use it for maintenance, for emergencies and when they have to service their boats to ensure they can

keep fishing. However, despite taking bookings and providing months of assurances, TasPorts has now closed the slip.

It has been suggested that fishers can use a slip at Stanley. However, due to the already heavy workload of this slip, boats have had to come to Hobart. There are four King Island boats here today. Others have had to go as far afield as Lakes Entrance and Apollo Bay in Victoria to get work done.

Many of these fishers have had to take time off fishing, which means lost income. It also means this work has been taken out of the King Island community and will impact their local economy. As one fisher said to me, it is like having your car break down in Hobart and having to take it to a mechanic in Sydney.

Why has this slip closed? When will it reopen? Is it true that TasPorts have offered to sell this slip to the fishers for \$1?

#### **ANSWER**

Mr Speaker, I thank the member for her question. I take great interest in matters to do with King Island; it is my favourite part of the Braddon electorate. I have said that publicly before, which probably does not engender a lot of enthusiasm outside the electorate but King Island is a fantastic place. I love visiting there when I get the opportunity.

I am advised that TasPorts regularly undertakes engineering and safety risk assessments of its assets around the state to determine structural integrity and remaining service life. I am advised that in June this year TasPorts was considering temporary repairs to the slipway at Currie Harbour on King Island so that slipping could continue this calendar year.

In July this year, advice was received from TasPorts engineers and external contractors to say that temporary repairs were not feasible so a decision was made to close the slipway while further investigation is taken, including an assessment of safe operating parameters and long-term rectification options. Once concluded, TasPorts will make a decision considering the future of the slipway.

I am advised that this necessary closure, due to the combined effect of ageing infrastructure and continual exposure to the marine environment, removes the only slipway on the island from use. This decision was made to ensure the safety of the island's fishing fleet operators, TasPorts personnel and the wider community. TasPorts is committed to working with all stakeholders and customers to minimise the impact of the closure.

The Currie slipway is used by a small number of vessels from within the King Island fishing fleet: around 20 is my understanding, although I stand to be corrected. In terms of immediate impact, three fishing vessels are booked for scheduled maintenance in the slipyard in late October-early November. Alternative arrangements have been communicated, including a list of alternative slipway facilities such as the port of Stanley, which is considered to be the most suitable alternative for King Island fishing fleet operators.

#### **TasTAFE - Government Investment**

# Mr YOUNG question to MINISTER for SKILLS, TRAINING and WORKFORCE GROWTH, Mr ELLIS

[11.02 a.m.]

Can you update the House on how the Government's investment into TasTAFE is delivering for Tasmanians and why this is so important to keep our economy strong?

#### **ANSWER**

Mr Speaker, I thank my friend and colleague, Dean Young, for his interest in this topic. I know he is a big supporter of our apprentices and trainees in his electorate of Franklin. This Government is putting learners at the centre of everything that we do at TasTAFE because they are our future. They are the workforce that we need to fill the jobs to keep our economy strong, and our plan to invest \$114 million into TasTAFE will be delivering new buildings and new facilities for those students to learn in.

Work has just begun on brand-new butchery facilities at Drysdale in Hobart, converting a training kitchen into a new space for butchery and other hospitality training. This gives our local meat processing industry the certainty they have been looking for, so that Tasmania's budding butchers can learn in facilities by term 1 next year. This follows earlier work on upgrading an older service kitchen into a proper commercial training kitchen, providing more space at Drysdale so that hospitality students can hone their craft but we are not stopping there. We have much more to come over the next 12 to 18 months.

In Burnie, the first stage of the new Agricultural Training Centre of Excellence will come on line next year. That is a \$5 million project which will include new learning spaces, new conference areas, an exhibition space, a mudroom and upgrades to stockyards and irrigation. There will be new farming machinery and equipment like the brand-new large tractor that we have on the way, and I know my friend John Tucker will be very excited about that - \$165 000 in that alone, complete with a front-end loader. This investment means that our agricultural workers of the future will learn the skills that will reflect the businesses they will go on to work in and hopefully one day own.

At Alanvale we will be progressing the health and community services hub and we are actively working with key stakeholders such as the Mental Health Council of Tasmania and TasCOSS on this. At Clarence, in Mr Young's electorate of Franklin, we are excited about the \$26 million Water and Energy Trades Centre of Excellence to be completed, a project that will be a game-changer for local students and industry, providing new opportunities for learners to get their start in a world-class facility. They are plumbers, gas fitters, sparkies and those really critical parts of our economy.

We will also be getting on with the job at new learning hubs at Alanvale and Clarence, delivering modern integrated student service areas that have a strong focus on technology and supporting our learners to thrive. Finally, at Campbell Street, we will be building TasTAFE's first-ever cybersecurity operation centre, thanks in part to a funding partnership with the federal government, meaning small business operators, apprentices and paraprofessionals will be able to upskill and access the training they need in areas where we know there will be a large number of jobs and is only growing by the day.

Our Government has a proud record in investing in TasTAFE's infrastructure right around the state and we have some very exciting months ahead of us.

#### RESPONSES TO PETITIONS

#### **Housing Crisis**

Mr Barnett tabled the response to a petition presented by Ms O'Connor on 31 May 2022:

• Petition No. 8 of 2022 - See Appendix 1 on page 83.

#### **Native Duck Hunting**

**Mr Barnett** tabled the response to a petition present by Dr Woodruff on 24 June 2021:

• Petition No. 9 of 2021 - See Appendix 2 on page 86.

### MESSAGE FROM HER EXCELLENCY THE GOVERNOR

Appropriation (Supplementary Appropriation for 2022-23) Bill 2022

**Mr SPEAKER** - I am in receipt of a message from Her Excellency the Governor which I will read:

In accordance with the provisions of section 38 of the Constitution Act 1934, the Governor recommends to the House of Assembly the payment out of the Public Account the sum of \$163 480 000 for the purposes set forth in Schedule 1 of the Appropriation (Supplementary Appropriation for 2022-23) Bill 2022.

# APPROPRIATION (SUPPLEMENTARY APPROPRIATION FOR 2022-23) BILL 2022 (No. 49)

# **First Reading**

Bill presented by Mr Ferguson and read the first time.

#### **MOTION**

### Attendance of Members of the Legislative Council

[11.09 a.m.]

Mr STREET (Franklin - Leader of the House)(by leave) - Mr Speaker, I move-

That the House invites all members of the Legislative Council to attend in the Chamber of the House of Assembly at noon today for the purpose of listening to the proceedings of the House in respect of a motion of apology to victims/survivors of child sexual abuse in institutional settings.

I advise those opposite that the Legislative Council made this request of the Government and the Government has enabled this. I thank every member of this House for their agreement in terms of allowing that to occur.

Motion agreed to.

#### MATTER OF PUBLIC IMPORTANCE

#### Mental Health

[11.09 a.m.]

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

That the House take note of the following matter: mental health.

I rise this morning to speak on this very important matter of public importance. Poor mental health can affect any one of us at any given time. It is absolutely essential when we are seeing an increasing need for mental health services across Tasmania that we have a Government that responds and provides those services, whether they be inpatient services or community-based services. The AMA report and school card, which was released yesterday, paints a damning picture of mental health services, particularly the availability of mental health inpatient beds across Tasmania and how that has deteriorated under this Government.

At the last state election the former premier, Peter Gutwein, said that health would be front and focus for his Government. Things have changed considerably since that time. Peter Gutwein is no longer the premier of Tasmania. The new Premier also holds the portfolio responsibilities for Health and also Mental Health and Wellbeing. Stating the fact that this Health minister has other responsibilities in being the Premier of this state is not about being personal. It is about stating a fact. It is about there needing to be a dedicated focus on health and mental health and wellbeing right across Tasmania. This should have the focus of a dedicated minister. It is an important portfolio and it should be given that due importance through its own dedicated ministerial responsibilities.

This Government has made many promises and commitments about improving access to mental health services and beds across Tasmania. We have seen announcements about the Launceston General Hospital and its redevelopment. That has simply been an announcement; there is no funding. Little has been delivered regarding the master plan process for the Launceston General Hospital. The Launceston General Hospital has the worst bed block in the country, which contributes to people spending more time ramped in ambulances and not getting access to care within clinically recommended time frames at our emergency departments. This has been more pronounced at the Launceston General Hospital. In the past few weeks there has been increased demand at the LGH and people have been turned away because the LGH cannot cope with that demand.

This report told us that the number of mental health beds across Tasmania had significantly diminished from 250 to 103. While there have been commitments to redevelop the Spencer Clinic in the north-west, the Launceston General Hospital, and the additional 27 mental health beds in the south of the state, little of that has been delivered. Significant time frames associated with that do not meet current demand. We have a significant issue with staffing and beds across our health system. The Government has made many commitments about this but delivered very little.

The other important point that I want to raise is about the terrible data that revealed the time spent by Tasmanians with poor mental health and wellbeing presenting, often in crisis, to our emergency departments. Some have to wait in an emergency department for 28 hours. I cannot image what that would be like for those people seeking support at such an important time where they need intervention, they need to be admitted to a hospital bed and provided care in a timely manner. How difficult would it be for them during that time? What additional pressures would it put on an already overworked emergency department? It is unacceptable.

I would like the Premier to provide an update to the House today about what he plans to do to address this significant shortfall in our emergency departments and access to mental health care for Tasmanians.

The Premier also talked about the review of Collaborative Assessment and Management of Suicidality (CAMS) and investment in community-based mental health services. During Estimates it was revealed that we are more than 300 positions short across mental health service. That is just in the Tasmanian Health Service. That is not through the bilateral agreement that will be required to provide community-based services across Tasmania through, for example, Primary Health Tasmania and the programs it will be delivering within the Tasmanian community.

There are severe shortages in mental health trained staff across the Tasmanian community. Last week we met with representatives of the university to try to understand what is being put in place to increase the number of people entering mental health specialties across the health disciplines, and to look at how we can train more people locally. It is important when we look at the shortages across regional and rural areas to access to mental health.

One of the most important things people raise with me all the time in my electorate is the lack of dedicated youth mental health beds in the north-west. People cannot wait until 2027 and the redevelopment of the Spencer unit for those beds. There is a dire need for them now. The Government needs to ensure that is delivered before that date and that there is an opportunity for those beds to be created. The Spencer Clinic is severely compromised. It has significant staff shortages, beds closed and conditions and amenities that are not up to standard.

That impacts on recruiting people to work or encouraging people to stay and work and provide mental health care and support across our communities. We want to see more action from the Government in providing beds for mental health patients across Tasmania and additional support for services across our community. This report showed we are not doing a good enough job in Tasmania. Tasmanians are suffering. They are not getting access to care when and where they need it. They are not being able to be admitted to our major hospitals to receive mental health care support.

### Time expired.

[11.17 a.m.]

**Mr ROCKLIFF** (Braddon - Premier) - Mr Speaker, I thank the member for raising the Matter of Public Importance today concerning mental health.

We are building contemporary modern integrated mental health care across our state so Tasmanians can get more holistic support in the right place and at the right time. A core goal of the Tasmanian Mental Health Reform Program, which commenced in 2019, is to ensure that people who live with a mental health issue or in suicidal distress have access to world-class systems of care including alternative services for people to avoid acute hospitalisation where this is not necessary. This is the best practice approach.

We are responding with a record \$370 million investment since we came to Government in 2014 to help people access care in the community and reduce the need to present to the emergency department. This is better for people needing care and for Tasmania's health system, as I explained in question time today. We have provided \$6.5 million in this year's Budget to address priority areas in the Mental Health Reform Program. This funding includes the roll out of adult acute care and continuing care community teams in the north and north west. This is in addition to the \$8.8 million provided in the 2021-22 budget for full operationalisation of the acute care team and the progression of the Peacock Centre facility and associated service components in southern Tasmania.

Additionally, as I have spoken about a number of times, the investment of \$45 million to fully fund phase 1 and 2 of Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services' review, report and recommendations will fundamentally change the way mental health care is delivered for children and adolescents in Tasmania.

There will be an extended CAMS after hours capacity at the Royal Hobart Hospital ensuring CAMS' presence at the hospital seven days a week until 10 p.m. Scoping work and early recruitment efforts have been undertaken around new service development in an expanded CAMS structure to deliver three new priority specialist services: a youth mental health service, an intensive mental health service for children in out of home care and a youth forensic mental health service.

Progress on our new community mental health hubs including 27 new mental health beds is well advanced, with the development application lodged for the St John's Park site. Building works are well progressed at the Peacock Centre following damage sustained in a fire on Christmas Eve last year. I look forward to opening that centre early next year.

The Police, Ambulance, and Clinician Early Response (PACER) team commenced in January this year staffed by mental health clinicians, police officers and paramedics who are dedicated to provide a rapid specialist response to acute mental health or behavioural concerns in the community.

As I said today in question time, PACER has responded to callouts to over 1200 people with a number of conditions including suicidal ideation, psychosis, depression, anxiety, confusion and incoherence, and welfare checks were also conducted. The PACER team handled several phone consultations with family members and other police or ambulance units as well. The majority, nearly 80 per cent of these people, were supported to remain in the community as opposed to having to attend the emergency department at the Royal Hobart Hospital.

Based on the early success of PACER, monitored weekly through progress reports and evaluation of similar models in other states, I am pleased that in this year's Budget we have made PACER a permanent service in southern Tasmania, with an additional \$9 million allocated over the forward Estimates. I am also pleased that the model for mental health emergency response that suits the needs of the north-west will be developed and piloted from the first quarter of next year, as we progress our vision for a statewide model.

I note the AMA report identifies gaps in primary care as a key factor leading to increased mental health-related presentations to emergency departments and hospital admissions across the country. We hear from GPs across Tasmania that Medicare does not reflect the increasing cost of delivering primary care services and the October federal budget does not provide desperately needed increases to the Medicare rebate, which has been well explained by GPs and AMA representatives across the country.

I urge the federal government to address the concerns we have had and have been calling for, alongside my fellow state and territory health ministers and premiers, and our peak medical organisations. I will continue to work closely with the mental health sector, as I explained today in question time with respect to the Mental Health Council of Tasmania and the engagement with a leaders forum there, which was very insightful and informative for me, because we need to continue to deliver a more integrated mental health system that better supports Tasmanians with mental health challenges to lead positive and fulfilling lives and to recover from or successfully manage their mental illness.

I also take this opportunity to acknowledge the hardworking statewide mental health services staff, who I know are dedicated advocates for their clients. I sincerely thank them for all the work they do, day in and day out.

[11.22 a.m.]

**Ms BUTLER** (Lyons) - Mr Speaker, I thank Ms Dow, our shadow for health, for bringing this matter on for debate today.

This closely relates to my shadow portfolio of veterans' affairs. We have been doing a lot of work in consultation with veterans across the state. The current situation with mental health services for our veterans in Tasmania is simply not good enough. We know that the Black Dog Institute's report on veterans' suicides says there is a 22 per cent higher chance for male ex-service veterans to be at risk of taking their lives, and the rate is 127 per cent higher for female ex-service veterans, when compared to the general population.

We have the highest per head population of veterans in Australia living in Tasmania, and we have been actively meeting with veterans across the state for quite some time now. Some of those sessions are confidential and we much appreciate that those modern veterans as well as older veterans are providing us with information on where the gaps and the deficiencies are, and very much the deficiencies in the Tasmanian mental health system and how that impacts our veterans, who are some of the highest risks of suicide in the country. This is really serious, this can cost lives and probably has cost lives because the services are just not there.

The current situation is not conducive to wellbeing, with Tasmanian veterans having to travel interstate to access inpatient mental health services. We have heard this same story from many veterans. What that means in short, is if you require an inpatient mental health service, there is an average six-week wait to access the St Helens or Hobart Clinic. We also know that

there is nine- to 12-month wait for other services that deal through the Department of Veterans Affairs. There are many veterans from around Australia who are moving to Tasmania because they appreciate the close community aspect of the Tasmanian culture and they also appreciate the isolation which they find helpful for their mental wellbeing.

We know that those inpatient visits are not covered if you do not have private health insurance. It is a \$10 000 payment, sometimes upfront, to access those mental health services and there are also very limited trauma and acute care services. Our veterans have to travel interstate, away from their family network and their comfort zone, just to be able to access the services that other veterans can.

The Minister for Veterans' Affairs, Guy Barnett, raised this when he spoke to the royal commission. He blamed the federal government for the lack of funding for mental health services in the state. However, the reality which the minister, of course, did not talk about, was that the federal government is more than happy to fund the services but this Government simply has not built the infrastructure. It is the state Government's responsibility to build the infrastructure for those veterans. It is the federal government's responsibility to fund the services. That is the problem we have: the infrastructure has not been built by the state Government in order to provide those services to Tasmanian veterans.

When you are dealing with people who are at such a high risk of taking their own life, you would really want to make sure you got that right and you really should not be providing information to a royal commission which is not correct. That was the information the minister provided at that royal commission. I know there have been discussions on a federal level about that because, quite literally, the infrastructure has not been built here for veterans to access those mental health services. That is the reality of the situation. It is not politicking; it is the truth.

Announcements are great but this Government makes many announcements. It has been a really long time now that they have been telling the people of Tasmania that they are going to build the infrastructure to provide proper mental health services for our community when it simply has not been done, or it is being done. It is always being done but these are people who need to access these services right now.

When we have veterans who are trying to transition from their life in the service, groups like Mates4Mates are fantastic, and services that are run through RSL Tasmania do a fantastic job. When it comes to acute mental health assistance there is a six-week wait or you have to go interstate. Sometimes it is up to a nine- to 12-month wait to access those services. It is simply not good enough. It is not good enough for any cohort in our community but especially not good enough for people who have served to protect our country and the associated PTSD they may have from that service, and also their families accessing those services. When you have veterans taking their lives, according to the Black Dog Institute, female veterans 127 -

## Time expired.

[11.30 a.m.]

**Dr WOODRUFF** (Franklin) - Mr Speaker, the *AMA [Public Hospital] Mental Health Report Card* released yesterday was shocking. It took me completely by surprise. We have all heard the stories. We heard the story of the person who had to wait for 28 hours to be seen in an emergency department when they were in acute psychiatric distress. It is hard to imagine

what that would be like: waiting 28 hours in a place with other people coming and going, coughing, in plastic chairs or even not plastic chairs. It is a public space. It is completely inappropriate that a person who is that desperate, who has exhausted all other avenues for health care, would be in that situation and have to wait so long to be admitted.

The conclusion of the AMA's national report card, which provides data about Tasmania, is overwhelming for the whole country. Severely ill patients are attending emergency departments after they have exhausted all other avenues for help. It is not because they cannot be bothered trying to find somewhere else to go. It is not because they have not tried. It is because of a failure of primary health and community healthcare options.

I recognise that the minister for Mental Health, Premier Jeremy Rockliff, has had very good intentions about transitioning to a focus on community health and primary health care and support for people in mental health distress. We support that direction instead of people ending up in a desperate situation needing to have hospital care, which should only be for a tiny proportion of people. The Mental Health Council has spoken on behalf of the mental health community organisations across Tasmania. Over the last four years or more there has been great work towards this and they have been clear that this is what the community and mental health services want.

The problem is that although the Premier has talked about some of the investments that have been made, they are far too small. We have an enormous gap, which the Liberals knew when they came to government. It was sitting there, according to the AMA's data, for 20 years before they came to government.

There has been a decline year on year in the number of mental health beds in medical institutions available to people in psychiatric distress. The number of beds has fallen off a cliff in Tasmania by head of population, from 251 in 1993 to just 103 beds available to people in a hospital or in a mental health service when they are in acute distress. What we have is more than half, two-thirds actually, of the number of beds available but it has not been matched by the transition to community services.

Tasmania's AMA president, Dr John Saul, makes that comment clearly. There has not been the investment in community health. There has not been the investment in primary health care support by the state Government for GPs. Of course, we understand it is primarily a failure of successive federal Labor and Liberal governments in serially under-funding Medicare. However, the state Government has a responsibility and must work with the GPs to patch that care.

The Premier was at the AMA dinner a couple of weeks ago in Parliament House. I spoke to the GPs who attended. They want to have a conversation, to have a group of GPs to be able to have support, because they are completely maxed-out with the level of need. To find the complex care support they need, they need mentoring support and help from the THS to help them provide professional mentoring to oversee their work as GPs dealing with the most complex cases. What happens is that they send people to psychiatrists and they get bounced back when their complex needs mean that that specialist is not interested in dealing with the whole patient. What we have is a devastating failure.

The Premier has decided to secure \$500 million in investment for an unnecessary mega-stadium, when we have two perfectly good stadiums in Tasmania, over putting that into

community mental health facilities. He is choosing to direct the resources of this Government away from people in mental health distress and lacking social housing, and put it into a stadium that is not needed and not wanted by the people in most distress in Tasmania. That is a decision that this Premier, Minister for Mental Health and Wellbing, is choosing to make. If there is half-a-billion dollars of resources, why not direct them where they are most needed? We could make an argument for lots of things but, first and foremost, we have to look at the most vulnerable people. They are the people we are responsible for.

Although the direction and the intention are there, it is clear that the reason we have a devastating gap is because of the paltry investment that has occurred to date. That has meant it has not been supercharged. We could have done this eight years ago if there really was a commitment to make a change to the system. Rather than just talk and have committees and have planning, we could have supercharged that. There is still time for the Premier to make that decision to supercharge it immediately.

# Time expired.

[11.37 a.m.]

**Mr WOOD** (Bass) - Mr Speaker, in order to deliver on our innovative, best-practice Tasmanian mental health reform program, we need to build, train and retain a mental health workforce equipped with the skills to deliver best-quality care to Tasmanians, to support the delivery of quality services and ensure Tasmanians have access to the care they need. This Government is committed to growing our mental health workforce. In the last four financial years we have seen an increase of over 38.5 FTEs in Statewide Mental Health Services.

The next few years will see significant reform arising from the reform program; the alcohol and other drugs reform agenda, child and adolescent mental health reform, and older persons mental health reform. Collectively, these reforms will have a significantly positive impact on our current services and how we support our consumers into the future, including considerable growth in clinical positions.

To grow the workforce, there will be continued and concerted recruitment and retention activity, and a focus on workforce development. Statewide Mental Health Services continues to explore options to expedite the recruitment process to ensure services are maintained and the reliance on agency staff and locums minimised. This includes the introduction of several developmental positions such as assistant-in-nursing, transition-to-practice and entry-level positions for allied health professionals. Our Government supports transition-to-practice nurses, with the aim to complete their post-graduate Diploma in Mental Health Nursing through fully sponsored and supported training. The number of positions under this program across the state has doubled from 24 to 49 positions in 2022. The service also supports student placements for social work, psychology, medical and nursing university programs. To recruit and retain psychiatrists, a market retention allowance has been approved for psychiatrists who are not already receiving an allowance. There is a dedicated staff member within the Mental Health Reform Program who works exclusively on recruitment and can provide extra assistance to interstate and international inquiries.

We are also excited to be supporting the growth of our mental health lived experience workforce. The appointment of the Mental Health Peer Workforce Coordinator is a joint initiative with Primary Health Tasmania and reflects the importance of ongoing collaboration across the broader mental health sector to create an integrated mental health system. Peer

workers with their personal lived experiences hold an important level of knowledge and understanding as they provide advice and hope to both consumers and carers on their own mental health journeys. Peer workers assist in breaking down stigma and provide a personcentred focus on service and system improvements. Consumer peer workers and family carer peer workers have been employed in our adult community mental health services across the state since 2018. In July 2022, these positions were made permanent.

We are also investing \$5 million to expand the health hub at TasTAFE's Alanvale site in my electorate of Bass, to include a new facility that will deliver training and workforce development for workers in the alcohol and other drug mental health and youth sectors. A new partnership between the Department of Health and the University of Tasmania has been made official to create a centre for mental health services innovation. The centre will facilitate engagement and collaboration between statewide mental health services and the university across a range of areas, including workforce development, training and education and research and development.

In conclusion, our specialised mental health workforce is growing larger, covering more disciplines with more opportunities for education and specialisation, and is more ready than ever to deliver the best quality mental health care to Tasmanians.

Matter noted.

#### SUSPENSION OF SITTING

Mr STREET (Franklin - Leader of the House) - Mr Speaker, I move -

That you now leave the Chair until the ringing of the bells at midday.

Sitting suspended from 11.43 a.m. to 12 p.m.

#### ATTENDANCE OF MEMBERS OF THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

**Mr SPEAKER** - In accordance with the resolution passed by the House today, I now invite members of the Legislative Council to enter the Chamber to listen to the proceedings of the House in respect of the motion of apology to victims and survivors of child sexual abuse in institutional settings. Welcome, members of the Legislative Council.

## **MOTION**

# Apology to Victims/Survivors of Institutional Child Sexual Abuse

Mr ROCKLIFF (Braddon - Premier) - Mr Speaker, the following motion has been circulated.

Mr Speaker, I move -

That the House -

- 1. Expresses its deep, unreserved sorrow on behalf of all Tasmanians, to all victims/survivors of institutional child sexual abuse and apologises for the pain, suffering and trauma they have endured through previous actions and inactions by those in authority.
- 2. Acknowledges victims of institutional child sexual abuse who sadly are no longer with us, remembers them and extends this heartfelt apology to all who love them.
- 3. Apologises that laws and policies of successive parliaments and governments have inflicted profound grief, suffering and loss on these our fellow Tasmanians and have let them down.
- 4. Extends sincere respect and gratitude to all those who demonstrated great courage in sharing their painful lived experience with the Commission of Inquiry, and continue to share.
- Respects victims/survivors who continue to suffer in silence, who do
  not feel able to speak or have chosen not to, and acknowledges that
  their lived experience is as equally important as those that we have
  heard from.
- 6. Values the bravery of all people who did the right thing and reported suspected abuse only for their complaints to be ignored.
- 7. Accepts shared responsibility for past failures to keep children in state institutions safe from harm.
- 8. Commits to working together and across the community to deliver on the recommendations of the Commission of Inquiry that ensure the harms of the past are not repeated, and to make Tasmania the safest place in Australia for children and young people.

Mr Speaker, the Tasmanian Government and the Tasmanian parliament unreservedly apologises to all victims and survivors of child sexual abuse in Tasmanian government institutions. Members of the Tasmanian parliament are united in this House today. We failed you. We are all accountable and we are sorry.

Our institutions have a responsibility to ensure the safety and wellbeing of children and our institutions have clearly failed in that responsibility. No child should ever experience sexual abuse or any other form of abuse. No child who has been abused should ever experience a response that rejects or minimises their experience. No child should be silenced or punished.

We are deeply sorry that our institutions violated your trust when they should have been places where you were safe, secure, supported and protected. We are sorry for failing in our responses to the abuse, for causing you harm through our responses and failing to meet your and the community's expectations. We express our sincere sorrow and regret for those who came to us and who were not believed and not supported at a time when you needed us most.

To those who were also abused after being placed in our care, we are so sorry for the actions we and successive governments did not take that might have led to your safety, and we are sorry for the actions that have had the effect of protecting abusers and shielding institutions from accountability. We have failed you and we accept responsibility for that failure.

Today we acknowledge the pain and suffering and the enduring impact of trauma on your health and wellbeing, on your life and the lives of the ones you love. We apologise for the loss of trust and safety in this world. We apologise for the potential that has been lost and the things that were stolen from you that you will never get back.

We also acknowledge that trauma can affect relationships and generations, and that is why we extend our apology to your children, your partners, parents, siblings, families, friends and all those who have been impacted by what happened to you. We would also like to extend an apology to those who spoke up to protect our children, only for those concerns to be ignored. You were also let down by us and the system.

Today we are also saying thank you to those who demonstrated enormous bravery in sharing their lived experience through the inquiry and having to relive some of the most harrowing and traumatic times of your life. It is because of you that there is a genuine commitment to real change, meaning other children and young people will be protected from experiencing the abuse that you endured. I would also like to thank the victims/survivors who gave up some of their time to share their thoughts about what today's apology needs to be to have meaning for you.

We acknowledge that there have been many more who do not feel able to choose or chose not to speak to the commission. Today we also acknowledge the many victims and survivors who have never spoken of their abuse. We will believe you and we will be here to support you also should you choose to come forward in the future. Your experiences are equally important.

With a heavy heart, I want to recognise those victims who tragically are no longer with us. They are not here to see the failings of government institutions brought to light, nor to see the Parliament of Tasmania apologise, take accountability and commit to action. Today we will remember them and extend this apology to their families and friends, many of whom have worked so tirelessly to ensure their voices and their experiences are heard. To you all, I say, I have listened and I have learned.

Over the past eight months throughout this inquiry we have heard about a very, very dark chapter in Tasmania's history. It is a chapter no-one should ever forget. Today we give a solemn undertaking to all Tasmanians to never allow a repeat of this abuse, of the secrecy and the suppression: to never allow a repeat of the failures that allowed such abuse to occur.

Our Government is acutely aware of the enormous responsibility to act swiftly and to act decisively to implement the commission's recommendations. This parliament is acutely aware of its responsibility to ensure that the changes made to protect our children and our young people in this state are enduring for all time. While regrettably we cannot change what has happened, we can determine what happens next. This parliament will be defined by the actions we take now to ensure the injustices perpetrated by Tasmanian government institutions can never happen again.

We know that we must do better to protect all children in Tasmania from abuse and that our actions must give meaning to this apology. We have listened to those who gave evidence and as a result commenced work on a number of interim actions where it is clear we can and should make those changes now. For the same reason we are saying sorry now, it is never too early to acknowledge the wrongs and apologise. We have heard you through the hearings, we believe you, and we are deeply sorry for what you have endured. We know there is still much more work to do. We are committed to making the changes required to ensure that Tasmania is a safer place for all children and young people.

I believe it is also important for everyone listening today to understand that child safety is everyone's responsibility. If you have a concern about a child, when your feeling or intuition tells you something is not right, do not hesitate. Please, take action. No concern is too minor. Silence allows abuse to continue, so please report your concerns. It is only by working together with a shared sense of purpose that we will make Tasmania a safer place for all. We are all accountable. We all take responsibility. We are all deeply sorry.

# [12.13 p.m.]

**Ms WHITE** (Lyons - Leader of the Opposition) - Mr Speaker, I rise to speak strongly in support of this motion. There is no matter of greater importance than the safety of our children. We in this parliament acknowledge and take responsibility for the failings in our state government's institutions which have so badly let down so many children in our schools, hospitals, the youth justice system and other government settings.

We deeply regret these failings which have caused enormous pain and suffering to children, who should have been afforded the highest protection we could offer. We offer our deepest and sincerest apologies to the children who have grown up with that pain and have had to fight every step of the way to find a path through the trauma, hurt and feelings of betrayal, and try to move on with their lives in spite of it, in many cases, with little to guide them but their own courage.

Tragically also, to the children who are unable to find their way through, whose pain was too overwhelming for them to overcome and who are no longer with us as a result, there is nothing we can do to make up for that.

If we are to find a way forward and protect other children, we must start by acknowledging the profound harm these systemic failings have done to so many children, children who have had their innocence stolen from them and then had to fight a system that did not believe them, or that dismissed their complaints because it would be too hard to prove; to the victims' and survivors' families, who entrusted their children's care to state institutions only for that trust to be betrayed in the worst possible ways; to the whistle-blowers who were not listened to, who had their concerns minimised, who tried to warn us of the horrors but found that instead of our gratitude for helping to protect children, they got silenced; to those parents who saw their children suffering but were unable to penetrate a wall of deeply held trauma amid the complex emotions of guilt, shame, anger and sorrow; to those who knew and tried to get help for their children and justice but were unable to penetrate a wall of bureaucracy and were left by the system to deal with their pain and grief, trauma and guilt without the support and help that they deserved and without the help and support that their children deserved.

To each of you, we say sorry. We are sorry that we still cannot protect all our children. We have not done enough yet, but let this day be a mark of our public commitment to each of you that we will redouble our effort and that what follows our words in this place will be action.

The Government has made a commitment to implement all of the recommendations of the commission of inquiry when they are handed down next year. That is a commitment that must be kept. While today is about acknowledging and apologising for the way we have let children down, there must also be a single-minded focus on doing everything within our power to protect from this failure to keep children safe, from happening again.

I would like to acknowledge the former premier, Peter Gutwein, who announced the commission of inquiry and did so, I believe, from a place of genuine desire to make a difference to the lives of children in our state. I thank the commissioners for their dedication and careful work and all the staff who have supported the commission of inquiry. Their compassion and care has helped to support many victims/survivors tell their story and expose the failures of successive governments.

I recognise the bravery of all of those who have come forward. In particular, I would like to pay my gratitude to those who spoke up both on and off the record before the commission of inquiry was announced. Their powerful stories shocked us, horrified us and demanded action from us. From that, the necessity for a commission of inquiry became clear.

The wider community shares the distress and sorrow at both the nature and the extent of the matters that the commission of inquiry has exposed. We heard the testimony and questioned how these things could have happened. We read and heard the reports in the media and we asked why nobody did anything. The uncomfortable reality is that many of these failures to protect children were known but people did not act. Many of these stories of abuse have been told before but people did not listen.

The commission of inquiry has provided a safe place for people to share their experience and for them to be believed. Some gave evidence to the commission of inquiry because they wanted to protect others. They wanted to expose what they had witnessed, the failings, the horror and a lack of action to keep children safe. Some shared stories where the only action taken was to protect the perpetrator. Some shared their own stories of abuse, of their pain, of how a system that should be set up to protect the most vulnerable utterly failed.

The personal stories from the commission of inquiry were the most heartbreaking to hear. The horrific abuse children who should have been safe were subjected to and the years and years of dealing with the trauma of that abuse, the lifelong damage that has caused, the gaslighting, not believed by people in positions of power, holding the pain tight in their chest as it threatened to consume them, the loneliness, the isolation, the secrets, the shame, the horror of discovering through the media that they were not alone, that so many others had experienced similar trauma, in some cases at the hands of the same perpetrator, the ordeal of having to speak up themselves through the media in order to finally be heard.

Tragically, these horrific experiences are not restricted to those who took part in the commission of inquiry. There are those who have equally dreadful stories, who have never shared them. We know that many other children have also suffered terribly at the hands of people they should have been able to trust. In every instance where a child has been abused

and had their world shattered, it is important to remember that it is not your fault and it was never your fault.

We know that all of you who have experienced this terrible betrayal have lived a very different life from the life you should have had. For all of that, we acknowledge your pain and anguish and are deeply and sincerely sorry.

I want to acknowledge the extraordinary courage and resilience it has taken to come through such a devastating experience. It is your strength and fortitude that has brought us to where we are today, no longer dismissing these awful stories of abuse but exposing them instead, so that the systemic failings that have allowed this to go on for so long can be fixed; so that those who allowed these atrocities to continue can be held to account; so that we can have trust in our public institutions again; so that we can know that our children are safe and protected; so that this never happens again.

We come together today in this House to acknowledge the deep hurt caused by these failings, to take responsibility for these failings and to give our firm commitment to do better. We are here as representatives of the Tasmanian community to offer our sincere apologies to the children who lives were so damaged, to their mothers, their fathers, their brothers and sisters, their grandparents and all who love them.

I know that for some, today will be met with mixed feelings. This is a highly sensitive and personal issue. Every person will deal with this in different ways and it is important that we respect that. For some people, today will be a really important day to help them heal. For others, it might be quite distressing, and I want to acknowledge that. That range of reactions is normal, and we accept and respect that. Our role is to do everything we can to work with individuals to ensure that they have the support they need.

There is no apology that can take away the weight you bear, the loss of your innocence, or the sadness that remains with you, but I hope that by making this apology today we can help ease the burden of your trauma. We are deeply sorry - sorry for your pain, sorry for your suffering, sorry for the appalling treatment you endured after already experiencing one of the worst things a child can experience, and sorry for failing you when you should have been protected.

No-one should suffer as you have suffered and along with our sincere apology, we offer you our ongoing compassion and support. We offer our vow that we will work continuously to ensure that this never happens again and that Tasmania's children are protected, as they should be, in a community that always puts their safety first.

Mr Speaker, I commend the motion to the House.

## [12.23 p.m.]

**Ms O'CONNOR** (Clark - Leader of the Greens) - Mr Speaker, joining us here in this parliament, across the hall in the Long Room, out on the lawns, on Elizabeth Street Pier and on screens across the country, are Tasmanians, victims/survivors and people who love them, who have been abjectively failed by successive administrations and governments of every colour.

On behalf of the Greens, Dr Woodruff and I and all the people we represent, I want to say to you, our fellow Tasmanians, how deeply, unreservedly sorry we are for the lifelong pain

that you endure. You have been grievously wronged and for that we are sorry. To victims/survivors, we are beyond sorry. Your innocence was snatched away, your trust broken and your childhoods cut short.

We grieve with you for all that has been lost through layer on layer of betrayal, betrayal of your vulnerability and your trust. While we can never know the vastness and depth of your suffering, we hear you when you tell us that what happened to you as children and teenagers has afflicted every day of your adult lives. We know that some of you are still children, traumatised, looking for answers and for help. We want to help. All of us in here want to help.

The Greens in this place have always fought for the rights and safety of children and young people, and always will, but it was not and has never been enough. I am truly sorry for any and every part we have played in failing you, and those who love you.

In here, we feel and accept your anger towards all of us across political boundaries who could and should have done more. You sure do have the right to be angry, and you do not need anyone in this parliament to tell you that. Every child has the right to feel loved, safe and wanted, but you were not kept safe, not by all the adults around you, not by those you had a right to trust and not by the state of Tasmania, which too often placed you directly in harm's way: in classrooms with paedophiles dressed up as teachers; in foster homes, out of sight and mind, and in danger; in youth detention, overseen by predators with too much power, too few managers, and senior bureaucrats who cared enough, or had the courage to speak for you, and too little government oversight; in public hospitals, where you were admitted to get better and were instead preyed upon by those your parents unknowingly entrusted you to. To your parents, your families: we are so, so sorry. Your trust too was betrayed and your child was not kept safe in the arms of the state.

As a society, we put some of you as children in places like the Royal Derwent Psychiatric Hospital, or Willow Court, for the best part of the past two centuries until a little over 20 years ago. Behind the high walls of that bleak, bleak institution, your disability, or mental fragility, or the fact you were a teenage girl locked up on a charge of moral mania, left you extremely vulnerable to cruelty, neglect and sexual abuse.

For too long, all of you here who were so terribly hurt were made near invisible by the state. There was no formal acknowledgement or acceptance of responsibility by those who should have protected you, no words of sorrow, no commitment to save other children from the trauma you feel, the shockwaves to your very soul that you endure, mostly suffering in silence, each and every day.

Today, this parliament, on behalf of the State of Tasmania, acknowledges your great suffering, gives its sincere, heartfelt apology, and commits to doing much, much better by this island's children and young people from here.

Many of the people watching will rightly be cynical about what today's apology really means beyond the words we say. Although it is often said that words are cheap, they do matter. Words spoken in truth and open-heartedness signal feeling and intent. Words like 'sorry' can have deep meaning and provide a measure of healing, but we all know actions always matter more than any words.

The actions this Government and this parliament take from here really matter to victims/survivors, their friends and families and those who grieve the unimaginable loss of a child. It will not bring their sons or daughters back, but the actions we ultimately take to protect children from harm in future will bring some comfort to those who have lost someone precious and beloved.

The tangible response to the evidence and recommendations of the commission of inquiry will be what really matters to whistleblowers, who had the courage to speak truth to power in order to protect children. Those brave state servants recognised and acted on their moral duty to keep kids safe, often at huge personal cost.

The actions this parliament takes following this apology have to encompass the laws it enacts, the policies parties in government take to elections and implement, and the scrutiny applied to those laws and policies by non-government MPs.

On behalf of the Greens, I want to assure everyone listening and watching today that we regard this as a sacred trust. We will never, ever abandon Tasmania's children and young people. Prioritising their future is core to who we are. We advocated strongly for, and watched closely, the commission of inquiry. We have been moved by the courage and testimony of victims/survivors and whistleblowers. Equally, we have been revolted by the litany of failures on the part of so many arms of the state.

We are so thankful to those who spoke their truth before and on to the commission. Such bravery. We also sincerely thank all working with the commission for shining light into darkness with such empathy and clarity of purpose.

Dr Woodruff and I will be in here working cooperatively with our colleagues to ensure that every recommendation made by the commission is implemented. Tasmanian children and young people deserve nothing less. I believe there is a strong shared commitment in this parliament to delivering on the recommendation of the Commission of Inquiry. If we have to cut the roads budget or cancel the stadium on Hobart's waterfront to give kids the future they deserve, then let us have that debate.

Let us be honest with ourselves and everyone watching today: we would not be here apologising and there would be no commission of inquiry without the courage of victims/survivors who came forward, giving voice and strength to others, or the whistleblowers who cried the warnings and were too often ignored or, worse, not believed or shut down. To you brave good people who stood up for kids, we are sorry.

What we have seen and heard, first through journalist Camille Bianchi's podcast, *The Nurse*, and the work of local journalists who amplified her ground-breaking work, then through the testimony of victims/survivors and whistleblowers to the commission of inquiry, is just a sliver of the truth. This island society and those at places in positions of authority and trust have a long, sorry history of damaging children. The profound harm of this to-date relentless failure by the State of Tasmania has been inflicted on Tasmanian children and young people over many generations; since colonisation, in fact.

In the very early days of this settlement, Mathinna, a Tasmanian Aboriginal girl, was taken from her family to the home of colonial governor, Sir John Franklin and his wife. Lady Jane was childless and they wanted to improve the girl child. Instead, as we read in

Richard Flanagan's devastating book, *Wanting*, Mathinna was first treated like a pet or an exhibit, then sexually abused and then discarded by the Franklins. Mathinna died at 17 years of age, her last days spent as a prostitute. She was a child; she was just a baby.

Not enough has changed since the bastard children of convicts were sent to the orphan school and Aboriginal children were ripped from their families into short lives of punishment and pain. Only last month, we had children locked in their cells for 23 hours a day, day after day, at Ashley, a place that has been torturing kids for a century. The Greens and others in our community have been pushing for Ashley's closure for more than a decade. We will not let up until its gates are closed for good and young people who end up in detention are treated with dignity and respect, and given a real crack at life.

Is now the right time to give this apology? There is a range of valid views. I believe any time is a good time to say sorry when we know there has been a terrible wrong. We have not heard it all but we have heard enough from victims/survivors themselves to know an apology and much more is needed. It is a moral imperative.

We have heard enough from whistleblowers who spoke up and came before the commission of inquiry to know an apology and more is needed. We know there are victims/survivors, some of whom for very valid reasons could not face the commission of inquiry, who also suffer to this day. We see you and we are so sorry you suffer.

In my life and work, I have known many victims/survivors. I am always struck by how deep the scars of their abuse are and how fresh the wounds. I have known and loved victims who did not survive, including my beautiful baby sister, Kristy. Today, I honour her life too. May all who have been lost rest in light and peace and may we never again abandon the children. Instead, let us commit without reservation or qualification to making lutruwita/Tasmania the safest place in the country for children and young people. We are so sorry.

### [12.35 p.m.]

Ms JOHNSTON (Clark) - Mr Speaker, I rise today to say sorry and to say to the victims/survivors of child sexual abuse, I believe you. It took a lot of courage for those to come forward to tell their stories of abuse. I acknowledge the bravery of people who could not come forward, as dealing with the consequences of child sexual abuse every day requires bravery every single day, whether they share their stories or not.

If there is one thing we must acknowledge it is that children must be believed. As the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse concluded, there are many barriers to children disclosing abuse, including being disbelieved or even punished as a result of disclosure. Adults need to be educated in recognising and responding appropriately to behavioural signs or a disclosure of abuse. This did not happen in Tasmania.

Every child has the right to a childhood, the right to safety and the right to protection. These are fundamental rights, something every parent would want their children to have. That is not just me saying so; it is enshrined in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Somehow, in Tasmania we allowed horrific atrocities to occur to children entrusted to our care. We failed them. We failed their families. We failed the Tasmanian community.

Little Tassie - one of the safest places in the world, we tell ourselves and others - but a blind eye turned to the unspeakable horrors right here in our institutions. For the victims/survivors, 'safe Tassie' is a cruel veneer. Institutions such as hospitals and schools, whose very existence is to protect and nurture children, somehow became safe havens for evil people to do their worst.

Like most Tasmanians, I am devastated and I am ashamed. The revelations from witnesses before the Tasmanian commission of inquiry revealed harrowing tales of inaction, obstruction, ineptitude, indifference and incompetence to the litany of complaints, boundary breaches and red flags that victims and their families raised. In case after case, we were told of a staggering lack of trauma-informed approaches to complaints and often no proper investigation at all. When attempts were made by victims, their families or staff to report concerns, there were disastrous failures within government systems, record-keeping and training procedures and a very clear lack of support for victims/survivors, families and whistleblowers. Overall, a common experience for victims/survivors and their families is that they felt ignored. There is a persistent theme of being put off, sidelined or the abuse minimised.

To the parents and families of the children who have been abused, I am so sorry. I cannot begin to imagine your anguish. You have carried the burden of your child's experiences and made heartfelt and often very difficult submissions to the inquiry, which we are very grateful for. I am so very sorry that your children's lives have been shattered and, terribly, lives lost and family relationships broken.

To the victims/survivors of child sexual abuse, I am deeply sorry. I am sorry that the state failed to protect you and believe you. I promise I will listen and I will learn so that you receive the support you need and deserve, so that no other child should have to suffer as you have. I commend the motion to the House.

## [12.40 p.m.]

**Mr O'BYRNE** (Franklin) - Mr Speaker, today I welcome all those who are here or are listening in, whether you are in Parliament House, nearby on the lawns, at the reception centre, at home, in the state, or abroad. I would like to acknowledge those who are no longer with us and their loved ones, and those who have chosen not to listen today and who have very mixed feelings about the actions of the parliament.

Today, we recognise the harrowing experiences of members of our Tasmanian community, Tasmanians who have been abused, silenced, dismissed and neglected by the very institutions they were told to trust, and should have been able to trust. To the innocent Tasmanians whose childhoods were inextricably changed and those who are still suffering because of our failure to provide you with a safe environment, to care for you, to listen to you, to believe you and to act in your best interests, we say sorry.

Today is about acknowledging the state of Tasmania, the institutions we administer and invest so much trust in, failed to keep you safe. It is about taking responsibility. It is about saying as a parliament, on behalf of the people of Tasmania, that this parliament hears you and that this parliament believes you. We recognise the profound grief and trauma experienced by those who suffered abuse in Tasmania's institutional settings. We recognise the lasting and ongoing impact this has on the lives and livelihood of too many Tasmanians. To all of those who deserve nothing but care, safety and support, but instead experienced the most horrifying nightmare, we are so sorry. We cannot imagine your pain.

To those who bravely shared their experience, including those who gave evidence to the commission of inquiry, I cannot begin to understand how difficult this process must have been for you, revisiting the darkest moment of your lives, while confronting the very institutions and power structures that failed to keep you safe. You did so with tremendous bravery to not only stand up for yourselves, but also for those who have suffered and been silenced, and to ensure that other children will not suffer as you have done. In doing so, we acknowledge the pressure that victims/survivors feel to speak up in protection of other children when others who have responsibility for the protection of others are failing them.

To those who could not share their story, or chose not to, we recognise your ongoing suffering and acknowledge your lived experience is as equally as important as those we have heard from.

We also recognise those who are no longer with us: those who will not have the opportunity to see the justice they deserved; to have their voice heard; to be believed and to be supported.

We also acknowledge the profound and ongoing impact that your experience has had on those around you - your loved ones - and we pay our deepest respect and gratitude for those who spoke up on behalf of our children at much risk to themselves and their careers.

We acknowledge that the commission of inquiry has been a tremendously difficult process. It has shone a light into a dark place - a tragic and systemic failure to keep children and young people safe. It has laid bare a culture, processes and conditions that enabled the most wicked and obscene behaviour to take place.

I know that we can never erase the terrible harm that has been inflicted on so many people, but we can commit to ending the systemic abuse and culture of coverup. We can ensure the terrifying acts of the past are not repeated. We can and must commit to doing everything in our power to make Tasmania a safe place for our children and young people because they and you deserve it. Again, I say we are sorry, so very, very sorry. I commend the motion to the House.

**Mr SPEAKER** - I now ask members to signify their support for the motion by standing and joining me in one minute's quiet reflection to acknowledge the victims and survivors of child sexual abuse, their families and support people. I welcome all others in this place to join us.

Motion agreed to nemine contradicente.

#### SUSPENSION OF SITTING

Mr STREET (Franklin - Leader of the House) - Mr Speaker, I move -

That you now leave the Chair until the ringing of the bells at 3.30 p.m.

Motion agreed to.

Sitting suspended from 12.48 p.m. to 3.30 p.m.

### STADIUMS TASMANIA AMENDMENT (TRANSFERS) BILL 2022 (No. 39)

### **Second Reading**

[3.30 p.m.]

Mr STREET (Franklin - Minister for Hospitality and Events) - Mr Speaker, I move -

That the bill now be read a second time.

It gives me great pleasure to bring a bill before the House that progresses the Tasmanian Government's commitment to establish Stadiums Tasmania and commence its operations. Our major stadiums are important for a range of reasons. They are spaces that bring people together to entertain them and make them feel part of something bigger than themselves. They are home to sport of all levels, concerts, arts and cultural events, ceremonies, performances, eisteddfods and functions of all types.

A primary and significant use is elite professional sport. Elite sport not only provides entertaining events for Tasmanians to enjoy, it provides inspiration for men, women and children to be fit and healthy individually or as part of a team. It supports the wider effort of our sporting clubs and organisations to bring people together and strengthen our communities. It serves as a key preventative health measure and is an investment into reducing longer-term costs and pressures on the health system. It also brings enormous economic benefits, business development and job opportunities and will diversify and strengthen our visitor economy.

I am pleased to confirm the Stadiums Tasmania Act 2022 commenced on 25 May 2022. This created a new statutory authority that can own, manage and develop our major stadiums as a Crown entity with a skills-based board and a statewide perspective. It will enable each stadium to continue to operate effectively and efficiently and meet the needs of their local communities, major sporting codes and competitions, other users and their audiences now and into the future. It also positions us to better identify the local needs and sporting and entertainment trends to inform future development that will enhance the assets.

As Minister for Hospitality and Events, I am particularly conscious of the important role that major stadiums play in our cities and regions. They are assets that generate visitor interest that greatly contributes to and broadens the Tasmanian visitor economy. If you are out and about on an event day at one of our major stadiums, you would know how much energy, local engagement and intrastate, interstate and international visitation they can generate. It is important that our stadium infrastructure is contemporary, relevant, responsive and competitive. We need to continue to strategically invest in our major stadium infrastructure to ensure they remain current, contemporary and respond to the changing needs and expectations of sporting codes, competitions, audiences and other users.

The Stadiums Tasmania Act 2022 positions us to focus on these challenges and opportunities and will draw together a currently disaggregated set of important assets under the one umbrella. Both the election commitment from 2021 and the state of the state address 2022 included several tasks that the Government is keen to have Stadiums Tasmania fulfil, drawing on the professional and technical expertise that will be available to it.

We will position Stadiums Tasmania to explore the feasibility of future potential developments, working in partnership with the Department of State Growth to progress major

stadium capital developments, develop a 10-year strategic stadium plan and fulfil other responsibilities assigned to it in its statement of expectations. Each of these are important aspects of the role Stadiums Tasmania is being fully equipped to fulfil within government and they reinforce its mandate.

The Stadiums Tasmania Amendment (Transfers) Bill 2022 completes a two-stage legislative process. The first stage established a statutory authority that can own, manage and oversee the development of major stadiums and other related assets. As I noted earlier, I am pleased to confirm this is a task that has already been achieved.

The second stage of this reform process comes with the tabling of this bill. This is an amending bill. It provides for the ongoing employment provisions for Stadiums Tasmania and the provisions that are needed to smoothly transfer stadiums and related assets contracts, liabilities and employees to and from Stadiums Tasmania. The bill also includes some additional governance provisions akin to similar state entities.

The transfers bill approaches its desired outcome in a tried and tested way and draws on the practical experience of similar statutory bodies in Tasmania. The bill has been crafted in a way that enables the smooth transfer of major stadiums and related assets to and from Stadiums Tasmania and provides ongoing employment and governance provisions. The provisions in this bill are commensurate with the functions, powers and governance structure established for Stadiums Tasmania.

I now turn my attention to providing the House a concise overview of the key provisions contained in the transfers bill before the House today. The Stadiums Tasmania Amendment (Transfer) Bill will update and expand the list of definitions used in the principal act to ensure the list of terminology used in the bill and transfer provisions is comprehensive. This includes recognising that transfers may involve the Crown, the authority and non-Crown entities and ensuring the transfer processes are clear, flexible and fit for purpose.

The bill amends the time frames contained in the principal act under which the board is to prepare its first business plan under section 19 and its first annual report under section 32. These provisions recognise that Stadiums Tasmania only commenced on 25 May 2022 and the inaugural chairperson and board cannot be appointed prior to the start of the financial year on 1 July 2022. These provisions will give the new board time to begin operating, develop its first business plan and as soon as it is practicable in 2022-23 prepare its first annual report to encompass its first full year of operation.

The bill also outlines the employment arrangements of the chief executive officer and the staff of Stadiums Tasmania and enables their employment pursuant to the Fair Work Act 2009. This will replace the interim provisions built into the principal act, making them the ongoing provisions and enable Stadiums Tasmania to employ staff. This recognises the importance of positioning Stadiums Tasmania to be as commercially focused as possible while still a crown entity. These capabilities align with the employment provisions of most of the stadiums proposed for transfer and better align with the variable staffing requirements and non-standard working hours associated with operating stadiums.

The bill confirms the process upon which employees who are proposed to transfer are to be made an offer of employment. This is a standalone Part which reinforces the importance of current stadium employees and the knowledge, skills and expertise they possess. Use of the term 'offer' is to consciously reinforce the fact that each employee proposed to transfer must agree to his or her transfer. The bill confirms that if they decline an offer, they will remain with their current employer.

Importantly, the transfers bill preserves specific agreed employment entitlements. While the transfer provisions for employees from the state to federal system and federal to federal system are generally prescribed under the Fair Work provisions, the bill reinforces these provisions and contains some additional provisions that are designed to ease the transition process for employees. These provisions include recognising remuneration entitlements and benefits, general leave and long service leave, continuous service and preserving the defined benefit superannuation arrangements of eligible State Service employees.

The provisions also allow for agreements to be formed to achieve the same outcome for non-Crown employees. They also provide state servants who transfer with the ability to have their years of service with the State Service and Stadiums Tasmania recognised if they return to the State Service.

The bill also outlines two distinct processes in Part 4B that give the minister the ability to transfer an agreed set of assets, liabilities and contracts to or from Stadiums Tasmania via a *Gazette* notice or a transfer agreement. The notion of using a notice in the *Gazette* is consistent with the provisions in the Rail Company Act 2009 and the Irrigation Company Act 2011. Whereas the flexibility to use a transfer agreement is an option that gives the minister the ability to develop more tailored transfer arrangements, this should be warranted. These transfer provisions will apply to the Crown, the authority and non-crown entities.

The bill introduces a provision that waives the need for Stadiums Tasmania to pay state taxes. It is a common practice built into the Rail Company Act 2009, Irrigation Company Act 2011, Macquarie Point Development Corporation Act 2012 and the Water and Sewerage Corporation Act 2012.

The bill also builds on the governance provisions contained in the principal act by amending Part 6 to outline the duties, responsibilities and expectations of the board, officers and employees and former board members, officers and employees and make them more explicit. These provisions are consistent with the governance provisions in the Government Business Enterprise Act 1995 and the Corporations Act 2001.

Last summer Tasmania hosted an historic Ashes test match for the first time. In June 2021, the AFL blockbuster between Hawthorn and Essendon at UTAS Stadium was sold out, as were two historic AFL finals played at UTAS Stadium in September, the very first time we hosted AFL finals in the state.

The support for and pride in our teams like the Tasmanian JackJumpers and Hobart Hurricanes across the state has been nothing short of outstanding. These are prime examples of the sorts of elite sporting opportunities Tasmania can and should aspire to now and in the future. These types of events are of great appeal. They showcase Tasmania to visitors and prospective visitors and inspire people to strive to compete at the highest level of elite sport. Working together, this will help stimulate grass roots participation and help build a more active and healthier Tasmanian population.

As members know, Stadiums Tasmania is initially expected to assume responsibility for the Crown-owned MyState Bank Arena in Hobart and the Silverdome in Launceston. The potential inclusion of Blundstone Arena, Dial Park in Penguin and UTAS Stadium remains subject to negotiation with their respective owners. These negotiations can start to progress once we have greater certainty about the transfer process.

Each stadium has the potential to generate their own income by arranging and hosting events through leases and licences, hospitality, merchandise, sponsorship deals, pourage and naming rights and other similar mechanisms. This will continue to be encouraged. As is the case with similar stadium authorities elsewhere, the Government recognises that to succeed, Stadiums Tasmania will need ongoing financial support to maintain its board and establishment and cover the operational deficits of these stadiums.

The 2020-21 and 2021-22 state budgets included a total allocation of \$16 million in recurrent funding for Stadiums Tasmania over the forward Estimates to help cover these expenses. A financial profile of each stadium and their specific financial needs will need to be considered by the board once it is appointed. While Stadiums Tasmania will have a role planning and facilitating new infrastructure, the primary responsibility of major stadium development projects remains with the Department of State Growth. This means Stadiums Tasmania will not have direct responsibility for facilitating major capital developments announced by the Government involving Blundstone Arena, Dial Park, the Silverdome, UTAS Stadium, Wilkinsons Point or the proposed new arts, entertainment and sports precinct in Hobart. However, as the owning entity it will be a primary stakeholder.

I am conscious some members have raised concerns about the risk that Stadiums Tasmania could become disproportionately influential in relation to publicly funded projects. Recognising this concern might arise, the principal act includes the requirement for a ministerial statement of expectations to be developed, introduces the capacity to issue a ministerial direction and requires the board to follow the Treasurer's instructions and seek the Treasurer's endorsement to borrow funds. These checks and balances are important contemporary governance provisions.

In addition to these checks and balances, section 7(2) of the principal act requires the board to obtain the minister's, hospitality event's and the Treasurer's approval, acting as shareholder ministers if it intends to progress plans to acquire/dispose of or demolish a stadium. Furthermore, as an added safeguard, parliament would need to endorse the allocation of any additional funding required to implement such a plan as part of the state budget. This makes them subject to scrutiny by parliament and the budget Estimates process.

I can also reassure members that while the focus of Stadiums Tasmania is on major stadiums and related assets this work does not in any way diminish the importance of other community-based assets. It does, however, direct and focus attention on the role major stadiums fulfil in maximising our ability to engage in elite national and international competitions and events. The nature of major stadiums is that they are complex and resource-intensive to own, operate, maintain and upgrade. We also need to ensure they remain safe, competitive and fit for purpose. Our stadium assets are vital components of our community's infrastructure. They play a critical role in bringing Tasmanians together and drawing people to our state from across the country and from around the world.

The Tasmanian Government's plans to prepare Stadiums Tasmania to begin operating through the transfers bill will position us to better meet these needs and maximise the role and benefits these important assets fulfil in our local communities and our state. I am sure all members present will join me in expressing our gratitude to all the staff, volunteers, sporting codes and competitions, community organisations and management of Tasmania's stadiums for the excellent work they do.

I trust they will see the ongoing establishment of Stadiums Tasmania as a reflection of our commitment to them. I am pleased to be able to say the Government has delivered its commitment and Stadiums Tasmania has been created. We expect it will be able to have its leadership appointed in the coming months in order to commence operating over the spring and summer.

I am proud to introduce the bill. While its focus is on drawing our major stadiums together, it also represents several important objectives that unite us. The opportunity to attend or participate in an event at one of our major stadiums not only creates the ability to showcase our talent on the sporting field, on stage or by hosting a memorable event, it also gives us the ability to build and enhance our community.

I would like to acknowledge the work of the staff within the Department of State Growth and the Office of Parliamentary Counsel in preparing this bill. They have consulted with the appropriate parties for a long time and I am sure they are now experts in the field of stadium management. With that, I commend this bill to the House.

[3.45 p.m.]

**Ms WHITE** (Lyons - Leader of the Opposition) - Mr Speaker, I rise to provide a contribution to the bill. I thank the minister's office and department for providing a briefing. We have been waiting for this bill to come to the parliament for a while.

That is where I would like to start my contribution. There are some timelines outlined by the minister in the second reading speech for which I would like an update in his summing up. It seems there has been slippage before we have started. There is reference in the second reading speech to the board being appointed prior to the start of the new financial year, on 1 July 2022, including with the chair, which will now rule the board to begin operating and developing its first business case plan as soon as practicable in 2022-23, and prepare its first annual report to encompass its first full year of operation.

**Mr Street** - I think I said in the second reading speech that they could not be appointed until after 1 July.

**Ms WHITE** - Cannot be appointed, yes, but for a 2022-23 full year of operation. My first question is, what progress has been made on identifying a chair and a board that would need to be in place in order to then select a CEO?

The other point the minister made in his second reading speech is that he was hoping to have that leadership appointed in coming months, in order to commence operating over the spring and summer, which is right now. I suspect this was something that was intended to be debated before now, and it has not been. I am keen to get an update from the minister about whether there is going to be any change to the time frames that have been outlined in the second reading speech and how accurate that second reading speech is?

I have a number of questions about the way the bill operates. It would be remiss of me if I did not take this opportunity to talk about the biggest stadium issue of all in Tasmania: the proposal to build a \$750 million stadium at Macquarie Point, and the lack of community support for that project. This is a clear demonstration, again, of the Government's wrong priorities. Here we are on a momentous day like this talking about stadiums. Many people would find that particularly galling. There is no need for Tasmania to spend public money building another stadium in our state. We have taken the opportunity through this place time and again to point out how the Government has its priorities wrong, and to remind them that there are so many other pressing needs in this community that should be addressed as a priority ahead of stadiums.

Former Liberal premier, Robin Gray, has once again penned an opinion piece that was published in *The Examiner*. I will read it for members in this Chamber, who may not have read the opinion piece when it was printed last Thursday. It says:

IT'S not parochial: the North is being dudded and it's a bad investment. Following my public comments on the dud stadium deal, I have read the response from the state Government and its own tourism body trying to position those calling out the poor decision to invest in a \$750 million stadium in Hobart, as 'practising low-rent, parochial politics'.

With all due respect - this is not parochial. It's a dud deal for the north and Tasmania and a complete waste of money that would be much better spent on health care and education.

We don't need a new \$750 million stadium in Tasmania and that money will come out of health, education and other critical infrastructure.

We are in dire need of more nurses and aged care workers and we should be investing in training Tasmanians and making Tasmania more welcoming to interstate and overseas trained professionals.

We have a GP crisis on our hands, which is not being addressed and this is only going to get worse.

Our education standards and outcomes are among the lowest in the country.

Parochialism is focusing on small sections of an issue, rather than considering the wider context.

Well, the wider context is this: for a much smaller amount of money, the Government can increase the capacity of UTAS Stadium in Launceston and make Launceston the home of AFL football, while Hobart has MONA, the basketball, most of the cricket and the major convention centre.

It's the big picture and the wider context I am focused on - investing sensibly and fairly across the north and south of the state - and not building a \$750 million white elephant stadium which forces all the good AFL games to be played in Hobart.

The AFL seems hellbent on a stadium with a roof.

Will they stop playing games at the MCG, Kardinia Park, the SCG, the Gabba, the Adelaide Oval, as none of those have a roof?

And the AFL seems hell bent on a stadium in Hobart and the last time I looked, that is parochial and not focused on the wider context.

As we suggested two weeks ago, a decision of such significance, which is only new to the people of Tasmania, to be taken to a plebiscite or referendum before a commitment is made.

Robin Gray is a former Liberal premier of Tasmania.

I did not think I would ever be quoting a former Liberal premier in this place as part of a contribution I might be making on a bill in the Tasmanian parliament. However, I cannot disagree with the arguments that have been put in that opinion piece by former Liberal premier Robin Gray about the need for the Government to get the basics right first.

This Government is failing to address the basics, the fundamental requirements of a government to invest in health and education, critical infrastructure to grow our economy, to make sure all Tasmanians can have a good life. Instead, it is obsessing about a new stadium.

Here we have debate on a bill that sets out the ability for the Government to transfer a stadium asset into the management of a new body with a CEO and a board costing \$16 million over the next four years of Stadiums Tasmania. This is work currently undertaken either within the Department of State Growth, or within councils and their employees who are currently engaged across those sites, who are being asked to transfer into Stadiums Tasmania.

In the conversation I had with the department, we talked about the union consultation undertaken with some of those employees. I would like to know what the minister's understanding is of how those conversations have progressed; whether each of those employees is intending to transfer into the new entity. Also, critically, what happens if the Government chooses to divest one of these assets?

If, for instance, the University of Tasmania Stadium, York Park, is transferred into Stadiums Tasmania, where there are currently people employed by the Launceston City Council working to maintain that asset, those workers transfer across onto a new work agreement. Then, in the future, the Government decides it no longer wants to continue to operate York Park and it transfers the asset out; it might sell the asset. There are provisions in this bill for how that is dealt with by the ministers. The two shareholder ministers, the Minister for Hospitality and Events and the minister for Infrastructure, have a joint responsibility to decide whether a transfer of the asset occurs. Nowhere in this bill does it talk about the rights of the workers employed at those assets, those stadiums. What happens to them? I am keen to understand not only how the consultation has gone with the workers employed at the Silverdome, at MyState Bank Arena and in conversations that might be taking place with Blundstone Arena and UTAS, but also what happens to those workers if the stadium assets that come into Stadiums Tasmania are divested in the future?

I am also be keen to understand what consultation happened prior to the election announcement with the clubs named in this bill. The former premier, Peter Gutwein, made an election commitment to establish Stadiums Tasmania in April 2021. He spoke about it with the intention to initially roll in not just existing assets owned by the Government such as the Silverdome but UTAS Stadium in Launceston as one of the key stadiums in our state that would be transferred under this new arrangement into Stadiums Tasmania but we see not just the Silverdome and UTAS Stadium captured in this bill but five assets, including My State Bank Arena, Blundstone Arena and Dial Park in Penguin. I would like to know what consultation took place with the clubs and those who used those stadiums before the announcement was made by the Premier in April 2021 to understand what the impact might be for them. From the conversations I have had with some of them, in particular, I am going to reference Blundstone Arena and Cricket Tasmania, there does not seem to have been any consultation.

Since that time, there has been engagement. Since that time, Cricket Tasmania has received funding from the State Government to engage a consultant, Deloitte, to undertake a study to help them make an informed decision. In the conversations I have had with Cricket Tasmania, they were expecting to have that completed by the end of November. You might have a progress report to provide to the parliament, minister. Also, how much did the Government pay Cricket Tasmania to engage Deloitte to undertake that work?

I am also keen to understand how much the Government paid KPMG, who they have engaged to help support them with the establishment of Stadiums Tasmania. There seems to be a lot of consultants engaged by the Government to help them set up Stadiums Tasmania, to get to a point where we still do not have any of these answers before we are debating this bill here in the Chamber today.

I am not clear whether any board members have been appointed. No? The minister is shaking his head. Can the minister provide an update on the time line for when board members may be appointed? Until they are, a CEO cannot be appointed, but perhaps a time line can be provided by the minister about when he expects a CEO to be appointed.

I would like the minister to talk in more detail about the staff arrangements. I have talked about how they come in and how they go out. I would like to confirm for the House, how many staff are we talking about? I understand that at the Silverdome but I would be grateful if you could provide some details about that. I understand there are six employees at UTAS Stadium, currently employed by the Launceston City Council. There may be as many as 10. Can the minister provide some advice about that?

I also understand that within the department, Communities Tasmania staff have previously been working under the arrangements to operate - you have Stadiums Tasmania. What is the other one called, minister? Major Stadiums?

Mr Street - Within?

**Ms WHITE** - The Department of State Growth. There were staff within Communities Tasmania who I understand have transferred to the Department of State Growth. This was something we talked about in the briefing. I may have this wrong.

Mr Street - Silverdome.

Ms WHITE - Silverdome, so that is the six, if you could confirm? I am keen to understand who they are currently employed by. Which department? How many staff at My State Bank, Dial Park and, of course, Blundstone as a future transfer? I understand there are 20 full-time employees at Blundstone and also the Cricket Tasmania staff. I expect that they would not be transferred and so it would be the 20 full-time equivalent staff at Blundstone. I am keen to understand what progress is being made about that. What is happening with those staff? What consultation has taken place with those employees and what time frame are we talking about?

I would like to better understand the way that the ministerial responsibility for the divestment of the asset occurs. In the second reading speech, the minister spoke about there being a ministerial statement provided by the Minister for Hospitality and Events and the minister for Infrastructure. Because of that, there could be parliamentary oversight of those decisions. That was only in relation to allocation of any additional funding required to implement such a plan as part of a state Budget.

In the second reading speech it argues that this makes them subject to scrutiny by parliament and the Budget Estimates process. As we all know, that has its flaws because we often struggle to get answers from this Government, both in question time and in Budget Estimates. If that is the only scrutiny that parliament has as to whether an asset is divested from the Stadiums Tasmanian portfolio then I am concerned by that. We are talking about very expensive assets. One of the clauses in this bill exempts state taxes from being paid on the transfer of these assets. I can well understand that you do not need to pay state taxes when they are being brought into Stadiums Tasmania, but if the Government chose to divest the asset from the authority in the future, I would be grateful if the minister could confirm whether that also exempts states taxes from being paid.

For instance - a hypothetical argument - say Bellerive comes into Stadiums Tasmania. If the Government proceeds to build its \$750 million stadium at Macquarie Point and Cricket Tasmania moves across to that site and all cricket is played from Macquarie Point, they have a new high-performance centre at the university co-located with the AFL high-performance centre so Bellerive really does not have a reason to exist anymore apart from community clubs who might use it. So the Government looks at that and says, 'That's not really our core business, so we are going to divest that asset. We are going to go out to the private market and sell it to the highest bidder, the ministers have agreed'. Are state taxes payable by the purchaser on that asset if it is a private purchase, if somebody wanted to purchase it and build apartment blocks there? That is a different proposition from transferring an asset into Stadiums Tasmania. I can well understand why you would not need to pay state taxes to do that but if we are setting up a structure that is going to make sure that the public interest is protected, if there is any future divestment to a private purchaser for any of these assets, they should pay tax on those things.

Clause 5 of the bill talks about business plans and requires that the first business plan be prepared as soon as practicable in the 2022-23 financial year. Could the minister explain whether we will need to wait for the appointment of the board and the CEO before this can happen? I presume that would be necessary, or is this going to be work that is outsourced to a consultant?

Another question I had regarding divestment was whether there is the ability for the parliament to have any oversight role. Obviously we are here debating the establishment of Stadiums Tasmania. You have outlined in this bill the assets you would like to bring into

Stadiums Tasmania which still require negotiations to achieve that. What role would a future parliament have if a government decided to divest of one of those assets beyond scrutiny at Budget Estimates of the budget allocation? I am talking about the decision that is taken and whether there needs to be approval granted or any oversight of that prior to a sale, transfer or divestment occurring. In most instances, a lot of public money has been spent to build these assets for community benefit and if they are going to be privatised or sold, the community should have a say about that before it occurs.

That is probably all I have in relation to the bill. There is quite a lot more I can say on the stadium. We might need to go into Committee depending on whether the minister can provide those answers but I do not expect that that will take too long.

I will come back to the first point I made that here we are having a debate about stadiums on a very historic and significant day, and it is pretty tone-deaf from this Government that, again, it is failing to get the basics right. There is a lot of important work for this parliament to be doing. There are bills we have already commenced debate on, including donation disclosure laws, which have a much greater and higher priority in the minds of Tasmanians than whether the Government sets up a new board and CEO to run Stadiums Tasmania. It speaks volumes about the priorities this Government has that are not the priorities of the people of Tasmania.

[4.05 p.m.]

**Ms O'CONNOR** (Clark - Leader of the Greens) - Mr Speaker, I could not determine from the Leader of the Opposition's speech whether Labor will be supporting the bill.

Ms White - I'd like to hear some answers on some of those questions.

Ms O'CONNOR - Okay. We do not support this legislation. We do not support the establishment of Stadiums Tasmania. We think this is bread and circuses on the part of Government. We do not support the imposition on our beautiful city, nipaluna/Hobart, of a massive stadium on our waterfront. We think Stadiums Tasmania is something of a make-work scheme for the former chief of staff to the former premier, Andrew Finch, and as an extension of that, I will not be at all surprised if Tasmania gets an AFL team and its first president is the former premier, Peter Gutwein. I think he is just waiting there for the job.

Ms White - We may all have that suspicion.

**Mr Street** - He has already taken on chairmanship of the Migrant Resource Centre, which is commendable.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - Yes, which is really good. Mr Gutwein obviously had a strong community spirit and that work he is doing for the Migrant Resource Centre not only is very important work but it suits his character well.

We do not support this bill and it is consistent with our position on the previous bill, which established Stadiums Tasmania. I thought the Leader of the Opposition asked a number of important questions. I look forward to hearing the answers to them but it will not change our position.

It is an unnecessary, expensive change that is significantly administrative in nature. You are bringing stadium assets under the one statutory entity for very modest potential tangible benefit to the Tasmanian people, far too many of whom are languishing on the elective surgery waiting list, some of whom have died waiting for elective surgery or an ambulance, and far too many of whom cannot afford the rent.

In fact, just today after the apology I was talking to a victim/survivor who is homeless. When we come into this place and have a bill like this put on the table in the middle of a housing crisis, when we know the health system needs more resourcing and we certainly know child safety needs more resourcing, I believe it confuses and annoys Tasmanians that a government would prioritise the establishment of a stadium authority and, while they are at it, make a promise for a \$750 million stadium while there is so much unmet social need on this island.

I will be curious to hear what the Opposition's response to this bill is ultimately, because I think you have to be consistent about these things. If you recognise that there is enormous unmet need and areas of government policy and portfolios that need significantly more investment and if you do not support a brand-new stadium on our waterfront a kilometre away as the crow flies from Bellerive, then you should be consistent and not support this bill.

This bill is really just tinkering in a way - 'We already have these stadium assets but we're going to bring them under the one statutory umbrella and, while we're at it, we're going to transfer any staff who were state servants who want to go onto the Fair Work Act.' I do not understand why the Government has been veering down this path. The same thing happened with the TasTAFE corporatisation where staff at TasTAFE were put on the Fair Work Act, and it is happening here. Maybe there has been clarity from the Government on why they do that but I certainly do not remember anything cogent being said about why you would take people off the State Service Act and put them on the Fair Work Act, other than that their employment is a bit less secure under federal law.

I have a couple of questions for the minister on top of the ones I will be listening to very carefully from Ms White. Can the minister confirm that all the assets transferred to the new Stadiums Tasmania will still be owned by the State of Tasmania? These are public assets that were paid for with public funds on public land and we believe they belong to the people of Tasmania. There was also the question about why staff are being moved onto the Fair Work Act.

I listened with interest to what Ms White said about this not being parochial - it is a dud deal for the north. Can you remind me, Ms White, were you quoting from a former premier then, 'It is not parochial, it is a dud deal for the north'?

**Ms White** - Yes, Robin Gray.

**Opposition members** interjecting.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER - Order.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - Well, Ms Finlay, I think it is a dud deal for the whole state when the Government -

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** - Through the Chair, please, Ms O'Connor.

Ms O'CONNOR - Actually, Mr Deputy Speaker, I am able to refer to members, but through you, I say to Ms Finlay, it is a dud deal for the whole state. In the north of the state you have York Park. In the south of the state we have Bellerive. There is a measure of equilibrium there with regard to sporting facilities that are available to the local people. However, should the State of Tasmania pour in the vicinity of \$400 million into a brand-new stadium, which they never asked anyone about but themselves, it will be a terrible deal for the State of Tasmania.

To the Premier and people who believe a stadium on the waterfront is a good idea, I take them back to this morning. The strongest reaction from the people who came to hear the apology today was when the stadium was mentioned, because across the community - and I am sure northern and north-west members know this too - across demographics, professions and I would say voting inclination, there is resentment about this stadium. People are scratching their heads that a government could cook up something like this while we have the health and housing systems in the state they are in, and while we know the child safety system needs much more resourcing. The stadium that is proposed for Hobart's waterfront is deeply unpopular.

That might not worry members from the north or north-east of the state but it should certainly worry Liberal members in the south of the state. People in and around this town are resentful that this was plonked on the table. First the previous Premier said it and then it went away for a while after he went away. Now it is back and despite what the Premier says, it has come back because of, I believe, bullying by the AFL. They want a bright, shiny new toy on this beautiful city's waterfront and the Premier has not been able to resist.

I will make it really clear again for anyone who did not hear it the first 10 times that we said it: our support for a Tasmanian AFL and AFLW team is not contingent on a stadium. We do not support a stadium on Hobart's waterfront. We want to see this island take its place in the national league for men and women, as it should. We want to see kids in rural and regional Tasmania have an opportunity to play for Tasmania in the national league. We do not support this stadium and we believe that is the majority view of the Tasmanian community, complex and varied as it is.

I certainly hope there is still time to avert this disastrous decision. When we get a chance, we will be telling the AFL that too. We do not support this stadium. Labor certainly has made some of the right noises about not supporting this stadium, although to date, I am pretty sure that the Leader of the Opposition has not picked the up phone to the Prime Minister to beg him to save us from this folly.

In closing, I note that in Tasmania, as always, everything old is new again, and Tas Inc has many faces. I was interested to read that the former - or probably still one of the most ardent backers of the cable car on kunanyi is now a new board member for the Macquarie Point Development Corporation. I certainly hope that Mr Oldfield is now fully occupied with the corporation and lets go of the folly, the desecration and the insult that is a cable car up kunanyi. There is still legislation on the books that was introduced by the Liberals, supported by Labor, which facilitates that cable car for a single project, effectively for a single proponent. Should that project have received approval, either by the Hobart City Council or the tribunal, then the Pinnacle, as a result of that legislation supported by the Liberal and Labor parties, would have been handed over to a private developer - the pinnacle of kunanyi/Mt Wellington - for somewhere between 13 or 14 structures, an encrustment on the top of the mountain that is of

deepest spiritual significance to the Tasmanian Aboriginal people and beloved by many Tasmanians and people who live in and around nipaluna/Hobart.

That legislation should be repealed, the cable car facilitation deal, and we will certainly be giving parliament an opportunity to do that. I hope Mr Oldfield and the rest of that group of people who have spent a lot of time and money trying to get this development up, trying to get the law changed so they could, trying to win hearts and minds and failing abysmally, get the message. It was rejected on 18 of 26 grounds, rejected by the Aboriginal people, rejected by the Hobart City Council, rejected by the planning tribunal and rejected by the people of Hobart in majority.

We will not be supporting this bill. We do not support bread and circuses for the population when what the population needs is to have their cost-of-living pressures addressed, their health system properly funded, and homes built for them and their families. Imagine if we spent \$350 million rolling out better public transport systems in our major centres statewide. What a difference that would make. We have the worst public transport, mass transit infrastructure, of any capital city in Australia. Imagine what you could do with \$750 million.

I watched a man the other day coming down Bathurst Street on his bike. He had a helmet on and a Hawaiian shirt: a middle-aged fellow. I thought, good on you for getting onto this quite busy road and making your way from wherever you have come from to wherever you are going. Within 30 seconds, a car just in front of us pulled into his lane, did not even see him, and the poor guy on his bike had to kick out his leg to kick the car to save himself from being flattened because, as a state, we do not prioritise the greatest good for the greatest number of people, which is the job of a good government. We will stick a stadium that will probably cost more than \$1 billion on Hobart's waterfront but we cannot get the cycle infrastructure right. We cannot get the public transport right. Pedestrian infrastructure is failing. The good work that has been done has been primarily been done by local government. In this city, it is done by the City of Hobart, the council, and thank you for that.

We will never support pouring hundreds of millions of dollars of public money into bread and circuses when, with a bit of imagination and a bit more heart, you could do a whole lot more with that public money.

### [4.21 p.m.]

**Mr O'BYRNE** (Franklin) - Mr Speaker, I rise to provide a few comments. The previous speakers have articulated a number of serious questions about the second tranche of the work in establishing Stadiums Tasmania. The previous speaker, in particular, illustrated the problem with the Government that when you cannot get the basics right, even sometimes the most sensible of things become problems for you.

Other states have created entities similar to what you are proposing with Stadiums Tasmania. When there are many outstanding government service delivery failures, some of the things which should not necessarily become controversial become controversial.

I will not echo a number of the questions, particularly questions from the Leader of the Opposition, the member for Lyons, Rebecca White, around the role of the board, the functions of the board, the ownership, what happens with transparency, around how those matters are dealt with and how the public will be informed about these things?

The first tranche of this legislation I gave in-principle support. I am also interested in listening to the answers from the minister. There are some significant questions that have been asked. I have a couple that I want to put on the table.

We know when, in your second reading speech, minister, you refer to Stadiums Tasmania assuming responsibility for the two existing facilities in MyState Bank Arena and the Silverdome. At the time of the legislation under the previous minister and Premier, there were lots of discussions around the other codes such as cricket and other stadiums dealing with Launceston Council and UTAS Stadium, and Dial Park in Penguin. We raised a number of questions in that debate around what happens to, for example, the Tasmanian hockey facility. When you talk about the definition of which stadiums and which facilities are going to be included and not included, it becomes opaque. That creates a level of concern because you are creating an organisation.

The rolled gold example is Macquarie Point Development Corporation. That has been mired in controversy and created much public concern because of the lack of transparency and the utter confusion and mess created by this Government in the operations of that corporation and the revolving door of people coming on and off that board, people who are well known to the Government in different circles, and mainlanders who are plucked out of relative obscurity for a Tasmanian to be flown down and attend meetings, put up in hotels. There are some legitimate questions about how that is being done or how that has been done.

Taking ownership and creating a corporation, Stadiums Tasmania, just for Silverdome and MyState, you do not justify the work. You will need to establish a greater sense of understanding and a line of sight for us to see what happens with those other facilities, what the plans are, the ownership and the risk profile not only for Stadiums Tasmania but how those decisions on those facilities are made. One thing confuses me, and I wonder if the minister could clear this up? In your second reading speech, you say:

While Stadiums Tasmania will have a role planning and facilitating new infrastructure, the primary responsibility of major stadium development projects remains with the Department of State Growth.

I think I know what you mean, but that is a really grey line. Who makes the call? Who has the responsibility? You say they have responsibility for the Silver Dome. This has been a challenge for the state Government in terms of the use and purpose of that facility and trying to find a role that makes sense for the community. MyState Bank Arena is run by, by my understanding, Larry Kestelman and the Kestelman Group. I am not sure how busy the CEO and the team will be managing MyState when it is a rental arrangement. A big part of the justification and the hoopla around MyState, which I believe has been and continues to be a successful investment - time will tell - was the community facility, which has been long promised. We were told only 18 months ago that we would now be playing on them. The basketball and netball communities, particularly in the south, are outraged by the lack of information, the lack of transparency and the lack of progress. It was only when alarm bells were rung in recent weeks that we found out there is not even a development application for that. MyState Arena, which will be considered a part of Stadiums Tasmania, is managed by a private organisation. The bit the Government has responsibility for does not even have a development application. You have let the entire southern basketball community down by over-promising and significantly under-delivering.

You could not have fumbled that worse: telling people in press release after press release that they will be bouncing balls on community courts by the end of this year, and you do not even have a DA in. You cannot even defend the argument why you have only got to that stage, apart from saying that it has been a bit complex. Life is complex. It is your job to fix these things.

Regarding negotiations with cricket, the community facility at Dial Park at Penguin and the Launceston City Council - they are not going to give that away for free; they are not going to transfer it all away. There is a lot of work to be done. It seemed like a good idea but it is falling apart at the seams. Minister, I would like to hear your response and understanding of when, how and why a lot of these things will occur to justify the existence of this.

I repeat the concern that there has been little to no accountability for Macquarie Point Corporation. I am not talking about the controversy around the CEO. I am talking about the board not delivering what was committed to, the time it has taken to get to this point, and the mess and dysfunction that has been created there. That is of great concern.

The Government has not only done this with Macquarie Point, it has done it with the Housing Authority. The Government says it wants to be transparent and accountable to that, but then sets up an organisation at arm's length so you have someone to blame and there is a grey area of who is responsible. In my view, the Government is responsible for these things.

Harking back to the MyState development, particularly the community courts, in your second reading you say:

It is important that our stadium infrastructure is contemporary, relevant, responsive and competitive. We need to continue to strategically invest in our major stadium infrastructure to ensure they remain current, contemporary and respond to the changing needs and expectations of sporting codes, competition, audiences and other users.

Based on the MyState redevelopment, if it was not for the LK Group I am not sure you would be able to deliver that because your bit was the community courts and you failed. The community has every right to be critical of the state Government. This is not a community organisation looking for a new commitment. This is a commitment from 2018. Here we are pushing into the fifth year and you do not even have a DA. I understand that there was a period with complications around the MyState facility redevelopment when the concept of the JackJumpers was floated. I know that would have delayed it. However, even with that announcement and reorganisation, you made commitments that people would be playing sport in those community facilities by now. We are at least three or four years away, if that.

There is a philosophical question. I am not against the establishment of Stadiums Tasmania. I have said that in a previous contribution on the original bill. Other states have done this to manage bespoke facilities, connecting that to the broader needs of those states. I look at the Queensland one. They are now very well aligned, obviously off the back of the Commonwealth Games, with the Olympic bid and so, there is justification for this.

Given the fantastic job we did in announcing our Commonwealth Games bid, and how successful that was, it seems to me that there is a fair bit of spin in this, and I am not talking about an Ashes Test. There is a lot of promise but, again, we are stumbling in for another bill.

Not much progress has been made; lots of media announcements. If it was not for Mr Kestelman and the LK Group pulling together and doing the upgrade, I am not sure what you have done, with the greatest respect, across the whole of government. A number of ministers are responsible for that.

In relation to this, minister, there are a number of questions which the two previous speakers put on the record. I am interested to hear your response because they are crucial in terms of accountability to government.

### [4.32 p.m.]

Ms FINLAY (Bass) - Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to put on record my contributions to the Stadiums Tasmania Amendment (Transfers) Bill 2022. I support the comments made by Opposition Leader, Rebecca White, and others who have spoken this afternoon. I reinforce the comments already made that perhaps greater consideration for the respect of the day, and considerations of the matters that might have come before this place, it does seem slightly tone-deaf to have this before us.

Before I make my contribution, I acknowledge that the Leader of the Greens reflected on the only moment this morning that caused - there was an outpouring of emotion throughout the whole morning, but an audible outpouring was in response to this. It worried me in that moment.

In making my contributions this afternoon, I will reflect on a few matters in the second reading speech because they are curious. They usefully clarify some of the elements of this bill. They also potentially undermine the Government's position in terms of their current obsession with the development of stadiums and support the position of most Tasmanians we are hearing from, their concerns at the priorities of this Government and where their head is at. The importance of stadiums versus health, education or housing, for instance. I am going to go through this second reading speech.

Yes, it is about the establishment of Stadiums Tasmania and the commencement of operations. We get to paragraph 5 and it talks about recognising how stadiums bring enormous economic benefit, business development and job opportunity into communities, particularly with visitor economies. I am on record for months now reinforcing the importance of York Park in northern Tasmania. York Park as a stadium in northern Tasmania does not just provide opportunity for footy fans to get in and love footy content but, at the time of the year when those games are provided, supports the northern winter economy, particularly our visitor economy. Recognising that is important is good to have on the record through this. It also supports the position of so many northern Tasmanians who are concerned about the obsession of this Government, which has its priorities so wrong at the moment.

Our great leader and I often have a conversation that differs slightly on this but we always refer to this stadium the Government is proposing as a \$750 million stadium. There is no way known to anybody who has ever worked in any project, whether it be infrastructure, sporting, whatever, that anyone could deliver the stadium being proposed for \$750 million. There is no stadium of its kind across the country yet in current figures with current investment in current development environments that could deliver such a significant stadium for that amount. We refer to it as a \$750 million stadium but throughout this contribution I might also make other relevances.

When we are talking about the benefits of stadiums in communities, we also need to talk about the costs of stadiums in communities. I am pleased to see that there is a recognition of the importance of these things, particularly for economies and the roles they play, as noted here, not only in cities but in our regions.

This second reading speech refers to election commitments. I want to draw on some election commitments made by this Government at the most recent election and remind them of their responsibilities. Again acknowledging the comments of the Leader of the Greens, this Stadiums Tasmania bill is for stadiums across Tasmania but the thing on the mind of everybody at the moment is the preposterous idea of developing a new stadium in Hobart. Yes, it will impact all Tasmanians. It is on the mind of all Tasmanians that it is not the right priority and not the right time.

There was an election commitment made to the communities of the north in the election of 2021. That election commitment was built up off their own AFL taskforce report, as I understand. That report was used to create the York Park future vision document. That document in turn was used to underpin an election commitment by the Government that they would pursue the redevelopment of York Park and, in doing so and supporting the AFL taskforce, ensure an equal share of AFL content and blockbuster games in the north.

Yes, this new stadium proposes to have a significant impact across Tasmania but it is also causing Tasmanians right across the state to question where this Government is at the moment and why they seem so obsessed with this new development. If it goes ahead it will impact not just the community but the economy of northern Tasmania that already exists and is built upon the commitment of these games in northern Tasmania.

Our leader has already raised concerns about how assets that come into Stadiums Tasmania will be disposed of. There is a reference further down the second reading speech about this authority owning, managing and overseeing stadiums but the question of how these assets will be disposed of is important.

I raised concerns about the processes of disposal when the first tranche of legislation came through, whether that be for sale or demolition and reuse by this Government. At the time I used Bellerive as the example with the prime real estate at Bellerive. Once all these assets are brought into Stadiums Tasmania and there is board, a CEO, a plan and a stadiums strategy, who says that it is not the intention through ministerial direction or statement, or through the policies of the Government, or the plans of the entity to intentionally seek to mothball Bellerive or York Park in order to make a stadium they are proposing to develop in Hobart stack up. All of the figures presented as part of the - I heard it referred to today as a prefeasibility, the work done by Pwc so far, anybody I speak to who has any sense about understanding attendance, numbers, where people from across the state will travel to go to an event, the cost of bringing in events into Tasmania, if this Government goes ahead blindly, despite the feelings of the Tasmanian people, and builds this stadium in Hobart, it will absolutely impact the events that already occur in the north and at the Bellerive stadium. If they intentionally seek to mothball those under the guise of Stadiums Tasmania and dispose of, sell or demolish those assets, it will need to be, as our Leader has said, the financial processes but also the approvals for that very clearly stepped out.

Having been involved with the Launceston City Council for the best part of 20 years, in my first months of being elected mayor of Launceston, Jim Bacon declared York Park to be

the home of football in the north. The team of people who work and have worked for many years as part of the York Park team have developed what is celebrated by people across the state and the country as one of the best stadiums around - and not just stadiums, but the turf, the surface our team there has worked so hard to develop and only just recently re-laid. For them to come across into Stadiums Tasmania, which I am sure they are supportive of, because if you are in a stadium environment you get to be something bigger and that brings its positives, but to trust the process. I do not see the risk as much in the north as I do in the south where there is a duplicate of infrastructure. To then have those assets and what you have worked so hard to develop for so long taken away from under you would be devastating for the teams of people either at Blundstone Arena or York Park at the moment. Understanding those transfers and the authorities to dispose of those assets in the future will be important.

The second reading speech recognises the importance of these stadiums to the regions and it also recognised how much of a quality facility York Park already is, which would bring into question again why there is a need for another stadium, a \$750 million stadium, a billion dollar stadium, a billion-and-a-half-dollar stadium, in Hobart when we already have facilities. I quote from the second reading speech:

Last summer Tasmania hosted an historic Ashes test match for the very first time. The AFL blockbuster between Hawthorn and Essendon at UTAS Stadium was sold out, as were two historic AFL finals matches.

We have a facility in Tasmania that hosted AFL finals matches, played at UTAS Stadium in September, the very first time we have hosted AFL finals in the state. You include in your own second reading speech just how fantastic these facilities already are, how celebrated they are, that when we have visiting teams here, they cannot help themselves that every presidential lunch and every media release talked about how great the facility is and how great the surface is and how great the teams are that have built that up there - but the Premier thinks we need to have a new stadium in Hobart.

The AFL taskforce report acknowledged the role Bellerive and York Park would play in the future strategy for an AFL team. Maybe sometime in the future we would need future AFL infrastructure but it is not the right time and Tasmanians know it is not the right priority to be investing in right now. The minister's own second reading speech identifies that. Not only does it identify that, it also identifies that the nature of stadiums is that they are complex and resource-intensive to own, operate and maintain.

I am going to paraphrase the Premier now. I do not understand how so far into a conversation, when there is so much community commentary around this proposed new stadium, that the Government does not take a breath and say, 'Okay, maybe we've got this wrong. How are we going to correct our pathway on this?'.

It was not that long ago that the Premier, on what we call a tile on Facebook with a picture of himself, declared - and I remind you that this second reading speech said - that stadiums are complex, resource-intensive to own, operate and maintain. I can tell you, because of the work we did at the Launceston City Council and I was aware of the research, that there was a time when there were no stadiums in Australia that actually made any money, that created a net positive outcome. There may be one now. As I understand it, a stadium that has a commercial tenant the scale of seven may actually return a profit, but other than that, they are cost centres. They are investments in opportunity in states. They are not revenue raisers.

The Premier says, 'A stadium and entertainment precinct will help fund health and education systems that we can all be proud of. Then, in another place, says, '... and build homes for Tasmanians'. I know that someone like the Treasurer might stand up and say, 'Finlay does not get it. She does not understand economic stimulus. She does not understand how things like this create economic benefit'. Economic benefit is different from direct state revenue and revenue you can generate and get benefit from to invest in something else. To be able to put on the record and say to those few Tasmanians who say, 'Great, we'll have this stadium and it will help fund health and education and build homes for Tasmanians', that in itself, having to get to that level of misrepresentation of the reality, demonstrates the weak footing this proposed stadium is on.

In terms of economic benefit, I do understand the economic benefit because I felt it in Launceston. That is why, over the months that have continued to see this Premier on the back of the previous premier obsess about this new stadium, I have been relentless in making sure the Premier answers a really simple question that he seems unwilling to, although implies that he has answered, in terms of games being played in the north. I want to make a couple of comments about some of the suggestions of what is going to happen in this new stadium.

Today we awoke to an exclusive interview between Rob Shaw and the Premier about the stadium. There are some interesting comments in here that are relevant. I have been talking to many people in my community in northern Tasmania and the feedback that has been provided now about the Premier and this Government in delivering mixed messages. In fact, I had someone say to me today that he was using weasel words to try to get out of answering direct questions about this stadium. Rob Shaw could not get direct answers from the Premier when he tackled him on this stadium deal. He said that Mr Rockliff was non-committal. 'Mr Rockliff declined to answer whether he thought most Tasmanians wanted the stadium'. I know that when you do not answer a question, that is actually answering the question. When you do not want to say yes or no to something, you have something else on your mind.

Rob Shaw said Mr Rockliff declined to answer whether he thought most Tasmanians wanted the stadium. We all know most Tasmanians do not want the stadium. We all know that most Tasmanians know it is the wrong priority. We also know through what has been said in *The Examiner* today that the Premier knows that too. If there is anything that this Premier wants to be known for and to leave a legacy with his leadership in Tasmania, the way that I hear people describe this Premier is that they want him to make decisions in the right interests of Tasmania. If he stood back from this, took a breath and said, 'You know what? Actually, I think we've got this wrong', he would be respected for that and would not have to not answer questions in the parliament or in the media.

When the Premier said that he does not know whether Tasmanians support a stadium, that in itself is insightful. The other thing that gets said a lot, and our leader has reinforced it again today, is that Tasmanian Labor supports a team for Tasmania. I heard the Leader of the Greens also say that today. It can never be said that we do not have on the record that we support a Tasmanian team and we have for some time been trying to clarify from the Government where they in fact have tied together the team and the stadium. Again, in speaking to Rob Shaw today, the Premier talked about the team and separately about the stadium. The Premier has confirmed that having a team and building a stadium is not something that Tasmanian Labor and, as I understand it, the Tasmanian Greens, have ever supported putting together. We absolutely 100 per cent support Tasmania having a team but not having this stadium.

One of the other things that was put in writing today - and it has been put in writing in two places in different ways and I would like this clarified by the Government - is that there is, in the same breath, a statement saying that the Government is capping its contribution at \$375 million. That is on the premise that the project will be a \$750 million build. Again, in writing, the Premier has said:

We are being very clear that our contribution will be capped at 50 per cent.

Fifty per cent is not \$375 million. As I said before, anyone who can develop this project and get away with it for \$750 million will be doing well in a future where we do not yet understand the reality of what the costs will be at that time. This project will not be under \$1 billion. It is not true to say they are capping their contribution at \$375 million, and if they are on the record as saying they are capping their contribution at 50 per cent, then they need to be consistent in the way they talk about that, because 50 per cent of an unknown amount is like writing a blank cheque for the taxpayers of Tasmania and that is just not good enough.

The other mixed messages - and as someone described to me today, weasel words - are about the nature of games committed to the northern community, in fact, to the entire Tasmanian community, but at York Park. Language is important, and it gets thrown back in my face all the time. When I was being interviewed about the stadium not that long ago, I said something like, 'It is not the right time for infrastructure in Tasmania', and everyone went 'Ha, ha, ha, that is hilarious, she does not support infrastructure'. Those people do not know me so well, but language is important. We have been asking very clear questions of this Premier about an equal share of AFL games and blockbuster games in the north because the northern economy is underpinned by those games right now.

In the paper today, they talk about 'content'. In the way that the Government might throw back references to infrastructure to me, I am going to throw back the word 'content'. What is content? When you say 'content' and then you include AFLW, VFL and VFLW, that is not talking about an equal share of AFL games, it is not talking about an equal share of blockbuster games. I know that when, assumedly, the Government dropped some details to one of the media outlets recently, in *The Advocate* in October, they said 'a Tasmanian AFL team would play seven of its rostered home games at a controversial new stadium in Hobart leaving the north with only four, it was revealed'.

Interestingly, in the same article, they talked about seven AFL games attracting 16 000 people on average. They talked about seven NRL games, six A-League games, international rugby, BBL, and international cricket. What has not been said - although we have just asked some questions and got some answers in the other place - is how much it costs to bring those games down here. You can talk about the benefits, but if you are being up-front and honest with the Tasmanian community you would talk about the costs.

Seven NRL games in a year - some simple maths here - is at the cost of between \$300 000 and \$500 000 per game - so, seven times \$500 000. We are talking about a lot of money to bring games to Tasmania. If you can pull that off as a Government that is fantastic, but to imply that the net operating outcomes of this stadium will be able to be invested into health, education and homes for Tasmanians, when to bring in those seven NRL games could cost, for each game, between \$300 000 and \$500 000, then you need to be real about exactly what will be happening.

If those are the costs and the realities of games required to build up this stadium in Hobart, there is no doubt that the great content that we have in the north now, will be ripped out of the north and it will be prioritised into the south, whether by design of this Government or by requirement of the leagues.

In making my contribution on this stadium transfer bill, I want to be very clear that if this Stadiums Tasmania entity does get a chair, a board, a CEO, a plan, and it starts to deliver for Tasmania, then there will be a price to pay if, in building a southern stadium, that content is taken away from the north in order to try to make a stadium in the south stack up. Then the northern Tasmanian community will rise. In that I include the north, the north-west and the north-east and even the East Coast because so many northern Tasmanians come to York Park to see great content. People from the south travel to the north to see great content. It is not good enough to continue to be focused on building a new stadium in Hobart when it is clear it is the wrong priority and it is clear that most of the Tasmanian community do not support it.

In speaking to this, this afternoon, I ask the Government to be upfront with the Tasmanian community. Take a breath and stop and think about what the Tasmanian community is telling you. It is not the right time and it is not the right priority. If you seek to undermine the good things that are happening in our regional communities where great content in the north underpins the winter economy for the northern Tasmanian community, then it is not the right time to build this stadium. It is not the right priority and unless you can get the basics right now for all Tasmanians across health, housing and education, then the Tasmanian community will not come with you and they will not support you on this or other projects because it is not the right time and it is not the right priority.

[4.56 p.m.]

**Mr STREET** (Franklin - Minister for Hospitality and Events) - Mr Speaker, I thank those opposite who made a contribution. I will go through the questions one by one, as best I can to provide the information that was asked for.

With regard to the timing in the second reading speech, I understand there has been some time since you were briefed and since the bill was tabled. I will not speak about all of the delays but the last delay is that this should have dealt with within the last session of parliament but I was absent, which is why it was not dealt with then.

It is my expectation that the chair will be appointed in the coming weeks and that they will be able to assist us in appointing the inaugural board. Once that board is appointed, it will be able to recruit the chief executive officer. The first step in that process is the chair of the board and that announcement is imminent.

Ms White - Is it Peter Gutwein?

**Mr STREET** - No, it is not.

You asked about the pre-election commitment with regard to consultation with Cricket Tasmania. The announcement for Stadiums Tasmania was made with a vision to look at all major stadia assets. However, it was made clear in the election commitment that it was subject to consultation with the various asset owners including Cricket Tasmania and Clarence City Council. That was made clear at the time of the election commitment.

With regard to how the business plan will be developed, the board is responsible for the development of the annual business plan. Therefore the first business plan cannot be developed until the board is in place. It will then be up to the board to determine how the business plan is developed, but in accordance with the act.

You asked about how much was given to Cricket Tasmania for the consultation work that was done. It was \$145 000. That money was provided to allow them, as a not for profit organisation, to gather all the information that they needed to be able to talk potentially about the transfer of the asset because they own the assets over there at the minute and Clarence Council owns the land that they sit on. It is a requirement of the funding deed that they share that work with the government and again, my understanding is that the work has been completed and is not far off being submitted to the Government as well.

That is not only about the transfer of the assets but the work included in that was work around what their future requirements would be for high-performance facilities, acknowledging the fact that when the assets over there were developed as they are, it was only for the men's team but since then the women's team has come on board as full-time professionals as well. They were looking at what they are going to need, not only now but for the next 20 years to accommodate both those teams.

Employees of the Silverdome and UTAS Stadium have been consulted on the Transfer Bill as they are the most directly affected by these reforms. This involves approximately 15 employees - six at the Silverdome and eight to nine at UTAS, plus casuals.

As Mr O'Byrne asked and answered his own question regarding MyState Bank arena, all the employees at MyState Bank Arena are employees of the LK Group and will not transfer to Stadiums Tasmania. For the term of that lease, part of Stadiums Tasmania's business function will be with the LK Group.

I am not able to comment on the situation involving Blundstone Arena or Dial Park at this stage, as the negotiations about their potential transfer will be a matter for Stadiums Tasmania to progress. Blundstone employs just over 20 individuals and Dial Park is serviced by the staff of Central Coast Council. Those employed in the management of the arena are Cricket Tasmania employees as well.

Ms White - Those 20?

**Mr STREET** - Yes. There was a question from Ms O'Connor about why the Fair Work Act is being used to engage the employees.

Ms O'Connor - Easier to sack them?

Mr STREET - The adoption of the Fair Work system to employ the staff of Stadiums Tasmania recognises the State Service is designed to meet the needs of a large and complex organisation that employs over 30 000 individuals, who work in a wide variety of technical, professional, and administrative roles and settings. The determination was that this model was not deemed to be a good fit for Stadiums Tasmania. Stadiums Tasmania is being established as a relatively modest and bespoke entity. The decision to adopt the Fair Work system recognises that running a stadium is not a regular nine-to-five job, and that stadiums can operate around the clock and require additional staff and effort in the lead up to, during and after major

events. The Fair Work system provides a broader array of arrangements that can be used to meet the dynamic resource needs required for hosting major events. I made it clear in the second reading speech that those employees who are employed under the State Service Act will take those benefits with them in the transfer.

Mr O'Byrne asked a question about the demarcation between different parts of the government. Infrastructure Tasmania in the Department of State Growth is responsible for coordinating strategic policy and capital infrastructure projects, including establishing Stadiums Tasmania and its governing legislation. Now that Stadiums Tasmania has been established and its leadership is being recruited, it is helping prepare the authority to commence operating and facilitate the initial stadium transfers. The role will then conclude and the project team will move on to other tasks. Stadiums Tasmania is set up to manage these assets with a strategic vision for how we can better utilise these assets that come under it.

There was talk about north versus south. What I envisage and what I hope is that there will be a coordinated approach to attracting events to Tasmania so that our venues in the north and venues in the south will be on the one page in terms of potentially attracting events that visit both areas.

**Mr O'Byrne** - By interjection, transfer occurs, they manage the facilities; what happens if there is a major upgrade of the facility required? Who would have responsibility for running that, Stadiums Tasmania or the department?

Mr STREET - Much like the build of a new asset, it has nothing to do with Stadiums Tasmania as the builder. It would be a stakeholder, informing what it requires from the stadium, what it should look like in terms of design and capability. The responsibility for the build would sit within Infrastructure Tasmania and the Department of State Growth and Major Stadiums, which is the standalone in the Department of State Growth. Sorry, I should not have said Infrastructure Tasmania. Infrastructure Tasmania advised and did the work on setting up Stadiums Tasmania. Stadiums Tasmania is the managing entity of these assets. Major Stadiums is the standalone in the Department of State Growth responsible for coordinating the development of major stadium infrastructure. That would be the one within State Growth that would have responsibility for design and build of any new stadium. It would then transfer to Stadiums Tasmania to be the managing entity.

**Mr O'Byrne** - I get that. My question, for example, there is major proposal for an upgrade of your park, so that is transferred to Stadiums Tasmania to manage the asset. If there is a \$50 million upgrade to York Park, who runs that?

**Mr STREET** - Major Stadiums within State Growth would be responsible for the build and upgrade, but Stadiums Tasmania would be consulted as the managing entity on what that upgrade should look like.

Mr O'Byrne - So they will just be another stakeholder?

Mr STREET - Yes.

Mr O'Byrne - Thank you.

**Mr STREET** - The question was asked, have the employees and their unions been consulted? They have. Since July 2021 staff at the Silverdome have been provided with periodic project updates, also published on the project website. These staff have received briefings from their managers, or the project team on plans to establish Stadiums Tasmania, since September 2021 and received face-to-face briefings on the proposed transfer plan and transfers bill in June 2022.

Feedback from affected staff has been very positive about the plans. We cannot foresee all scenarios that might face an authority of this nature. This place has created the board and we need to trust that the board will make sound strategic decisions. I believe that with the quality of people we have on the board and as the CEO that that is the case. I have the funding to Cricket Tasmania.

Why is parliament approval not required for assets being disposed of? Section 7(2) of the Stadiums Tasmania Act 2022 requires the authority to have approval from both the minister, and I think you said the minister for Infrastructure in your contribution, but it is actually the Treasurer, to dispose of assets. It is like the requirements contained in the legislation that governs the TT-Line. It is important to recognise that the assets proposed to be owned and managed by Stadiums Tasmania have very different financial characteristics from entities like Hydro Tasmania, which is a profitable utility that supports the day-to-day operations of most Tasmanian businesses and households.

Conversely, major stadiums in Tasmania and across Australia tend to operate at a loss and annual deficits. As a result their market value is limited and the potential repercussions of selling off a stadium are much less than other entities. As a result it is considered that the dual ministerial approval for the disposal of assets is deemed appropriate for this authority commensurate with other legislation.

Mr O'Byrne asked if there are only a few stadiums within Stadiums Tasmania why this is necessary? It has been established to fill a wide range of functions, as outlined in section 15 of the original act. The election commitment included plans to transfer MyState Bank Arena and the Silverdome as they are already Crown-owned assets. It is also envisaged that other assets will come on board over time subject to negotiation with the asset owners.

I do not want to get away from the contents of the bill, but Mr O'Byrne mentioned the community facility at the back of MyState Bank Arena. I understand his frustration. I understand the frustration of the stakeholders. It is not just Wilkinsons Point and the community facility there. We need more community courts across Tasmania to facilitate the boom that we have had in indoor sports, particularly basketball off the back of the JackJumpers.

Not just basketball: we have netball pressures, Futsal, gymnastics, and other indoor sports. I am acutely aware of that. I also understand that the solution to that problem does not just lie in us building new facilities, but also in getting access to state-owned facilities, such as gymnasiums within schools outside of school hours. We have not done a good job in the past in accessing our schools outside school hours and putting those assets that we own to community use out of that time. I am very eager -

Ms O'Byrne - I will talk you through how we did Latrobe with that before -

**Mr STREET** - Sorry?

Ms O'Byrne - Happy to give you some history on that one, anytime you want.

**Mr STREET** - I understand having already had initial discussions about it, Ms O'Byrne, the difficulties that are involved and the demarcation -

Ms O'Byrne - There should not be.

**Mr STREET** - There should not be, but there are demarcation disputes over those assets. My firm opinion is that when we have kids wanting to play indoor sport who cannot get access to courts at an appropriate time of the day, we need to be doing everything we can to use the existing assets that we have. I am more than happy to talk to you, or anybody else in this place, or outside of it, who has ideas on how we can open those schools up.

**Ms O'Connor** - You should go to Queensland and have a look. I am sure they do that up there. There is much more cross-pollination between community and schools for assets.

**Ms O'Byrne** - We based our changes on that. We removed the barriers because there used to be a legal barrier that schools were worried about and we took that away. Sorry, but there's no actual barrier.

Ms O'Connor - That's right.

**Mr STREET** - I have got to say, before I became sport and recreation minister and before the JackJumpers came on board, it was more around open fields than it was the indoor facilities that the question was first raised with me and parents ringing my electorate office and asking why they are driving past schools that have empty playing fields when they go from Kingston to Pontville, for example, for their kids' sports.

Ms O'Connor - You know the Education minister and you could fix it.

**Mr STREET** - My commitment to you is that I will be doing everything that I possibly can to fix the situation.

**Mr O'Byrne** - You need to get on your feet a bit more, minister, we like this.

Ms O'Connor - Yes, you're all right.

Mr STREET - Flattery will get you everywhere, Mr O'Byrne. Back on the investment of assets, I want to finish by reassuring the House that the principal act in section 7(2) states that the authority cannot acquire, dispose or demolish major assets without the approval of the minister and the Treasurer. The question that I would have for others opposite is if they are not satisfied with that, why they think that I or the Treasurer, as ministers, would make decisions on the disposal or the divestment assets that was contrary to the public good, Mr Deputy Speaker.

**Ms White** - To be fair, it's not a reflection on you. It is about making sure there are appropriate processes followed.

**Mr STREET** - Yes, and the divestment of assets from Stadiums Tasmania is the same as or commensurate with other state-owned entities. There are any number of issues that were raised by those opposite in their contributions that sit outside of this bill that I am more -

**Ms White** - You have not answered some of mine that were relevant. How much did the KPMG contract cost? If you drive an asset to a private entity, will they be exempted from taxes?

**Mr STREET** - Sorry, you are right, I should have addressed that. The exemption on paying state taxes is only for Stadiums Tasmania as the state entity. If they were then divested to a private operator, that exemption does not transfer with the asset. That exemption sits within Stadiums Tasmania as an entity. I will give the KPMG information - I do not have an exact figure but I am told that approximately \$450 000 was given to KPMG for the work that they completed.

**Ms White** - To be clear, if they were engaged by the Department of State Growth to support the establishment of Stadiums Tasmania -

**Mr STREET** - Before you raise those questions, I was going to say that there were other issues outside of the contents of this bill that were raised in terms of AFL content and what have you. I am not going to address all of that now while I am on my feet but I am more than happy to have that -

**Ms White** - I have two more with the bill. What is the test in your assets to be included? I think that was one of Mr O'Byrne's questions.

**Mr STREET** - That will be a strategic decision for the board and for the CEO to making consultation with myself and the Treasurer as the shareholder or the responsible ministers. It is not my expectation that we would bring community facilities or facilities that are primary community facilities into Stadiums Tasmania. What we are interested in is the major assets that can be used in a strategic way in terms of attracting events and content to Tasmania.

**Ms White** - The final question was about the staff. When an asset might be divested, what happens to them?

**Mr STREET** - Those arrangements will be a matter for the board in conjunction with the Government of the day if a decision is made in terms of divesting an asset.

As I said, I thank those opposite who made a contribution. I understand the argument around Macquarie Point which I was not going to touch on at all but it is a separate issue to Stadiums Tasmania. It would be the managing authority for any new stadium that was built in the state, not just at Macquarie Point, but it is not pertinent to this particular transfer bill.

I thank everybody for -

**Ms White** - How much have you spent in advertising for the board, the CEO and in setting up Stadiums Tasmania? You have told us about the money that has been spent on KPMG and Deloittes but have you engaged any other consultants?

The contract to KPMG was the amount I just talked about of approximately \$450 000. The total cost is approximately half a million dollars but that includes the \$450 000. That includes the cost for hiring the recruitment agency to run the initial process for the hiring of the board chair -

Ms White - The \$145 000 is in addition to that. And the Launceston City Council has not been supported to do any work assessing moving to Stadiums Tasmania?

Mr STREET - My understanding is that the city of Launceston undertook this work about three years ago off their own bat before Stadiums Tasmania was announced by the Government at last year's election so that work was already in place.

Once again, I thank everybody opposite for their contributions. I commend the bill to the House.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** - The question is that the bill be read a second time.

The House divided -

#### **AYES 22**

NOES 2

Mrs Alexander

Ms Archer

Mr Barnett

Dr Broad

Ms Butler

Ms Dow

Mr Ellis

Mr Ferguson

Ms Finlay

Ms Haddad

Mr Jaensch Ms Johnston

Mr O'Byrne

Ms O'Byrne

Ms Ogilvie

Mr Rockliff

Mr Shelton

Mr Street

Ms White

Mr Winter (Teller)

Mr Wood

Mr Young

Question agreed to; Bill read the second time.

Bill read a third time.

Ms O'Connor

Dr Woodruff (Teller)

# WORKERS REHABILITATION AND COMPENSATION AMENDMENT BILL 2022 (No. 48)

# **Second Reading**

[5.22 p.m.]

**Ms ARCHER** (Clark - Minister for Workplace Safety and Consumer Affairs) - Mr Deputy Speaker, I move -

That the bill be now read the second time.

The purpose of the bill is to make amendments to the Workers Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 1988 to extend the benefits delivered under two unrelated sections of the act. Specifically, the bill amends section 27 of the act, which establishes the presumption as to cause of certain cancers in relation to firefighters, and section 87 of the act, which deals with the cessation of entitlement to weekly payments on the basis of a person's age.

I will speak first about section 27, which provides that if a firefighter meeting relevant criteria is diagnosed with a specified cancer then it is presumed, in the absence of evidence to the contrary, that firefighting was a substantial contributing factor to the disease.

I am sure we can all agree that work carried out by Tasmania's firefighters is vitally important to our community. Whether volunteer or paid, our firefighters provide a crucial service to the community, sometimes at risk to their health and safety. It is, therefore, important that if their work results in injury or disease, the benefits of the Workers Rehabilitation and Compensation Scheme are readily accessible to them.

The presumptive provisions of section 27 make the process of applying for compensation less onerous for a firefighter who contracts one of 12 specific cancers which have been linked to the work of firefighters. There is a group of workers employed in firefighting and fire prevention operations in the Tasmania Fire Service who are not covered under section 27, namely the Bushfire Risk Unit. These employees perform bushfire prevention operations during the autumn, winter and spring months and undertake bushfire-fighting operations during the bushfire season. They perform similar tasks and are exposed to similar risks to other firefighters covered under section 27.

It was brought to my attention in 2020 that most of these firefighters do not meet the definition of any of the three types of firefighters covered by section 27, namely career firefighters, volunteer firefighters and occupational firefighters. Because of this, most employees of the Bushfire Risk Unit in the Tasmania Fire Service engaged in bushfire prevention and fighting activities are excluded from the presumption. Clearly, these workers undertaking firefighting activities should be afforded the same protections as those workers covered under section 27.

I should acknowledge that a small number of employees of the Bushfire Risk Unit are covered by section 27 because they are career firefighters. However, they are in the minority. Those who miss out on coverage under section 27 are State Service employees, or State Service officers appointed or employed under the State Service Act 2000, and are engaged in bush firefighting or bushfire prevention operations. They are appointed for the purposes of the Fire Service Act 1979 in accordance with section 27 of the act, but they are not career firefighters.

A statutory review of the operation of section 27 commenced in 2020. I requested that WorkCover Tasmania board consider the cost of covering employees of the Bushfire Risk Unit. Coverage is affordable. The board's actuaries estimated extending coverage to the Bushfire Risk Unit would cost an additional \$53 000 per annum, which is 1 per cent of the cost for all firefighters covered by section 27 of the act. The board recommended the act be amended to cover the relevant employees of the Bushfire Risk Unit. Our Government strongly supports this recommendation.

The amendment set out in clause 4 of the bill will rectify the current gap by including the relevant employees in a new definition of occupational firefighter. The current definition is limited to workers of an agency or government business enterprise, a significant function of which is the management of forests or parks. It therefore excludes employees of the Tasmania Fire Service. There will be no change to the status of occupational firefighters covered under the existing definition. These workers will remain covered in the first part of the new definition. The second part of the new definition will provide coverage to the relevant employees of the Bushfire Risk Unit within the Tasmania Fire Service.

Moving on to section 87 of the act, the current provisions provide for the cessation of the entitlement to weekly compensation payments under two sets of circumstances, according to when the injury occurred in relation to the person attaining the pension age. By pension age, I refer to the meaning of the term under the Social Security Act 1999 of the Commonwealth.

Currently, under section 87 of the Workers Rehabilitation and Compensation Act, if a person is injured 12 months or more before reaching his or her pension age, then the entitlement to worker compensation payments ceases when the person reaches their pension age. If the injury occurs less than 12 months before attaining pension age, the entitlement to payments ceases after one year from the date of injury. Workers whose conditions of employment would have allowed them to work beyond the date of attaining pension age may seek a determination from the Tasmanian Civil and Administrative Tribunal, allowing the continuation of eligibility for payments until a date specified by the TASCAT.

Since 1 January 2018, section 87 has been silent on workers who are injured on or after reaching their pension age. Any question as to whether such workers are or are not covered by the cessation provisions of section 87 was settled in mid-2020 when the now former Workers Rehabilitation and Compensation Tribunal, which has become a stream within the TASCAT, confirmed that section 87 does not apply to these workers.

The proposed amendments to section 87, set out in clause 5 of the bill, aim to reduce the disadvantage experienced by workers injured at an older age by extending the period of time before the age-related cessation provisions apply to those injured close to reaching their pension age. The provisions of the bill will increase the existing time frames from one year to two years.

Under the proposed changes, if the injury occurs when the worker is aged two or more years before the date on which the person attains the pension age, entitlements to weekly payments will cease at pension age. In cases where the injury occurs less than two years before the date on which the worker obtains the pension age, entitlement to weekly payments will cease two years after the injury occurs.

Existing provisions which allow an injured worker to apply to the TASCAT for a determination for an extension of payments beyond the applicable cessation dates will be retained. There will be some changes to the existing wording for greater clarity and consistency throughout section 87. For clarity, aged-based cessation dates do not exempt the worker from other provisions of the act. They set a maximum period for the entitlement to weekly payments, subject to any decision by the TASCAT for the continuation of payments beyond the cessation date. Responsibilities to participate in rehabilitation and return-to-work programs apply just as they do for other workers.

Mr Deputy Speaker, section 87 is regarded by many stakeholders as age-discriminatory, because it imposes a limitation on the period of entitlement for payments to an older person injured in the years leading up to his, or her, pension age. The provision is allowing an affected worker to apply to the TASCAT for further payments are also regarded as age-discriminatory. Younger workers do not have to apply to the TASCAT to receive weekly payments for more than two years after their injury.

A review of section 87 was undertaken by the Work Cover Tasmania Board in October 2018. The board consulted with key stakeholders, called for submissions through regional newspapers and on 25 April 2019 published an issues paper on the boards, and the Department of Justice websites. Some stakeholders argued for the removal of age-discriminatory provisions, or at least a very significant reduction of the impact of such provisions. Some other stakeholders preferred no change, or minimal change. Despite two further rounds of stakeholder consultation in 2022 there is no universally-agreed approach to amending section 87. Views differ on how to find the right balance between treating older workers the same as younger workers on one hand, and on the other hand ensuring that our workers compensation scheme remains cost-effective and retains its focus on rehabilitation and return-to-work.

The Government believes the bill presents an appropriate balance, particularly when considered in the context that section 87 does not apply to workers injured on or after reaching their pension age. The Government has decided to maintain that position and to additionally provide some further benefits to workers who are injured less than two years before reaching their pension age. For these workers the cessation provisions of section 87 will not apply until two years after the date of their injury. No worker will be disadvantaged by the changes presented in the bill, and those workers who are injured within the two years before pension age will potentially benefit from the change to the cited time periods from one to two years.

It is the Government's view that the changes to section 87 are also affordable. Advice obtained from actuaries in June 2022 estimated that the cost would be an additional \$351 000 per annum to the scheme, compared to the status quo. This is less than 0.01 per cent of the suggested premium rate, which means that the proposed amendments to section 87 of the act will not trigger any changes to the suggested premium rate. The proposed changes contained in the bill are prospective.

In conclusion these changes will be beneficial to workers who are affected by them. They are worthy changes and are consistent with the objects of the act, including providing fair and appropriate compensation to workers and a fair, affordable, efficient and effective rehabilitation and compensation scheme.

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

[5.34 p.m.]

**Ms O'BYRNE** (Bass) - Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to support the legislation presented by the minister today, that acts in both ways to improve the protections and support for workers and I commend the work that has been done over time to achieve these outcomes.

Specifically, the bill amends section 27 of the act, which establishes the presumptive cancer-related causes. Tasmania was the first jurisdiction to move in this way in Australia, and it is something that we have been very proud of and has been picked up by other jurisdictions.

Section 87 deals with the issue of cessation entitlements based on age, which has been a matter that has been raised a number of times, particularly in an environment where workers are being encouraged to work longer, or in fact are being compelled to work longer because of the affordability of retirement not being quite what they had hoped. As we know, particularly with women workers, they are often retiring with significantly less income and the onus and obligation upon them to continue working in order to support themselves is great. With that as the framing, I will talk a bit about the legislation.

The presumptive revisions of section 27 are about making that process of compensation less onerous. It is difficult when you have been presented with a doctor's diagnosis to say that you have cancer in one of the very few industries where the UN agrees that it is a cancer-causing industry, to have to then go and make that claim.

It is an excellent piece of legislation that we have that allows that but I do also remind members that in the beginning of this legislation, they were still being contested. We still had challenges with certain insurance companies so I am pleased to see the extension of this and the fact that it now appears to be going through. I am looking and hopefully getting a nod from the advisers that there has not been any contested cases for some time, that cases have been accepted prima facie, and people have been able to very quickly access their entitlements in these circumstances.

The last time we had this discussion in parliament with the former minister Petrusma, particularly around the identification of cancer-causing legislation, we did raise the additional seven cancers that have been under discussion for some time - thyroid, pancreatic, skin, cervical, ovarian, penile and lung - and at that stage minister Petrusma indicated she would be bringing forward some work to ensure those cancers were covered. She was particularly sympathetic to a couple of them and we had some discussion about this over our time together in these portfolios, particularly for cervical and ovarian cancer.

One of the issues was that when this sort of work was originally done, there had not been enough women firefighters to be able to create the level of risk analysis and risk data to indicate that those cancers might be impacted. The argument is that there should be a process of risk based approach rather than the evidence-based approach. When the national review was being undertaken by the Commonwealth, the debate was not that there was not enough evidence, but there was enough argument at that stage that there was definitely increased risk. It was particularly because of the lower numbers of women that they were not able to provide that evidence but certainly the risk was there.

Given that we have historically looked to our colleagues in Canada around the prevalence of cancers and the work they have done, I want to put on the record that since that work was done nationally, where those cancers were not included, there have been significant changes in Canadian provinces and territories. Both the Yukon and Nova Scotia have expanded the

number of presumptive cancers to 19 and others have moved towards it, but not entirely to 19. Ontario has 17, Saskatchewan/Alberta has 16, Prince Edward Island has 15 and Manitoba has 14.

Some of the recent research has shown that after the first three years of a firefighter's career, elevated cell disruption is shown. That was research by Young and research by Jinzau. Between the recruit and the experienced firefighter, there is a 150 per cent increase in cancer risk which can be shown through analysis of DNA methylation studies. Despite improvements in protective clothing and safer work practice, firefighting cancer is still increasing internationally. That is partially attributable to the ever-increasing range of toxins that firefighters are exposed to and we see those predominantly in structural fires, car fires or the like, rather than some of the matters that we might be dealing with today.

The board has indicated that they will be undertaking a review in the next 12 months, minister, but given the previous commitment and discussions with the previous minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Services, might that work be able to be done faster, given the international research that already exists, and whether they can look at that more from a risk framework rather than an evidence framework. Otherwise we are going to require an awful lot of women to get cancer before we would be treating those cancers, particularly for our women firefighters.

We do see many more women joining the services and we see a lot more women volunteers. I would really like to see some movement in that area, minister. I am sure with your background in supporting women's issues that you would not want to see women inadvertently disadvantaged simply because we have not made enough of them sick for us to do the work. That is a matter I am sure the minister will be able to address in her summing up.

The minister mentioned that this was brought to her attention in 2020 because the Bushfire Risk Unit did not meet the definition of any types of the three firefighters covered by section 27, namely career, volunteers and occupational firefighters. That meant that those who were engaged in bushfire prevention and fighting activities were excluded from the presumption.

The United Firefighters Union thinks it is included and is quite comfortable with that. The union is happy to support it because at worst it is a doubts removal, and at best it is the thing that provides a level of protection. We would not want anyone to be put under questionable ability to get that access.

One of the reasons there has been concern whenever we try to extend the provisions of these types of coverage, is that in other jurisdictions as access to schemes is increased and the cost, therefore, of those scheme increases there is pressure to reduce the type of scheme you have. While the numbers and actuarial advice show that is not going to be the case here, it is something to keep a watch on to ensure that we do not, in attempting to be more egalitarian, remove access to services that people need. The actuarial advice that the minister has referred to does not take us there, given that we are only looking at an additional cost of \$53 000 per annum, which is 1 per cent, as the minister said, to the cost for all firefighters covered by section 27 of the act.

There are only a few people in the Bushfire Risk Unit who would need to be covered by this because the provision in the legislation specifically mentions that they must be involved in firefighting activities.

A concern was that it would be anyone in an administrative role, but it is clear from the legislation that only people with an increased risk because of their bushfire fighting services qualify. We would like to see faster work on the progression of those additional cancers, particularly because the international research has changed and because we want to encourage women to go into firefighting. We do not want them to think that they might have lesser health access than some of their colleagues might have.

Moving on to section 87 of the bill: there is no provision in this change that disadvantages an existing worker. It recognises that there are so many workers who are working far beyond retirement age. It also is a fair assessment of those last periods of time. As the minister says, if you are injured less than 12 months before attaining the pension age and entitlement payment ceases after one year from the date of injury that would change to two years. That is a reasonable and fair piece of work.

I appreciate the minister and the board received varying advice, predominantly from insurers around how this might be approached. Anything that ensures workers are able to get their entitlements if they are injured at work is appropriate.

In the briefing we had discussion about the TASCAT application for an injured worker. That is the process by which somebody would have to potentially prove that they were planning to work beyond retirement age. It is an entitlement now, but it was whether or not - there is no review built into this piece of work - the board is able to keep and report back to you on how those TASCAT applications go.

I am thinking of somebody who might have indicated previously that they were going to retire, but when they have done an income assessment, even if they wanted to retire, it may be clear that they cannot afford to retire and how those might be dealt with by the TASCAT board. It is a discussion that we had in the briefing. Minister, you might seek within 12 months from the board an update to see that those things are progressing and that we are still seeing a number of those cases being accepted. People's financial circumstances are changing. We know women's financial circumstances at retirement age are lower so we would like an indication on that.

There were, I understand, 14 submissions. This outcome certainly meets the needs that COTA put forward. I commend that. Once again, the actuarial advice indicates that there would be -

**Ms Archer** - We did meet with COTA a number of times.

**Ms O'BYRNE** - I am pleased to hear that.

The advice that came from actuaries in June 2022 estimated that the costs would be an additional \$351 000 per annum to the scheme compared to the status quo. That is less than 0.01 per cent of the suggested premium rates so we should not see any premium increase.

There is no point me labouring the point. This is a good piece of work, a good change that increases access. It will be interesting to see as behaviours change around work, as people stay at work longer, as work changes and as those changes to retirement age start to impact, whether we need to review it.

The other question is for the TASCAT review. A worker may not be intending to continue at their employment but may have been intending to have worked elsewhere post retirement age because of the nature of the work that they are doing. If I am working in a job in which the physicality means that I am going to take my retirement age when it comes, but then I still need the income, so I might have indicated that I was leaving that place but intended to do a less manual job or an administrative job in another area, would that make it difficult to get your TASCAT assessment about your ongoing work capacity?

That is something we can only tell with time, but it might be something that a review could look at. Peoples' work future is changing. The idea of retiring at a set age and enjoying a long retirement is unfortunately not the reality for many people now. For some people it is not their choice. They enjoy working and it is the engagement in work that keeps them mentally active.

[5.47 p.m.]

**Dr WOODRUFF** (Franklin) - Mr Speaker, the Greens will also be supporting this bill.

I want to say a few words about the challenging conditions involved in fighting bushfires. It is increasingly difficult to take the precautionary steps firefighters need to take to avoid exposure to carcinogens. Prevention is largely related to the specialist protective gear and the breathing apparatuses that are worn by firefighters. These become harder to wear in bushfires. There are people who are fighting house fires and there is the capacity often to have rotating teams so that people spend less time exposed to radiant heat and life-threatening conditions.

In bushfires that is not always possible because conditions change so rapidly and people become isolated. Bushfires in Tasmania and around the world are taking far longer to extinguish. They can be far more physically exhausting to get under control because people often need to spend so much time getting fires under control under incredibly hot temperatures.

In those conditions, firefighters can struggle to keep their full personal protective equipment on. If a person does, that has dangers because full PPE and heavy clothing that people need to protect themselves against breathing dangerous chemicals as well as the radiant heat that can kill people, means that the human body is at risk of cooking, and this is a known high danger for firefighters. The fire gear does an extremely good job of stopping the heat getting in, but it also does the same thing in reverse and it can stop the heat getting out.

Firefighters are known to suffer a much higher risk of heat exhaustion, heat stroke, heart attacks, asthma, and, of course, cancers, which brings us to the bill here today. The International Agency for Research on Cancer, the IARC, which is part of the World Health Organisation, declared firefighting to be a cancer-causing profession in July this year. It escalated the profession of firefighting from group 2b (possibly carcinogenic to humans), to group 1 (carcinogenic to humans). That is a belated statement from the WHO, which is not surprising as it takes a long time for the science to percolate up to that level. It is something about which the science has been quite settled now for some years. Firefighters are known to be diagnosed with cancer at a rate roughly four times the general population depending on the

cancer and that is according to a 2020 report from the University of Central Lancashire, commissioned by their local fire brigades union.

In bushfires and in preventive burns to some extent, people can be exposed to intense levels of particulates that are harmful to human functioning. They are transmitted by the smoke and can contain things like flame-retardance gases from burning plastics and volatile organic compounds that are released from the burning of many items that are sitting around in households or paddocks, in outside industrial activity, and from the chemicals that are burning in the bush itself. They can include industrial solvents, paints, pesticides, herbicides, petroleum fuels, and many chemical poisons that seep into the protective gear that people wear. They penetrate the masks and can cause immediate and longer-term breathing problems and for some people, cancers.

Unions and employees have long battled to have the cancers that are strongly linked to those exposures recognised as a presumptive occupational hazard and I want to recognise the work of many people around the world, firefighters, unions and people who have themselves suffered from those workplace-induced cancers and have had to go through painful processes of having their workplace exposure recognised as the cause or the source of the cancer they are suffering.

Regular and, to some extent unavoidable exposures to these carcinogens by firefighters were first recognised in legislation in Tasmania in 2013 for the career and volunteer firefighters in the TFS and that added a list of 12 cancers that, were a person to be diagnosed with one of them, it was presumed to have been as a result of a work-related exposure and not required to be proven thus. The presumption of hazard rests with the workplace activities and this means that the person no longer has to argue it. That is a much more just and humane approach and we are all pleased about that.

When I took the bill through for the Greens in 2017 and minister Archer added in Forestry Tasmania and Natural Resource Management employees, previously DPIPWE, who are involved in fighting bushfires, they were recognised as the gap. It is clear that the unintended, inadvertent gap was that there was one remaining group, the Bushfire Risk Unit, which I understand comprises mostly NRE, Forestry Tasmania and TFS staff who are tasked with taking the preventative burns to reduce flammable vegetation and reduce the threats of hazard. They remained unprotected as a result of the 2017 amendment and I spoke to the staff and asked them whether they thought there was any possibility there was anyone left in Tasmania. I want to thank them for the briefing that they gave me. They are quite confident that this is the last piece of legislation we will need to take to make sure that everyone who fights a fire is covered.

We strongly support the bill, and we also support increasing protections and resourcing for the very brave firefighters - the paid and volunteer people - who put their lives at risk because of the nature of the work that they do and also because of the increasing threat of the work from climate-charged bushfires. The nature of bushfires and the nature of fighting them is changing fast. Climate heating is driving things like heat domes, which focus intense heat bubbles over an area for days or weeks and that can drive up localised extreme increases in temperature that have never been seen in the region before. This might be an increase of five or six degrees above the highest recorded maximum in an area, and that sits for days over the area and makes fighting fires impossible and highly dangerous. It is also creating violent, fire-driven convective currents that manifest as towering pyro-cumulus clouds that can result

in - horrifyingly - firestorms. They have an intensity that creates and sustains their own wind system and generates enormous turbulence that can cause the surface winds to change direction erratically, which is obviously a huge threat to people who are on the ground in these intense conditions.

Humans never saw these conditions other than in the horrific fire-bombings of Dresden and other cities during the Second World War when there was such an explosive amount of heat generated by bombing at one point. These are new conditions, and people are standing there, going out protecting us and doing this work for us. We owe them all of the effort, resourcing and support they need to do that dangerous work. Some of the spokespeople for these firefighters include the 33 ex-fire chiefs and the emergency climate leaders for actions, who are crystal-clear that we all bear the responsibility to stop stoking the fires that increasingly threaten our communities and our wild places and the firefighters who fight them. They have pleaded with us and are very clear that the first order of protection firefighters need is to reduce the carbon emissions that we are putting into the atmosphere. Unless we stop fuelling the heat in the system, then all of the stuff that we do on the ground will be pointless in just a few years' time because of the way that the climate heating is accelerating so rapidly, far more than we thought.

The WHO's decision to classify the profession of firefighting as being carcinogenic to humans is obviously a call on all of us to do what we can to provide the critical measures that firefighters need to protect their health. I want to ask the minister, in line with what Ms O'Byrne said, why we have not in this bill added the seven extra cancers that ought to be covered by firefighter presumptive legislation, to include thyroid, pancreatic, skin, cervical, ovarian, penile and lung cancers. They are the ones that are listed by the WHO International Agency Against Cancer. They are obviously agreed now at the international level, so why are they not in this legislation? These affect men and women, but because more women are becoming firefighters in increasing numbers, and we want to encourage and support that, then we have to put the measures in place to support them early.

Finally, firefighters need to have a commitment from this Government for long-term health screening and therapeutic blood donations, which is now an available technique to manage a person's exposure to a range of dangerous toxins, including PFAS. Comprehensive health screening for all firefighters and the possibility of therapeutic blood donations is so important.

Debate adjourned.

## **ADJOURNMENT**

# **Nepalese Community Events**

[6.00 p.m.]

**Ms ARCHER** (Clark - Minister for the Arts) - Mr Speaker, I rise tonight on the adjournment to talk about a couple of things I attended on the weekend with our local Nepalese community, which is the fastest-growing community, other than our own, in Tasmania. There are approximately 177 nationalities represented in Tasmania and 152 languages other than English spoken in Tasmanian homes, for a population of around 570 000, which I cannot believe jumped 50 000 in only a short space of time, since we last had a census.

In relation to our Nepalese community, it is the fastest-growing of all of our culturally and linguistically diverse communities so I was delighted, on Saturday, to attend an AGM for an organisation I had not been involved with before. It is a national organisation, the Australian Nepalese Journalists Association (ANJA). They had their AGM in Hobart, which was very welcome. Their involvement during COVID-19 was particularly around supporting international students who had got caught up in the COVID-19 mess, we will call it, in terms of not being able to study, not being able to earn an income because of lockdowns and the like. They were very supportive of their own local communities.

What I have also discovered with our Nepalese community is that they are very enterprising and very supportive of each other as they welcome people from Nepal to Tasmania. I say that they are enterprising because in the space of only a few years we have gone from five businesses run by our Nepalese community in Hobart alone to approximately 20 in only the space of a year, I think. I am going off memory here, so I will talk in estimates but it is quite remarkable. We also have some businesses out in Moonah and Glenorchy because we not only have a culturally diverse community in the northern suburbs but particularly a high density of our Nepalese community.

I have been involved with the Nepalese community, particularly the Nepali Society of Tasmania and also cricket in Tasmania for some time. It never ceases to amaze me the passion and commitment shown through sport of our Nepalese community and, indeed, our Bhutanese community, and in cricket. They adore their cricket, as do the Indians, the Pakistani communities. Very competitive across the state. I can here Ms O'Byrne 'hear, hearing'.

On Sunday, it comes as no surprise that the ANJA AGM was timed beautifully and deliberately to coincide with our first Nepalese festival on Parliament Lawns, which took place on the weekend, and it was massive - certainly over the 1000 mark. That was run by the Non-Resident Nepalese Association, which exists across Australia but has set up in Tasmania as well. We welcomed the ambassador. I do not have notes in front of me so I do not have his name. The Nepalese Ambassador to Australia was here on the weekend and met with Her Excellency yesterday. It was his first trip to Tasmania. He remarked on how beautiful Tasmania is and also on the similarities with Nepal. When I think of Nepal I think big mountain - certainly bigger than the mountain we have in nipaluna. The similarities, I am told, is that they do have quite flat land in Nepal, as well as the heights of their mountain range.

It was very pleasing to attend that Nepalese festival: some beautiful dance, food, sharing of culture, as we see at many festivals across Tasmania but, indeed, in southern Tasmania.

That was off the back of Diwali on Friday night, which had been postponed from the previous Friday night when rain meant that it could not take place. I know Mr Street attended that event on Friday night. I was at the tourism awards with the Premier and then I went to the Nepalese events over the weekend. I wanted to bring that to the attention of the House. The Nepalese community across Tasmania is important to all of us, in relation to our growing Nepalese community but also our very culturally and linguistically diverse communities.

# **Recognition of Visitor**

**Mr SPEAKER** - Honourable members, I welcome a former member for Lyons and previous Speaker of the House. Michael Polley has come to join us. He is always welcome, of course.

<b>Members</b> - Hear,	hear.		

# **Brighton Show**

[6.06 p.m.]

**Ms WHITE** (Lyons - Leader of the Opposition) - Mr Speaker, I rise tonight to congratulate the committee of the Brighton Show for putting on an excellent show over the weekend. The attendance figures over the course of Saturday and Sunday were 39 647 people. It was a remarkable event and the weather was magnificent. I joined on Saturday with some of my colleagues; we had a stall at the show. It was wonderful to see the number of people coming through the gates to enjoy catching up with one another, experience the entertainment, watch the animals, meet with people in the community who run businesses, and buy things for Christmas presents.

The committee has worked tirelessly to put on the event. After two years where it needed to be cancelled due to COVID-19, it was a relief for them to be able to host the show again for the community, and the community truly rewarded them by showing up in such large numbers.

I would like to recognise president Geoff Jackson, vice-president Michael Purdon, second vice-president Hayden Purdon, treasurer Kaylene Lee, ground space coordinator Sharnie Purdon and secretary Rosie Purdon for their excellent work on the committee. I thank the Purdon family very much for their contribution to the Brighton Show because I doubt it would have happened without them. Not only were they able to host such a magnificent event after two years of disruption but they had a very full schedule.

Patrons who attended the show were able to enter for a very reasonable price of \$10, which enabled a lot of members of the community to take their children along and have a full day out and have a lot of fun. They were also treated to a full schedule of different entertainment options as well as interests over the course of the day. This included the Hall of Industries, which is a tradition at these country shows. There was a truck show with some very big trucks on the main oval. There were also a number of buses on the oval, there was the traditional woodchopping, car show, ute show and a baby show competition. I saw some pictures from that where the entrants looked very cute. I did not have my own baby there to enter into the baby show competition but that was because he did not want to show all of the other entrants up, Mr Speaker.

**Mr Barnett** - Hey, yes, nice one.

**Ms WHITE** - They had a very full livestock and animal schedule. It was over the two days. On the Saturday, the Westbury Show was also happening, so a number of exhibitors were showing cattle at Westbury on that day. They made the trip on Sunday to show their

cattle and support the Brighton Show, which is excellent. Without the support of those exhibitors we lose that link to traditional country industries and farming enterprises.

It is important that the community is able to see what a cow looks like, for kids to see what a sheep looks like, to be able to understand where milk comes from, and the important role that farming continues to play in our community. I am thankful to those exhibitors who took the time to go to both of those country shows to support them.

They had a cattle section, they had a sheep section, and they had miniature goats at the show. They were very cute and I had to try to pull Craig Farrell, the member for Derwent, away. He was making all kinds of noises about buying a miniature goat - and he may still buy a miniature goat. I suggested it would be very nice to have miniature goats on Parliament Lawns. I am not sure if he has raised that with you yet, Mr Speaker, but I am sure you will be giving your approval if he does put forward a suggestion like that.

They had the equestrian events on the oval. They had the poultry on show. They have an excellent poultry exhibit at the Pontville grounds. They had dairy goats. They had the dog high jump, which was run by Sorell Rural Youth, and they had a pet parade. It was a very full schedule over the course of the weekend. Those 39 647 people who went along had fun at the show and certainly received their money's worth. I hope all of the vendors who exhibited at the show had a worthwhile couple of days of trading as well. They all looked pretty busy selling food and their wares to the patrons attending the show.

I got the sense people were just really happy to be out together, gathering in big numbers again, in the sunshine, enjoying spring weather. It was a terrific celebration and a great country show. Congratulations again to the organising committee.

## **Housing Services Visit**

[6.11 p.m.]

Mr BARNETT (Lyons - Minister for State Development, Construction and Housing) - Mr Speaker, I am pleased tonight to pass on a sincere and heartfelt thank you to those who work and support vulnerable Tasmanians through Housing Tasmania and Housing Connect.

On Monday 31 October, I visited the Housing Tasmania Rosny office and then the Housing Connect Front Door office further down the road. It was a very warm welcome.

I appreciated the comprehensive tour at the Housing Tasmania Rosny offices. You could see the dedication of the team members there, the integrity of their character, and the empathetic and caring nature in which they took calls and provided support for tenants of Housing Tasmania in the south of the state.

The maintenance services based at Rosny are responsible for the maintenance of more than 6500 properties across Tasmania. They manage contracts across the state for contractors, tradies, sparkies, carpenters, plumbers, and repairs. They do the work for landscaping and the building maintenance services to maintain our properties to meet the standards consistent with the Residential Tenancy Act, and more.

It was a great opportunity to meet and say thank you on behalf of our Government, my office and all of us here for the wonderful support they provide vulnerable Tasmanians. Housing Tasmania can be contacted on 1300 665 663 for any tenancy or maintenance issues.

A little bit further down the road in Rosny, I visited the Housing Connect Front Door, which is managed by Colony 47. It is the main contact point for housing applicants in the south of Tasmania. I was shown around by Didi and Olivia, who are part of the team in Rosny. Housing Connect has a responsibility for managing applications from the housing register, which is often referred to in this place and is well known to members in this place, the other place and elsewhere. They assist with referral pathways and other support services.

I say a big thank you from me, my office and the Government for the support they provide. The majority of their work is phone contact. This has been the case for some time. In the recent financial year, Front Door South received more than 50 000 inquiries, including new applications, applicants updating their details, checking on where they may be on the register, receiving support or referrals to other specialist housing services. In the financial year 916 families received assistance with rent or bond to secure private rentals.

I thank the team members there who take those calls and provide that support every day to vulnerable Tasmanians in need. Often that support is provided to people in a time of crisis and their dedication and commitment to meeting the needs of their fellow Tasmanians is outstanding.

Housing Connect can be contacted on 1800 800 588 for anyone needing to apply for housing or housing support. Housing Connect is the statewide service that helps low income Tasmanians in need of housing assistance. The front door services are provided by Colony 47 in the south and Anglicare in the north. They also provide housing support. Housing support services are also provided by other partner agencies such as CatholicCare and Hobart City Mission.

I caught up with Harvey Lennon today and I thank him for the update on the services and support they provide in and around Hobart.

The Salvation Army and Wyndarra Centre are the partners walking alongside our housing clients and providing support and referrals along the way.

Housing Connect has been undergoing a period of reform in consultation with our partners. That reform is being extended for another 12 months with full roll out expected in July 2024. That is designed to align with the roll out in the new IT portal and the management system that will allow for better integrated management of the public-facing information and portal for self-service and the back-end management of those services.

Those reforms are a continuation of the service improvement for housing services in Tasmania and aimed at building capacity and better enabling Tasmanians to find a home.

I would like thank them, the partners and the steering group for their ongoing support and collaboration on this project. We look forward to continuing to roll out these important reforms. It is all part of our record spending on housing, to build more homes faster, to get those 10 000 new social and affordable homes built by 2032. We have \$1.5 billion budgeted and we are getting on with the job.

In conclusion, I would like to congratulate Mark Gaetani, who is currently state president for St Vincent de Paul Tasmania. He has been voted the next national president of St Vincent de Paul, starting in the early part of next year. It is a wonderful appointment. It is a credit to St Vincent de Paul for the wonderful work that it has done over many years. My parliamentary secretary, Lara Alexander, is a former chief executive of St Vincent de Paul.

## Time expired.

## **COP27 - Climate Change**

[6.19 p.m.]

**Dr WOODRUFF** (Franklin) - Mr Speaker, as we stand in this place this evening, the 27th Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change annual meeting is under way in Egypt. It is a very bleak meeting this year.

The world's chances of avoiding the worst ravages of climate breakdown are diminishing rapidly. The reports produced by the three key agencies in the week before the COP27 showed a terrible report card. The environment agency concluded there was no credible pathway to 1.5 degrees Celsius in place with woefully inadequate progress on cutting carbon emissions, meaning the only way to limit the worst impacts of the climate crisis is 'a rapid transformation of societies'. They have found that the current pledges for action by 2030, even if they are delivered in full, will mean a global heating of about 2.5 degrees Celsius, a level that would condemn us all to living in a world of catastrophic climate breakdown.

What climate scientists and meteorologists around the world are seeing is scaring them. They are scared because the predictions for how temperature changes and changing atmospheric conditions were going to affect local weather did not take account of the local conditions that are happening.

The overall planetary and country level projections have been for a more gradual increase in changing conditions, but what we are seeing already at 1.1 degrees Celsius, only 0.1 degree Celsius increase, are frightening changes, with heat domes sitting over countries and areas for weeks and months. There was a prolonged drought in China recently, a heatwave in the United Kingdom and Europe this year, near famine conditions across Africa and devastating flooding in Pakistan, which covered a third of that country in water.

Despite the intensifying warnings, it seems that nothing will stop countries from continuing to produce emissions. What is behind that is big fossil. Oxford University has found that the combined profits, taxes and royalties generated by the oil and gas industry over the past few months would be enough to capture every single molecule of carbon dioxide produced by their activities and re-inject it back underground. Why are we only talking about transforming society and not about obliging a highly profitable industry to clean up the mess that is caused by the products themselves?

# António Guterres tweeted:

I have just warned global leaders at #COP27:

We are on a highway to climate hell with our foot on the accelerator.

Our planet is fast approaching tipping points that will make climate chaos irreversible.

We need urgent #ClimateAction.

In Tasmania, we are still a climate leaner, we are not a climate lifter. Our response is to pat ourselves on the back, to feel comfortable and to make small changes. We are resting on our historical record and doing nothing about the emissions that we are making every single day from the largest source of emissions in Tasmania, native forest logging.

I will stop here for a moment and salute Dr Bob Brown who has today been arrested in the Eastern Tiers Forest. It is a beautiful forest surrounding the logging coup where he spent last night camping. The logged area has been devastated. It is a shadow of the beautiful forest it once was. Bob is determined to protest for Earth. He is determined to test Tasmania's draconian anti-protest legislation because he wants to show Australians what it actually is. It is life-defying laws. It is about shortening our lives and making them worse. It is about shutting up people who are defying the madness in the policies of this Government and other governments around Australia and around the world.

If it were not for Bob Brown testing these anti-protest laws, they will continue to have the chilling effect that they were designed for in the first place. It is all about keeping people silent and stopping the natural outflow of concern and fear and transforming that into positive collective action, which is what people are doing. They are standing up around the world every day.

The Greens will continue to support - as we always have - people who protest the madness of constantly doing great harm and destroying the web of life that the earth has gifted us with. I speak of the beautiful 500-year-old blue gum, which is 325 cubic metres of wood, an enormous blue gum, the biggest in the world. Lathamus' Keep, it has been named, because it is a tree which gives habitat to swift parrots. The giant tree hunters who found it have identified it is the only living tree of that size on the planet that is not in a protected area.

In Tasmania, this is what we do every day, we have to stop it, it is not normal, it is not moral, and it is life-denying, and we stand with Dr Bob Brown and everyone else who will continue to protest against the situation that we are in.

Time expired.

## **Digital Infrastructure**

[6.26 p.m.]

Ms OGILVIE (Clark - Minister for Science and Technology) - Mr Speaker, I rise on adjournment tonight to talk about one of my favourite things, and that is cables - digital infrastructure - and of course the rather marvellous Marinus Link. Telecommunications are very important for the Tasmanian community, never more so than now when we know an uplift in telecommunications and digital infrastructure will have the potential to elevate our entire economy, as we do similarly with our electricity situation as well. Those two things working hand in glove is very good news for the state.

No government in Tasmania understands the need for digital infrastructure better than this Government. We have seen this over many iterations of government in the state. Our Government is right on top of this issue. We are investing in our infrastructure and also partnering to deliver better connectivity right across the state, which is very important for a number of very good reasons, including business reasons, human reasons, communications, and digital divide. All of these issues are live and we are addressing them now.

The Tasmanian Government, as you may be aware, has participated in two rounds of the Australian Government's regional connectivity program. It was highly successful in contributing to three initiatives in round one, including upgrades to King Island's transmission and mobile networks, which is fantastic; service upgrades to the University of Tasmania's Bisdee Tier observatory, which I was very pleased about, it goes to the radio telescope and helps with our high-tech space sector; and addressing bandwidth issues at nine schools across the state. Right there, right into the students' classrooms with that technology.

The Australian Government has recently confirmed it will provide funding through round two of the program to build eight new mobile telephony macro-stations at Deddington, Royal George, Lake Leake, Pelham, Boat Harbour, Redpa, Port Latta and Scotchtown. This is in addition to deploying a wide-area fixed-wireless network to the Cradle Coast agricultural precinct. We know agriculture is important business and they need to connect as well. Together with the Australian Government and Telstra, we have invested over \$8 million into Tasmania's regional connectivity. These programs are important to upgrade Tasmania's telecommunications infrastructure and keep regional, rural, and remote communities connected and able to participate both economically and socially.

We hope that through the federal Budget that has recently been released that the Tasmanian community will benefit from additional regional connectivity program rounds. I was recently in Canberra at the digital ministers' meeting, and there was a lot of energy about making that happen, particularly black spots and those sorts of issues that we have been dealing with over many years.

Mr Speaker, I cannot talk about digital infrastructure without speaking of the importance of telecommunications connectivity for our beautiful state. Our Government has a strategy, vision and plan for our digital future, including the network layer of Tasmania's digital and communications infrastructure. Marinus Link has the potential to deliver substantial telecommunications capacity across Bass Strait, and we are looking for opportunities to deepen our state's cable capacity and add to resilience. Marinus presents an incredible opportunity for generations of Tasmanians to gain not just connectivity, but work experience and secure technical roles right here, roles also with global reach. That is for the electricity side, but also on the tech and telco and cyber sides, so we are looking forward to that.

Our current digital infrastructure is the foundation of a successful and growing ICT sector and we will need to work with those elements that we already have in place and the legacy systems, and we are looking for new projects and ways of revisioning what we do in Tasmania. The economic success of our digital economy and in fact our entire economy will rely in substantial part on what we do with the technology sector and our telecommunications connectivity.

Our technology and communication industries in Tasmania are going from strength to strength. They are expected to grow in value to \$2.1 billion by 2024-25 so it is impossible to ignore the value of this sector to our wonderful state. It is a marvellous time to be part of the

ICT industry and the Tasmanian Government wants to see it grow in strength and we are doing more to develop greater capacity, particularly with relation to cables.

We have a lot of support for the strategy that we are deploying. Steve Adermann from TasICT has said:

This is a watershed moment for ICT in Tasmania which will also make an even greater case for investments in data-heavy industries, such as data centres and AI computing for our state, as well as businesses and opportunities that have yet to be conceived.

It is very exciting and we know that growing our fibre optic capacity will craft new skills, pathways, jobs and opportunities and business for generations of Tasmanians to come. We know, living here in Tasmania, that our environment is the envy of the world and by building our digital infrastructure capacity we will also grow our ICT workforce. I think people will be attracted to come here and work here when they know they can connect and they can do business here. They can bring their job with them and work here from Hobart or anywhere in the state.

From the digital ministers' meeting, just to close out, I thought it would be good to give a quick report on the three top agenda items:

Digital ID - that work is ongoing and a lot of investment has been made into that.

Connecting up state and federal systems - how we manage digital IT to offset cybercrime. Crime, of course, we have seen an elevation in that recently and we are working hard on growing people who can assist companies to manage the cyber interface and also looking at ways we can help people understand more about how they can protect themselves.

The piece I am really excited about, and this was led by Tasmania, is getting the Digital Divide onto the agenda as a standing item - and this is something we will be driving. It was so good to see the smaller states coming together with one voice to say regional areas want the digital divide closed on resilience, connectivity and socially.

Time expired.

The House adjourned at 6.33 p.m.

## Appendix 1

## **RESPONSE TO PETITION**

#### Petition No.8 of 2022

## **House of Assembly**

#### The petition asks the House to:

- Support legislation that will permanently restrict short term stay to the primary residence of any homeowner;
- Support legislation to permanently cap rents at a maximum of thirty percent of the income of tenants;
- 3. Support legislation that will permanently ban the eviction of any tenant without good
- Support legislation to build or repurpose a minimum of 10 000 dwellings for public housing by 2030; and
- 5. Support legislation that will guarantee housing for all and secure housing as a human right.

#### **GOVERNMENT POSITION:**

The Tasmanian Government, through Community Services, Infrastructure and Housing (CSIH) Division in the Department of Communities welcomes the petition. It is clear that many people are concerned about housing and homelessness matters and that is why the Government is acting to address the issues raised.

There has been considerable demand for housing of all types in Tasmania over recent years, due in part because Tasmania sustained record levels of population growth.

The Tasmanian Government is responding to market pressures by delivering the 10-year \$1.5 billion housing package to provide 10 000 new social and affordable homes by 2032.

The Government is committed to reducing housing stress through a range of programs and supports, including making home ownership more accessible and affordable.

The comprehensive Tasmanian Housing Strategy will bring together the plan for the future; outlining priorities and actions to deliver new social housing, more homeless accommodation and affordable home ownership for Tasmanians.

The cornerstone of the plan is Tasmania's new housing authority 'Homes Tasmania', which will be tasked with building and acquiring these homes, as well as partnering with the sector. Legislation to create Homes Tasmania received Royal Assent on 17 October 2022.

The Tasmanian Government has made access to social and affordable housing a priority ensuring more homes for Tasmanians in need.

#### RESPONSE:

- The Tasmanian Government continues to monitor short stay accommodation closely. The
  Government introduced the Short Stay Accommodation Act 2019 to address some of the
  issues arising with short stay accommodation. The Act allows the Government to collect data
  on the number of properties listed on short stay accommodation platforms in residential
  zones. Booking platform providers are required to provide information. The Act aims to:
  - a. ensure all short-stay providers are playing by the same set of rules
  - provide comprehensive data regarding the extent of short-stay accommodation across Tasmania;
  - c. assist councils in their enforcement of the planning rules; and
  - councils are responsible for registering short stay accommodation and some councils, such as Hobart City Council, are considering ceasing to issue any new permits for entire homes to be used for short-stay accommodation.

Websites used to offer short stay accommodation must provide listing data to the Director of Building Control within one month of the end of each financial year quarter. This data can be used to inform future planning policy decisions and local government compliance activities.

According to the most recent short stay report prepared by Consumer, Building and Occupational Services, almost half (47.7%) of short stay providers are advertising their principle place of residence. The Government continues to assess the role played by short stay accommodation, including the support it provides Tasmania's visitor economy which, in the year to March 2022, accounted for more than 33,000 jobs, 6% of Tasmania's Gross State Product and comprised more than 740,000 visitors.

Through the implementation of Planning Directive No.6 the Government has implemented a fair and consistent approach to the regulation of the short-stay accommodation sector. This included exemptions in regard to home sharing as well as standard planning rules (acceptable solutions and performance criteria) which provide the basis for whether a proposed change of use to short-stay accommodation would be considered permitted, discretionary or prohibited.

The rules of the Planning Directive are included within the State Planning Provisions, which as required by the legislation and are currently being reviewed. The review will provide Tasmanians? an opportunity to have their say in regard to the short-stay provisions and consideration will be given as to whether the current settings are appropriate or need adjustment.

- The Residential Tenancy Act 1997 (RTA) is administered by the Department of Justice, regulating all residential premises. The Residential Tenancy Commissioner, established under the RTA, assesses whether rent increases are unreasonable. In mainstream rental arrangements, rents are set by owners and are based on the broader market.
  - There are existing protections against unreasonable increases in rent in the RTA, namely:
    - a rent increase must be given in writing, with a minimum of 60 days' notice before it is to take effect;
    - rent can only be increased once in a 12-month period and not less than 12 months after the residential tenancy agreement commenced or was extended or renewed; and
    - a tenant who considers that a rent increase is unreasonable can apply to the Residential Tenancy Commissioner for an order declaring the rent increase unreasonable.

The Residential Tenancy Commissioner may order the increase is unreasonable and prevent it entirely or determine it is partially unreasonable and reduce the value of the increase.

Similarly, in order to ensure adequate supply of housing in the context of residential tenancy, there needs to be a balance between the rights and responsibilities of tenants and property owners. The current provisions of the RTA strike a reasonable balance and further market interventions should be considered and approached carefully.

Tenants in social housing, unlike mainstream rental arrangements, are charged rent which is tied to income. This rent is capped at between 25-30 per cent of the tenant's income. Income -based rent setting has been found to be a very effective model in keeping rents affordable in social housing.

- The RTA specifies the circumstances in which a residential tenancy agreement can be terminated. Residential tenancy agreements can only be terminated in line with the requirements of the RTA.
- 4. Homes Tasmania will be tasked with building or acquiring 10 000 new social and affordable homes by 2032 in partnership with the sector and other partners. A new Tasmanian Housing Strategy is also being developed to bring together the plan for the future outlining priorities and actions to deliver new social housing, more homeless accommodation and affordable home ownership for Tasmanians.
- 5. The legislation which establishes Homes Tasmania recognises that housing is a human right. Australia is a signatory to the *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights*. Article 11(1) sets out the international obligation to recognise the right of everyone to an adequate standard of living, including adequate food, clothing and housing, and to the continuous improvement of living conditions. In this context, the Tasmanian Government continues to strive to improve the circumstances of all Tasmanians, particularly those in need.

Guy Barnett MP

Minister for State Development, Construction and Housing

Date: 21 October 2022

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# Appendix 2

## RESPONSE TO PETITION

# Petition No. 9 06 2021 House of Assembly

## The petitioners ask the House to:

The petition of the undersigned Citizens of Tasmania draws to the attention of the House the cruel and unsustainable practice of shooting native ducks. Every year tens of thousands of native ducks are shot in lutruwita/Tasmania for "sport". Some of these ducks are killed outright or after retrieval. Many others are wounded but not found, and slowly die suffering pain and distress. Duck shooting also threatens the survival of wild duck species. Duck numbers are on decline around Australia. Climate change, pressures from droughts and fires on these water dependent birds is increasing. Duck shooting often causes the death of "non target" birds — including endangered ones which are shot by mistake. Western Australia, New South Wales and Queensland have banned duck shooting. These states recognised animal welfare and environmental protection are more important than a "sport" enjoyed by a small number of people. It's time Tasmania did the same. Your petitioners therefore ask the House to ban native duck shooting in lutruwita/Tasmania.

### **GOVERNMENT POSITION:**

## **RESPONSE:**

- The Tasmanian Government recognises appropriately managed duck hunting as a traditional form of recreation in Tasmania.
- The Department manages an open season to provide access for recreational hunting and has strict regulations and procedures in place to ensure that the hunting of ducks is humane and sustainable.
- Determination of the wild duck hunting season is based on the results of the waterfowl monitoring surveys of wetlands which have been conducted by DPIPWE in Tasmania for more than three decades.
- Surveys have been conducted under governments of all sides, including the previous Labor-Green Government which, it is understood, did not ban duck hunting.
- These surveys show no evidence of long-term decline in wild duck numbers in Tasmania over this period.
- Animal welfare is taken very seriously by the Government with hunters required to abide by the rules and regulations monitored by DPIPWE compliance officers who, where necessary, enforce those requirements.

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As a prerequisite to obtaining a game licence to take ducks applicants must pass the Waterfowl Identification Test which ensures they have an appropriate knowledge of duck species that may be taken and other waterfowl species that may not be taken.

Hon Guy Bamett MP Minister for Primary Industries and Water