



PARLIAMENT OF TASMANIA

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

REPORT OF DEBATES

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Thursday 25 August 2022

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

QUESTIONS

Vacancy Management Control Committees - Re-establishment

Ms WHITE question to PREMIER, Mr ROCKLIFF

[10.02 a.m.]

Last night your newly minted Minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Management came into this place and added to his answer from question time. He confirmed that the Department of Police, Fire and Emergency Management had re-established the vacancy management committee on 28 July this year. In defending the re-establishment of a vacancy management committee in his department, he said:

Vacancy management committees are a common practice across agencies.

Which other agencies have re-established vacancy management committees, and when were those decisions made?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I thank the member for her question referring to the minister Mr Ellis's answer last night. I can get back to the member with some more detail on that matter.

It is worth reminding the House that when those opposite lost government in 2014, Tasmania was left with fewer police officers than when they came to office 16 years before in 1998. That was your legacy. We have rebuilt our police service after the savage cuts between 2010 and 2014 where, if memory serves me correctly, some 108 police officers were lost across the police service.

We have, across all our agencies, whether it be health, education, our police service, rebuilt frontline services, including more teachers in our schools. I mentioned yesterday there are 435 more teachers in our schools since we came to government in 2014.

Opposition members interjecting.

Mr ROCKLIFF - For the period from 2010 to 2014, Labor got rid of over 1500 public servants, I am advised, and in contrast we have recruited over 2300 public sector workers in the past four years. When it comes to supporting the front line of government, whether that be our police, our teachers in our schools or our nurses in our hospitals, this Government has been the one to invest in key services, not essentially take those services away as the previous government did between 2010 and 2014.

Cost of Living Pressures - Winter Energy Assistance Package

Ms WHITE question to PREMIER, Mr ROCKLIFF

[10.05 a.m.]

Yesterday you were forced to admit that one of the key measures contained in your winter energy assistance package, which you said in June showed you were taking immediate action to assist Tasmanians, would not actually be available this winter. Can you now also confirm that your winter bill buster payment will not be provided to nearly 70 per cent of eligible customers this winter?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I thank the member for her question. The Tasmanian Liberal Government understands many Tasmanians are facing cost of living pressures, which is why we announced a suite of targeted measures aimed at short-term, medium-term and longer-term assistance for households to provide immediate help. I am advised that an estimated 94 230 Tasmanians on concession cards are already receiving their bill buster payment at a total cost of \$17 million. Eligible concession card holders would have started to see the one-off bill credit of \$119 in addition to the \$61 concession increase included in their August electricity bill, helping them offset any bill shock. In addition, eligible pensioners will continue to receive a payment of \$56 for the year as part of the heating allowance.

Following the success of the previous loan scheme, we also announced medium-term support with a bolstered and expanded \$50 million energy saver loan scheme. This scheme provides loans of up to \$10 000 over three years to assist more Tasmanians reduce their energy costs through measures like double-glazing, battery storage, heat pumps and solar panels.

Opposition members interjecting.

Mr SPEAKER - Order.

Mr ROCKLIFF - It is important to ensure the scheme is implemented in a manner that provides both efficient and effective delivery and access to the widest range of energy-saving products for applicants. As with any process involving the use of public money, it is important that taxpayers get value for money.

Dr Broad - What, in 10 years? Next winter, or the winter after that?

Mr ROCKLIFF - Dr Broad, 10 years ago people were -

Ms WHITE - Point of order, Mr Speaker, under standing order 45, relevance. I ask you to draw the Premier's attention to the question, which was about the fact that nearly 70 per cent of eligible customers have not received the subsidy in winter, as the Government promised, and if he could confirm that is true.

Mr SPEAKER - I will uphold the point of order. Of course ministers and premiers always have to be relevant to the question, but I cannot control what each member is going to say or indeed understand in the future part of answering the question what is going to be said. I will allow the Premier to continue.

Mr ROCKLIFF - Thank you, Mr Speaker. Dr Broad was mumbling over there about 10 years.

Dr Broad - I said it would take you 10 years to deliver anything.

Mr SPEAKER - Order.

Mr ROCKLIFF - Ten years ago people were suffering under your 65 per cent price hike on energy bills, as well as some 10 000 people losing their jobs.

Ms White - What are you doing to help people now?

Dr Broad - Announcing programs, not delivering.

Mr SPEAKER - Order, Dr Broad.

Mr ROCKLIFF - As with any process involved in the use of public money it is important that taxpayers get value for money. A competitive process to secure a provider for the new and boosted program needed to be undertaken and, as I indicated yesterday, this process is progressing and nearing completion. My understanding is that approximately 600 people have pre-registered for the scheme, which shows that people are interested in taking up our scheme.

Ms White interjecting.

Mr SPEAKER - Order, Leader of the Opposition.

Mr ROCKLIFF - I have mentioned the \$180 bill buster payment, a \$17 million investment that is being reflected in people's bills at this present time and when they get their bills, it will continue to be reflected. There is a well-targeted policy and investment of \$5 million to support organisations that support vulnerable Tasmanians, particularly those on low and fixed incomes, who we will always ensure we are supporting through the many challenges people have by supporting organisations that support vulnerable people but also targeting assistance as well.

Swift Parrot Recovery Plan - Alleged Editing of Document

Dr WOODRUFF question to MINISTER for ENVIRONMENT and CLIMATE CHANGE, Mr JAENSCH

[10.11 a.m.]

Freedom of information documents reveal your department refused to sign the critically endangered swift parrot recovery plan unless it was edited to remove 'an imbalance in narrative around native forest logging'. Documents show your department demanded references to native forest logging and intensive silviculture as the greatest threats to the swift parrots' survival be struck out of the plan.

You clearly understand, because your department demanded the words be removed, that Tasmania's forest practices system has failed to protect all breeding habitat for the parrot and

is increasing its extinction threat. What knowledge did you have and what role did you play in this scandalous distortion of threats to the swift parrots' survival? Is it not true that you, your predecessor and colleagues are happy and actively contributing to the swift parrots' extinction to further your Government's native forest logging agenda?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I thank Dr Woodruff for her question. I do not thank her for the little personal insults she weaves into all of her questions in this place. There is a lot of that that goes on.

Dr Woodruff - What about the parrot?

Mr SPEAKER - Order.

Mr JAENSCH - It is one thing to ask a question of a minister and a minister has a responsibility to provide answers under scrutiny here. Questions from the Greens and others always come with a little spike which goes to a person's motivations and character. That does not make this a safe workplace. I ask them to stop and just ask questions.

Dr Woodruff - Which bit of that question was personal?

Mr JAENSCH - Please stop making it personal, like you just said, and please -

Dr Woodruff - All right, then please start taking your responsibilities seriously as a minister of the Crown.

Mr SPEAKER - Order, Dr Woodruff.

Mr JAENSCH - Thank you, Mr Speaker. Our Government is strongly committed to protecting swift parrots. Last year our budget provided \$1 million over four years for swift parrot recovery actions. This builds on other actions we have taken to protect swift parrots, including a project to trial methods of trapping sugar gliders. The success of the trial allowed NRM South to leverage further funding from the Australian Government of \$1 million to continue this important work. The swift parrot public area management agreement signed between Sustainable Timber Tasmania and -

Ms O'CONNOR - Point of order, Mr Speaker, under standing order 45, relevance. The question was: what knowledge did the minister have of this move to have logging removed from the swift parrot recovery plan? We do not need the propaganda.

Mr SPEAKER - Ms O'Connor, as you are well aware, I cannot tell a minister what to say. In the preamble of the question it went to the swift parrot, so I will allow the minister to answer the question as he sees fit - without further interjection, I might add.

Mr JAENSCH - Thank you, Mr Speaker. I note that the question Dr Woodruff asked me, 'Are you happy that your Government is happily driving the swift parrot to extinction?' has that personal edge. You just do not need -

Dr Woodruff - It is a question. You can answer it.

Mr JAENSCH - I have a right to establish the Government's credentials in response to that slur and that is what I am doing.

Dr WOODRUFF - Point of order, Mr Speaker. This is not about the minister's right. It is about the Government's censoring of the impact of native forest logging on swift parrots.

Mr SPEAKER - Order. Please resume your seat. It was not a point of order. Just because you stand does not mean you are allowed to interject. If any more of that goes on, I will ask you to leave.

Mr JAENSCH - The Swift Parrot Public Area Management Agreement signed between Sustainable Timber Tasmania and Department of Primary Industries, Parks, Water and Environment Tasmania in 2020 for the southern forests sets aside 9300 hectares of swift parrot nesting habitat from wood production. There is a whole suite of factors impacting the long-term survival of the swift parrot in Australia. The most important thing is that we are allocating resources. We are acting on priorities from the recovery plan, which has been in the process of review with the Australian Government. We will continue to invest in measures to minimise impacts on the swift parrot.

In relation to the document and the process of editing or preparation of advice that Dr Woodruff was referring to, I do not have advice in front of me.

Dr Woodruff - Will you bring it to parliament?

Mr JAENSCH - I will seek further advice on those matters, and report in due course.

Project Marinus - Effect of Transmission Lines on Farming Properties

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

[10.17 a.m.]

You would be well aware of the concerns of Tasmanian farmers across the north and north-west whose properties will be adversely affected by the transmission lines associated with Project Marinus.

Farmers think it is only right to receive fair compensation through contemporary contracts and reasonable consideration regarding the treatment and alignment of the line so it does not interrupt existing and future on-farm assets like irrigation. The farmers are being reasonable and they do not appreciate threats from your Government of the potential compulsory acquisition processes. Do you agree with their concerns? If so, will you back them?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, the Government always backs our farmers. We always have and we always will. There are a number of issues raised in the member's question and I will do my best to address them all.

On 12 August, the Minister for Planning formally declared the north-east wind proposal to be a major project. The proposal will now be forwarded to the Tasmanian Planning Commission which will appoint an independent expert panel to undertake the assessment in conjunction with our statutory regulators. This will be the second significant development proposal to be assessed under our major projects process, and the first from a private sector proponent.

The north east wind proposal is for a 210-turbine windfarm at two locations in the Dorset Municipality: Rushy Lagoon and Waterhouse. It is the type of large scale, complex project that our major projects assessment process was developed for. If it is approved, the windfarm would have a generation capacity -

Ms FINLAY - Point of order, Mr Speaker, standing order 45, relevance. I am not sure that the minister has the correct proposal in front of her. She is talking about the north-east. I am talking about the north, north-west. Could you bring the minister's attention to the question?

Mr Ferguson - That is not a point of order.

Ms White - It is. She has the wrong project and the wrong farmers.

Members interjecting.

Mr SPEAKER - Order from both sides. Interjections should cease. Conversations across the Chamber should cease. The minister has the call, and should be listened to in silence.

Ms PALMER - I felt that the question was quite broad, so I am giving a broad answer.

If approved, the windfarm would have a generation capacity of up to 1260 megawatts, and have an estimated construction value of \$2.7 billion. It would provide significant and much needed opportunities for employment in the Dorset area, generating up to 400 jobs during the peak of the construction and up to 65 jobs ongoing.

We all know in this place that all projects in Tasmania are subject to rigorous environmental and planning approvals -

Ms Finlay - Are you aware of the farmers who are under the Palmerston-Sheffield line?

Mr SPEAKER - Order.

Ms PALMER - with opportunity for public submissions and consultation on issues that may affect landowners and the communities.

If we look at the situation in the north west with the transmission developments, these are of strategic importance for Tasmania's renewable energy future. They underpin significant economic opportunities for the state, as well as helping to transform Tasmania into the smartest, cleanest and most innovative state.

Mr WINTER - Point of order, Mr Speaker, standing order 45, relevance. This answer is completely irrelevant to the question that was asked.

Mr SPEAKER - I will accept the standing order as far as relevance goes. The minister is answering as she sees that it is relevant. I remind the minister that that is her responsibility. If you could please continue.

Ms PALMER - Thank you, Mr Speaker. I will continue. This is all part of the Tasmanian Liberal Government's nation-leading vision to be a renewable energy powerhouse. I am sure that the Minister for Energy and Renewables, Mr Barnett, will be pleased to explain our vision further in detail.

Ms Finlay - Are the farmers satisfied with Mr Barnett? His treatment of them?

Mr SPEAKER - Order.

Ms PALMER - Understandably, there are some concerns in our community about these developments. They are large-scale infrastructure projects with complex and long delivery processes. All projects in Tasmania are subject to rigorous environmental and planning approvals, with the opportunity for public submissions on issues that affect landowners and that affect our community.

TasNetworks is currently progressing the design and the approvals for the north-west transmission developments and continuing to provide opportunities for consultation and input to landowners and the community. The Government is encouraging TasNetworks to continue its engagement process.

I know that the Minister for Energy and Renewables has previously met with landowners in the north west to discuss their concerns. Similarly, I will also encourage all impacted landowners to actively engage with TasNetworks and its land agents, so that TasNetworks can understand the specific impacts, including on land use to assess mitigations and options that might be available.

Electrical Apprentices - Cancellation of Training Block

Mr O'BYRNE question to MINISTER for SKILLS, TRAINING and WORKFORCE GROWTH, Mr ELLIS

[10.23 a.m.]

This week is National Skills Week. It should be a time to highlight and celebrate the skills and career pathways for apprentices and trainees. The experience for some Tasmanian eligible apprentices has not been so positive. Just yesterday, the Australian Energy Market Operator said there was a critical shortage of skilled electricians that could impact future renewable energy projects.

You were very quick to boast about your Government's commitments and promises when it comes to supporting Tasmanian apprentices and trainees, particularly in this industry. Can you confirm that approximately 20 second-year electrical apprentices on the north west coast have just had their training block cancelled for the rest of the year by TasTAFE? This will cause a massive disruption, not only for these apprentices, but also the 20 small to medium businesses who employ them.

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, the Government acknowledges that there is a lot of work going on at the moment. Tasmania is ideally placed to develop some of the renewable energy that this state, country and world needs, whether it is windfarms, pumped hydro, or it is Marinus Link, the last of which those opposite still do not have a position. I am happy to take by a way of interjection, whether they have decided to support Marinus or not.

Mr SPEAKER - Order, I am not happy with 'by way of interjection'.

Mr ELLIS - No, of course. They do not have any opinions of their own any more, after the federal takeover.

Mr O'Byrne is right, and many others are right: there is an enormous amount of work going on in the electrical space. Do you know what that means? That means enormous opportunities for young people and not so young people to get into an electrical apprenticeship, whether they are linesmen, sparkies, a whole range of people, even instrumentation - to get the skills and training they need to set themselves up for a good life.

This Government is committed. I noted Mr O'Byrne's acknowledgement, finally, of National Skills Week, which we have acknowledged in this place and celebrated widely. This Government has provided significant investment to meet the growing challenges coming down the pipeline. The other day I was in the beautiful electorate of Pembroke at the Clarence TasTAFE Training Centre, where we are investing \$26 million in the Water and Energy Trades Centre of Excellence. Do you know who those people are going to be training? They are going to be training sparkies. They are also going to be training plumbers for their sins, and gasfitters as well.

Mr O'BYRNE - Point of order, Mr Speaker, standing order 45, relevance. I have given him a crack. He has got nowhere near what is happening on the north-west coast. He is going nowhere near the challenge and the question I asked about the cancellation of training for electrical apprentices on the north-west coast. He can continue with his press release, but get back to the question please.

Mr SPEAKER - Thank you. Again, relevance. It is always important that answers are relevant, but I cannot put words into ministers' mouths, and I do not know what they are going to say in the future.

Mr ELLIS - Thank you, Mr Speaker. I appreciate the interjection from the Tim Jacobson faction. The member is sadly mistaken. We are talking right now about the training facilities for the next generation of electrical apprentices who will be building this state, who will be providing renewable energy that this state, this country and the world needs.

I was there the other day. The superstructure has gone up, the massive sandpit, and the project is coming along well. I also thank the team there, Hansen Yuncken, for the work they are doing.

We are proudly supporting training, specifically in the renewable energy and related sectors with the \$16.1 million Energising Tasmania package, delivered in partnership with the Commonwealth. The latest national training statistics show there are now 800 electro-

technology and communications trades training apprentices in Tasmania - a 48 per cent increase between 2017 and 2021.

We all know the dark days when Mr O'Byrne was in a Labor-Greens government and people could not get a job in the electro-technology space because they simply could not get any work. If the problems that he wants to manage are those of decay, decline and neglect, then go for it. That is why people have elected a Tasmanian Liberal Government - because we want to manage the problems of growth, we want to manage the challenges of delivering more training to more apprentices for more jobs because we are building more things in Tasmania. That is what this Government is committed to delivering.

We have more work to do. TasTAFE is like many other businesses in some of the difficulties they have had with COVID-19 and other restrictions, but we are backing them.

Just last month we began the transition that came online to the modern contemporary, fit-for-purpose TasTAFE that puts learners at the centre of everything they do, and operates more like the businesses that they serve. I will continue to work -

Mr O'BYRNE - Point of order, Mr Speaker - standing order 45, relevance. The minister has said a lot of words around commitments. I have asked him, what does he say to the 20 businesses on the north-west coast that have had their second year electrical apprentices cancelled.

Mr SPEAKER - I will accept the point of order. The points of order are not an opportunity to make another statement. Minister, the point of order is relevance. I remind you of that.

Mr ELLIS - Thank you, Mr Speaker. I will wind up, but I understand there are some pressures in our training system at the moment, and we will continue to work with those businesses. I have already reached out to a few on how we can deliver more training in this state, which ultimately is what we want to be doing, as a government, to back the additional jobs that have come online under this Liberal Government.

Patient Flow in Tasmanian Hospitals

Mrs ALEXANDER question to MINISTER for HEALTH, Mr ROCKLIFF

[10.29 a.m.]

In recent months and weeks, there have been reports across Australia about significant issues with patient flows across hospitals. We have seen those reports in Victoria and Queensland, especially post-pandemic. Can the you outline how the Liberal Government is working to improve the specific patient flow across our hospitals in Tasmania to ensure patients can access timely medical services as required?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I thank the member for her question and her considerable interest in this matter. I have, many times, mentioned our access and flow initiatives throughout our hospital system - right through from triple zero, through emergency department and patient discharge.

Health is clearly a top priority for our Government. We are spending \$11.2 billion over the next four years. On average, we are spending \$7.25 million a day on our health system. Our operating expenditure is some 33 per cent of our overall budget; it was 28 per cent when we came to government.

We are continuing to increase capacity in our health system. We have opened 105 new public beds and secured access to 41 new public-private partnership beds since May last year. We have also recruited more than 1500 additional FTE health staff since July 2020. The majority of these positions are in frontline service delivery, including nurses, doctors, paramedics and allied health professionals. We are continuing to recruit as well.

We know there is no one simple solution to the challenges in our health system, as Mrs Alexander alluded to. We recognise a system-wide approach is needed, which is why we have introduced statewide access and flow program to deliver a coordinated improvement in patient access and flow across our hospitals, using digital technologies to improve data access to assist with efficient patient management.

We have already opened integrated operation centres within our major hospitals, which enable centralised communication to support staff to make decisions about resource allocation to improve patient flow. We also know there are people in our hospitals who are medically well and ready to be discharged, but cannot leave as they are unable to access a residential aged care bed, or are experiencing delays in seeking approval of support through the National Disability Insurance Scheme.

A recent review across our hospitals showed the number of patients who are medically cleared to leave hospital but could not access these services represents the equivalent of two full wards at the Royal Hobart Hospital, or half of the entire bed capacity at the Mersey Community Hospital.

These are the challenges we are facing. We are engaging with the federal government and local service providers to highlight the significant impact this is having in Tasmania, and developing solutions to this issue to improve patient flow in our hospitals.

This week, the Department of Health has met with the National Disability Insurance Agency to discuss solutions to discharge delays for patients awaiting approval of an NDIS package. I understand that positive progress is being made. This is critical work, as we recognise the importance of delivery and care in the appropriate setting. We know that an acute hospital is not the right environment for people who have been medically cleared for discharge.

We are also convening a forum to bring aged care providers and other stakeholders together to identify the barriers to accessing services - and more importantly, to discuss what we can do to remove these barriers, recognising of course the federal government responsibility for aged care, the NDIS, and indeed our primary healthcare services. We are stepping in to ensure all stakeholders have a say. We are working together with the federal government to address some of these really significant challenges. The aged care forum is taking place on Friday 16 September. I look forward to hearing directly from the sector and working in a collaborative manner to resolve these issues, ensuring Tasmanians can access the right care at the right place and at the right time.

Land Tax - Primary Residences

Dr BROAD question to PREMIER, Mr ROCKLIFF

[10.35 a.m.]

You have spoken repeatedly about how you like reform. Following the release of the State Budget and subsequently in an interview published in *The Australian*, you stated that one of the reforms you want to tackle is broadening the state's tax base. Specifically in relation to extending land tax to primary residences, you were quoted as saying, 'that's a conversation I need to have with the Tasmanian community'. Can you confirm extending land tax to primary residences is on the table?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I thank the member for his question. That *Australian* article engendered quite a bit of interest across the community. Nevertheless, I have demonstrated through my time as minister that I like embracing reform and change for the better to improve the lives of Tasmanians.

The Government has committed, through its fiscal strategy, to maintain a competitive taxation environment. State taxes under a Liberal government will be efficient, fair, simple, stable and effective. We have already reformed payroll tax and recently implemented important changes to land tax. We have also made changes to a number of housing-related duty measures to further assist with housing supply.

The changes we have made to the state's taxation are consistent with our objectives of efficiency, fairness, simplicity, stability and effectiveness. However, the most important taxation reform we want to make at this point relates to the ongoing no-worse-off guarantee for our fair share of GST revenue which, if my memory serves me correctly, was also mentioned in that article. We want our fair share from the existing GST revenue pool.

The Government will always fight for a fair and equitable share of GST revenue for Tasmania. We know that Labor tax reform just results in higher taxes. That is what we have well become accustomed to, and your land tax announcements during the election campaign, if my memory serves me correctly, did not have any credibility whatsoever.

According to the most recent Commonwealth Grants Commission data, the ratio of revenue the state actually raised from its tax sources to the revenue it could have raised had it applied to the Australian average level of effort to its available revenue base, is the second lowest of all jurisdictions and below the national average.

The Government reduced the land tax thresholds that applied in 2021-22 by increasing the tax-free threshold from \$24 999 to \$49 999 and increasing the top tax band threshold from \$350 000 to \$400 000. In its 2022 state of the state address, the Government announced further changes to land tax rates and thresholds and these were legislated earlier this year. From 1 July 2022 -

Opposition members interjecting.

Mr ROCKLIFF - I am not interested in any of your carping or scaremongering. You have no credibility whatsoever. You have been taken over by your federal colleagues. We know you cannot move. There will be no ideas coming from your side because, frankly, you cannot move without getting permission.

Dr BROAD - Point of order, Mr Speaker, standing order 45, relevance. I draw your attention to the question which was, 'Can the Premier confirm extending land tax to primary residences is on the table?'. He has gone off on an irrelevant tangent once again. I ask you to draw his attention to this very serious question.

Mr SPEAKER - I will do that. As I have said earlier this morning, I will always remind ministers that they need to be relevant. At the same time, if you continually interject and bring up suggestions to ministers who are speaking, I can understand why they react to those interjections. If interjections cease, this process will be a lot more efficient. Premier, please continue.

Mr ROCKLIFF - Thank you, Mr Speaker; they are inciting interjections over there.

The Government has delivered a number of measures to support sustainable housing outcomes from across the state and to encourage businesses to employ young Tasmanians. For example, we extended the eligible period for the first home buyer and pensioner duty concessions for a further 12 months from 1 July 2022 and increased the dutiable value cap from \$500 000 to \$600 000, with a new cap applying retrospectively from 1 January 2022. We have extended the payroll tax rebate scheme for youth employees and apprentices and trainees for two years from 1 July 2022. We have also implemented a 2 per cent foreign investor land tax surcharge which will apply to residential land that is not used as a principle place of residence and is acquired by a foreign person on or after 1 July 2022.

We continue to make important reforms to our taxation system and continue to engage in the right policy settings for the Tasmanian people and the sustainability of our finances. The member wants us to spend less on government services. He might not support our energy bill buster payment given his mutterings around debt levels, which is counter to his Leader.

Ms White interjecting.

Mr SPEAKER - Please wind up, Premier.

Mr ROCKLIFF - I will wind up, Mr Speaker, by saying this: we will always do what is right by the Tasmanian people. We have had the most major disruption in our lives for generations as a result of the pandemic. We have had to invest, which has put us further into debt, but we have invested in keeping people safe.

Investing in our health system and keeping people employed are very worthy investments but we will always have a sustainable financial budget under this Government.

Biosecurity Preparedness - Traceability Systems

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

[10.42 a.m.]

Can you update the House on how the Tasmanian Liberal Government is supporting biosecurity preparedness and what is being done to support improved traceability systems for Tasmanian livestock and produce?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I thank the member for the question. In the second half of 2021 a consultation paper was released by the previous minister to seek input from producers and industry stakeholders into the development of a draft primary produce traceability strategy. Today I am pleased to announce an important step in this process with the launch of the new draft Tasmanian Primary Produce Traceability Strategy for public comment. Traceability helps to track produce through the value chain from paddock to plate and has a number of important benefits for biosecurity management, for producers and consumers, as well as our trade markets and the Tasmanian brand.

Our new draft five-year strategy, outlines our vision to deliver and enhance traceability framework that will provide confidence in the safety, quality and authenticity of Tasmania's primary produce. The strategy takes a multi-phase approach and aligns with the National Traceability Framework. The first phase will include new regulations for livestock which will harmonise traceability requirements for key livestock sectors including cattle, sheep, goats and pigs. Importantly, it will provide a regulatory framework to introduce electronic ID tags for sheep and goats. The second phase will involve development of new traceability regulations for the seafood and horticultural sectors and the implementation of the decision-making framework based on industry sector and enterprise assessment.

The draft strategy is available via the Department of Natural Resources and Environment Tasmania website from today. I encourage all stakeholders to review the strategy and have their say on this important biosecurity initiative that will further strengthen our protection and support our farmers and producers.

I take this opportunity, while biosecurity is front and centre, to provide a brief update on our preparedness activities in relation to foot and mouth disease in Indonesia. We continue to regularly engage with industry through the Agricultural Coordination Group round tables. Biosecurity Tasmania has been supporting Dairy Tas and the TFGA to run very informative industry workshops on foot and mouth preparedness.

Foot and mouth disease is not in Australia and we are doing everything we can to keep the disease out. Should foot and mouth be detected in our country, there are long-standing nationally agreed approaches and plans that would guide the response. There are also existing emergency management plans at the state level and state-based preparedness activities are well underway. For example, Biosecurity has undertaken diagnostic drill exercises for field and laboratory staff and is working with private veterinarians on surveillance activities.

The State Emergency Management Committee is working with my department on preparedness measures and planning for scenario-based exercises. Biosecurity Tasmania is engaging with federal Exotic Animal Disease Preparedness Taskforce, which will undertake a series of scenario-based exercises this month.

The federal Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry will also be undertaking a national foot and mouth disease exercise, which will be an important preparedness exercise for all states and territories. As it is Agfest this week, I would like to acknowledge the work of Biosecurity Tasmania and the Agfest management team to develop an appropriate biosecurity strategy for this week's event.

I cannot wait to begin my Agfest adventure tomorrow. I can ensure you I will be arriving with clean gumboots. The call to action is to come with clean boots and leave with clean boots so we can all do our bit.

Community Services Sector - Cost Index

Ms JOHNSTON question to TREASURER, Mr FERGUSON

[10.47 a.m.]

The community service industry in Tasmania is an essential pillar of our social and economic infrastructure. This industry supports people into work, education and training, employs almost 18 000 Tasmanians, and provides essential social and fiscal care and support for Tasmanians at every stage of life. This is the work that was once the domain of governments, which over the last 20 to 30 years has slowly outsourced more of its work to community service organisations.

I acknowledge the announcement of a temporary increase in indexation for state-funded community service organisations and a one-off cost of living increase from 2.25 per cent to 3 per cent for 2022-23. This is simply not enough. These same pressures have seen Victoria and New South Wales set index rates of 5.5 per cent and 4.6 per cent respectively.

The solution for Tasmania is to develop and adopt a cost index specific to the community services sector. Will you commit to working with the industry on this index to ensure sustainable community sector funding?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I agree from the outset with the earlier statement that the social sector in the Tasmanian community does a marvellous job looking after a range of people in our community, who from time to time need extra support and guidance, counselling, and assistance in times of trouble. This may at times occur when people are not expecting it.

The social care sector is not just for people who we might say are vulnerable. It is for the whole community. For people who feel quite secure in their job or their family and feeling quite safe at the moment, it might be very different for them tomorrow. That is why we have a strong compact between the Government, the agencies and our ministers, working with their counterparts in those funded community sector organisations.

As you alluded to, Ms Johnston, the Government through those departments does have established grant deeds with community sector partners. It is a way of creating a formal arrangement between government to deliver social and public services in partnership with what are non-government organisations. Necessarily there needs to be an agreement, there needs to be a contract, there needs to be funding and there needs to be performance outcomes agreed to.

That is the case today and it works extremely well. What is occurring is the increase in the cost of living is being felt not only by Government and households but also by the community sector. This is why the minister, Mr Street, on behalf of the Government recently announced an initial package of support for the Tasmanian community. This is \$5 million provided by the Government to acknowledge the impact of that rising cost of living. We have always said we stand ready to do more, should that be necessary. You and others would expect us to make sure that we do that in as sustainable way as possible.

The package includes increasing indexation to three per cent for community sector organisations for the current financial year. That is a genuine and well appreciated initiative by the Government. It is the highest level of indexation. It is a one-off arrangement for the time being. That was an initiative to help with the increased costs organisations experienced in their businesses. For example, an organisation that might have employees travelling around the state visiting people, would be running a car or a bus and they are seeing increasing fuel costs. We want to see the initial three per cent increase of their indexation go towards those kinds of costs.

We realise that has a one-off effect. While we are not promising anything in particular in the future, we have also agreed to review the indexation in the future, in particular in the 2023-24 budget year. I do not know where that will go. It would be wrong for me to predict it.

I appreciate in your question, Ms Johnston, you used the word 'sustainable'. It needs to be sustainable for our community sector partners, non-government organisations, and it also needs to be sustainable for the taxpayer.

We look forward to that review. We enjoy good relations with those organisations and their peak bodies and we intend to keep it that way. The Government will act as best it can to ensure that those partnerships continue to deliver for the people in Tasmania who are looking for our ongoing support.

Land Tax - Residential Properties

Dr BROAD question to PREMIER, Mr ROCKLIFF

[10.53 a.m.]

Tasmania is in the grip of a cost of living crisis. Because of your broken promises and your failure to get the basics right, power prices are going up by 12 per cent, water and sewerage bills are going up by \$450, and your new bin tax means council rates are going up all around the state. Will you rule out adding to the pain with a new tax on the family home?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I thank the member for the question. Clearly, you have no stomach for the job, no stomach for being the Treasurer of this state.

Dr Broad - So you are doing it?

Mr ROCKLIFF - I am not going to play any rule-in rule-out games with you. I will ensure that we receive the best advice to ensure that our budgets are sustainable in the future.

One of my many roles as Premier is to lead Tasmania's recovery out of the pandemic. One of my roles is to ensure that we have a sustainable revenue base to fund the services that people value. We have demonstrated where we are making - and have made - some changes to land tax and other areas, including payroll tax. It is all about ensuring Tasmania remains competitive and that we have a sustainable revenue base. When people approach me and talk about health services where demand is increasing, or the need for more resources in our schools, our investment in housing, the investment and support of community organisations, it is important that we do have a sustainable revenue base, moving forward.

I am not going to play any rule-in, rule-out games with you. What we will be doing is having a sensible conversation with the Tasmanian community about the sustainability of our finances moving forward. If you do not have the stomach for it, or for any reform at all, and all you are going to do for the next three years is sit back and whinge, quite frankly - taking direction from your mates who have taken you over federally - then you are not ready for the Government benches.

Those sort of questions highlight that you have no stomach. You are weak. You have absolutely no metal or stomach for reform in this place. We have, Mr Speaker. Local government - we have already demonstrated that. Parliamentary reform. We have already demonstrated that, where you are too damn weak to stand up.

We will always be a Government that is mindful of cost of living pressures, as you mentioned in your question. Always mindful of sustainability of services. We will get the pathetic media releases about whatever you are going to say. Honestly, do you think Tasmanians care what you say? I can clearly say that most Tasmanians do not. Most Tasmanians do not give a rat's ass about what you guys talk about, because you are pathetic. You come in here with your personal attacks. You throw stuff around all the time. You are pathetic.

Members interjecting.

Mr SPEAKER - Order.

Mr ROCKLIFF - You are just a pathetic mob that failed in government for 16 years. You are not ready in 2025 - clearly not anywhere near ready to have the stomach and mettle and vision and the policy grunt and reform to take the Government benches.

Swift Parrot Recovery Plan - Alleged Editing of Document

Dr WOODRUFF question to MINISTER for RESOURCES, Mr ELLIS

[10.58 a.m.]

What role did your predecessor and your department play in editing the draft swift parrot recovery plan to remove its focus on the threats of Tasmania's native forest logging industry? Did your predecessor or department make any inquiries, see any copy or contribute any advice to the recovery plan?

Now that you are minster, will you work with minister Jaensch to fix the swift parrot recovery plan to reflect the reality of forestry threats and to end logging in all swift parrot nesting and foresting and feeding habitat?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, as everyone in this place knows, I am a new minister, so it was before my time, but from indications from minister Barnett just now, he was not involved at that level either.

As for working with my great friend and colleague, Mr Jaensch, we will be doing that. We do that on a regular basis across a whole range of things because this is a Government that believes in finding the right balance between our productive industries, between jobs and also the environment.

We have a great partnership on this side, as opposed to those opposite, who do not even like being in the same room as each other. That is obviously why they were taken over by their federal counterparts.

We are strongly committed to protecting the swift parrot. Last year our budget provided over \$1 million over four years for swift parrot recovery actions. That builds on other actions we have taken to protect the swift parrot, which the members would know - and I pay tribute to my predecessors on this one - a \$150 000 project to trial methods for trapping sugar gliders. The success of this trial allowed National Resources Management (NRM) South to -

Dr WOODRUFF - Point of order, Mr Speaker, standing order 45. I thank the minister for talking about himself, but I asked him about whether his department had made any advice. He spoke about himself, but not about his department.

Mr SPEAKER - Thank you. We do not have to repeat the question. If you could resume your seat, please. I remind ministers that relevance is always important, but I take it from the conversation. I have heard swift parrot mentioned a number of times, so I will allow the minister to continue.

Dr Woodruff - Was there any advice in the drafting?

Mr ELLIS - You are right, Mr Speaker. It was a weird one, because I was literally talking about the sugar glider and NRM South and leveraging further funding of \$1 million from the Australian Government to continue this important work.

Dr Woodruff - It is not about the money. It is about the draft plan.

Mr ELLIS - We believe in it. The Swift Parrot Public Authority Management Agreement signed between STT and the former DPIPW in 2020, for the southern forests, sets aside 9300 hectares of swift parrot nesting habitat from wood production. That is PTPZ (Permanent Timber Production Zone). That is our Government working with our foresters and our community to make sure we do things in a sustainable and measured way - that we are continuing to do the fantastic work we do in that sustainable, renewable native forest industry -

Dr Woodruff - Of driving the swift parrot to extinction.

Mr SPEAKER - Dr Woodruff, order.

Mr ELLIS - to balance the need for jobs in our community, the need for a renewable carbon-sequestering product like timber, and of course protecting our environment. As those opposite well know, there is a whole suite of factors impacting the long-term survival of the swift parrot in Australia. The most significant, and one of the key threats to the swift parrot is predation from sugar gliders, as I mentioned.

Greens members interjecting.

Mr SPEAKER - Order. The member will be heard in silence. I note that you have the MPI, but I do not wish to throw any of the Greens out for continuous interjection, because it will be to lunchtime if that happens.

Mr ELLIS - Mr Speaker, I cannot understand why they are so cranky at scientists who say a species like the sugar glider that predate on swift parrots might have an impact on the long-term viability of swift parrots. I do not know why that is an issue. I do not know why they are rejecting the scientific advice on that. We have said there is obviously a range of factors that affect the swift parrot, and we are looking at working through all of those factors, rather than this kind of 'narrow cast' approach that the Greens obviously have.

At the end of the day, we know what the Greens are about. They are about locking up the native forest industry in Tasmania, which is world class, world leading and sustainable. They do not necessarily even really care all that much about what it takes, how they do it, but if they can find a way, they will go down that path.

We are here to back our sustainable forest industry and our beautiful environment -

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

Mr ELLIS - We developed the swift parrot management plan in consultation with key stakeholders - the detailed strategies and corresponding actions that aim to provide increased conservation and management for the swift parrot in public production forests.

Greater Hobart Traffic Solution - Update

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

[11.04 a.m.]

Can you update the House on progress for the Greater Hobart Traffic Solution, including the Government's plan for my constituents of Kingborough and Huon Valley, giving a real choice between private and public transport? Can you also comment on any alternative policies?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I already hear the cat calls from the Labor Party. Mr Winter, who used to be a great supporter of dealing with congestion in Hobart, is not serious.

Mr Young, welcome to the House of Assembly. You are taking this matter seriously. My Franklin and Clark colleagues in the Liberal Party have been focused on helping Hobart to arrest the congestion challenges that are real and have arisen because of constrained infrastructure, a growing population and an economy which is moving very strongly and we are seeing more mobility occurring on our network than ever before.

I thank Mr Young for his question because the Government has a \$200 million response to the Greater Hobart Traffic Solution for a range of initiatives to manage peak commuter demand. I hope members of this House will get on board.

A key focus of these initiatives is to provide Hobart commuters with choice, in particular private vehicles and better public transport options to allow greater travel time reliability, which is what it comes back to. Feedback on our designs for the extra transit lane on the Southern Outlet and Macquarie and Davey streets has indicated broad support for the project, particularly the need to incentivise public transport bus travel and improve traffic flow in Macquarie Street.

It is well and truly on the public record that a number of members of this House and in the community have had concerns around the Southern Outlet expansion, because that infrastructure is out of date, yet some members of this House have played the very base politics of opposing a project, undermining the process and doing something that would have put at risk the ability for the Government to provide a real traffic solution for the people in Franklin, in particular in Kingborough in the Huon Valley and the Channel.

Ms Haddad - How is it going to fix the traffic in the Huon Valley when you're knocking down houses in Dynnyrne?

Mr SPEAKER - Order, member for Clark.

Mr FERGUSON - I have said many times, more than I can count, that the Government would minimise property acquisitions for the transit lane, notwithstanding the large number of properties - which some members here have forgotten or do not know - that were compulsorily acquired in the 1960s to build the Southern Outlet that is there right now. They have conveniently ignored that.

Opposition members interjecting.

Mr SPEAKER - Order.

Mr FERGUSON - There are the voices you can hear right now, Mr Speaker, chipping in with nothing constructive to say, no stomach and no spine to stand up for people who need a better transport solution.

As minister, I have said I will minimise the impacts on our community and I am pleased to advise today that after significant and patient efforts, the design work, the property impacts and land acquisition have indeed been minimised. I can confirm today that only three full property acquisitions are required, all of which have been purchased by the Government on a voluntary basis through respectful negotiated agreements with the vendors. There have been no compulsory acquisitions. Another four properties will be partially acquired which will be partial land only, and that process is well underway in the normal way.

Members will recall the political accusations and claims made by others in this place, whipped up by people like Mr Winter, who used to be a friend of this project, but became an enemy of it. That unfortunately resulted in a lot of unnecessary alarm for residents of Dynnryne in particular.

Ms Haddad - Because you were threatening to knock down their homes.

Mr SPEAKER - Order.

Mr FERGUSON - I acknowledge and pay tribute to those people who have worked with us, noting the anxiety and the concern that a number of people had felt, particularly in response to the fear that was being whipped up by members opposite who have opposed this project and did not even want to give it a chance. They falsely claimed that there would be 17 homes gone. They used all sorts of inflammatory language and they totally pre-empted the process from the start.

Opposition members interjecting.

Mr SPEAKER - Order. Please wind up, minister.

Mr FERGUSON - Ours is an integrated set of measures. It is about providing real benefit to the people who will use the extra lane, as a bus passenger or in a vehicle with at least three or more occupants. It is an end-to-end solution so that we have the physical infrastructure of the extra lane, including through that bottle neck between Macquarie and Davey, and a proper access then on to Macquarie, but I want to emphasise the additional bus services. There will be an extra 43 express daily bus services between Hobart and Kingston and two park-and-ride facilities to support that transit lane. I was asked about alternative policies, but there is no time, only to say there is not one.

Salmon Industry - Moratorium

Ms FINLAY question to PREMIER, Mr ROCKLIFF

[11.10 a.m.]

The salmon industry presents Tasmania with an incredible economic opportunity. It is highly productive, primarily based in regional areas, it pays its workers great wages and it offers Tasmanians a diverse range of career opportunities. You promised Tasmanians you would not impose a moratorium on the salmon industry. You said that to do so would cost jobs, but in another stunning broken promise, there is now a moratorium on the entire industry and, true to your prediction, we have seen salmon companies announce to their shareholders that they are ceasing new investments in Tasmania.

Ms O'Connor - Massive global corporations.

Mr SPEAKER - Order, Ms O'Connor.

Ms FINLAY - No new investment means no new jobs. With your moratorium due to expire soon, will you admit it has been a failure and today rule out making it permanent?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I thank the member for her question. Do you really think industry believe anything you say, seriously, after you lot between 2010 and 2014? When I was minister for Primary Industries and dealing with a lot of matters concerning the salmon industry we made significant reform in that process in terms of independence, with an independent umpire and penalty provisions, such as penalties for marine debris, and greater transparency - and I did not hear a lot of support from you lot over there.

When I was advocating for the many jobs in the salmon industry, the many jobs in associated industries, of which there are hundreds, and when I was in the salmon industry's corner as minister -

Opposition members interjecting.

Mr SPEAKER - Order.

Mr ROCKLIFF - I did not hear much from you lot, because you were too scared to stand up for industry then. When the industry needed you and was under attack, you were nowhere to be seen. We were. We were reforming the salmon industry, making it more accountable, more sustainable, more transparent and independent in terms of regulation. We were in the salmon industry's corner for the value it has for all of regional Tasmania, but you were nowhere to be seen.

Ms FINLAY - Point of order, Mr Speaker, standing order 45, relevance. The Premier has been on his feet for some time now and has not mentioned the word 'moratorium', which was the purpose of the question. Is the moratorium going to be permanent?

Mr SPEAKER - I will take the point of order. As I have said, I will always remind ministers of the point of order and therefore relevance. I cannot put words in the Premier's

mouth and I do not know what he has in mind as far as the rest of the answer goes. I will allow the Premier to continue.

Dr Broad - Instead of just making stuff up, answer the question.

Mr SPEAKER - Order, Dr Broad.

Mr ROCKLIFF - The former minister, Mr Barnett, if my memory serves me correctly, announced the development of Tasmania's 10-year salmon plan in September 2021. He clearly stated that an immediate 12-month moratorium was in place. Moreover, the moratorium meant that while the 10-year salmon plan was being drafted, there would be no net increase in total leasable area for finfish farming in state waters beyond the current locations in those areas subject to current research permits that may result in approved lease areas.

The moratorium is still in effect and will expire in September 2022. The draft 10-year salmon plan which will be released later this year, I am advised, will be developed on the principle of future growth and lies in land-based and offshore salmon farming, world's best practice through continuous improvement and strict independent regulation.

Our Government has been on a considerable journey when it comes to the salmon industry. We have improved the regulation. We have improved the independence around the regulation and also penalty provisions for non-compliance, including marine debris, ensuring its sustainability and ensuring that we have continuous improvement in the salmon industry. Why is that?

It is because we value the salmon industry, we value the hundreds of jobs, thousands of jobs, that are employed by the salmon industry directly or indirectly. Some of the innovation of the businesses supporting the salmon industry is extraordinary.

When I was under attack by many people, no confidence motions and all sorts of things by the Greens, deafening silence from those opposite. Waiting to see where the wind is blowing. Will we support salmon today? Will we not support salmon today?

Dr Broad - That is rubbish. Is there a moratorium or not? You are the one who put on a moratorium.

Mr ROCKLIFF - What are the politics of the day? What will we do? You cannot make your mind up. That is why you have been taken over. When you cannot make up your own mind, your federal party has to come in and take you over. You have no policy substance whatsoever. Now you seem to be on the bandwagon of industry -

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

Mr ROCKLIFF - if this industry trusts you after 2010 and 2014 when 10 000 lost jobs, particularly in the resource sector.

Whaleback Ridge - Declaration as a Major Project

Mr WINTER question to PREMIER, Mr ROCKLIFF

[11.16 a.m.]

Whaleback Ridge is a \$6 billion windfarm and hydrogen development on the west coast. Will you declare the development to be a major project as you did with the north east wind farm?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, that decision is premature to make in question time. We will be working with the proponent on compliance with various agencies. What it can be assured of is that Tasmania will be the nation's cleanest, smartest and, most innovative state. Through the development of more renewable energy, we will deliver jobs for future generations of Tasmanians and ensure the cheapest form of electricity and renewable energy supports, growing investment and new industry here, while supporting our country's move to cut emissions and tackle climate change.

Ms Butler - Will it be assessed as a major project?

Mr Ferguson - That question undermines the process.

Mr Barnett - It is premature.

Mr SPEAKER - Order.

Mr ROCKLIFF - Whaleback Ridge is a \$4.5 billion large scale wind power and green hydrogen development proposed for the west coast of Tasmania, north-west of Zeehan. Whaleback is a large and complex project involving installation of the 500 wind turbines expected to produced up to three gigawatts of renewable energy and in an industrial scale, hydrogen production facility with the capacity to produce green hydrogen at a commercial scale for local, national and export supply.

It extends over an area of approximately 27 000 hectares of Crown land, predominantly within regional reserve and various land tenures and is coincident with mineral strategic productivity zones, with some mining exploration licences issued within the same area.

The proponents have sought the Government's support for the project to be considered for assessment under the major projects pathway in the Land Use Planning and Approvals Act 1993. A range of information has been sought from the proponent to determine the most appropriate steps. The Government is awaiting the provision of information from the proponent.

Racing and Greyhound Tracks - North-West Tasmania

Mr TUCKER question to MINISTER for RACING, Ms OGILVIE

[11.19 a.m.]

Can you provide an update on the progress of the north-west coast tracks project and the support the Government is providing for racing on the north west coast?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I thank the member for his question on this very important matter. The Government is a strong supporter of the Tasmanian racing industry, which makes a vital contribution to our economy and employment, particularly in regional Tasmania.

The Tasmanian racing industry contributes \$185 million per annum to the Tasmanian economy, with 38 per cent of that directly benefiting our regional communities. Mr Tucker cares deeply about this.

The recent independent report also identified over 5800 people participate in the industry, with almost 500 harness and greyhound participants located on the north west of Tasmania. Harness and greyhound racing on the north west generated a gross value added contribution of over \$21 million to the Tasmanian economy.

I was very pleased to announce last week that Tasracing has found a new preferred location for harness and greyhound tracks on the north west coast. Racing has a rich history on the north west coast. Until March this year, the Devonport Showground had been the main racing venue for the harness and greyhound codes for almost 100 years. Racing was relocated from the Devonport Showground in March 2022 to allow for a residential development that will benefit the region.

Participants residing on the north west are currently being provided with a travel subsidy -

Mr Winter - Where to? You cannot relocate to nowhere.

Ms OGILVIE - I thought you knew that, Mr Winter. To reduce any financial burden for transferred race meetings or trial sessions, the new racing venue will be located opposite Devonport Airport, with the proposed site on 27 hectares of private land on Mill Road, Wesley Vale. The Tasmanian Government will invest \$8 million over two years in Tasracing to build the proposed new race track. Tasracing will also be contributing funding to the project. Initial site investigation works have been completed, including geotechnical and agricultural assessment and compliance. Much of the work for the original Palmers Road site development can be applied to the new site at Wesley Vale, which has been accepted by both the harness and greyhound codes.

The Government has remained committed to this project, which will ensure harness and greyhound racing has a long future on the north west. I would like to acknowledge and thank participants on the north west coast for their patience while Tasracing identified a new site. I hope this announcement provides surety for the many participants located on the north west. I look forward to the delivery of new racing facilities in the region.

Unlike the Opposition and shadow Racing minister who were strangely silent on the Greens' petition to end the funding of greyhound industry last week, our Government will continue to back the state's racing industry.

Mr Winter - You know exactly what I think about that.

Ms OGILVIE - It would be good to have a clear and unequivocal statement of support from you, Mr Winter, and from the Labor Opposition affirming your commitment. I have not seen it.

ANSWER TO QUESTION

Swift Parrot Recovery Plan - Alleged Editing of Document

[11.24 a.m.]

Mr JAENSCH - Mr Speaker, on indulgence, I have some further information to add to a question that I provided before. Thank you.

In response to Dr Woodruff's question earlier, Mr Speaker, I said that I would seek further advice from my department. I have received further advice and I will present it here.

I am advised that on 14 April 2022 the Australian Government Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water released information in response to a freedom of information request. This included various versions of a draft national swift parrot recovery plan prepared between 2018 and 2021 which contained comments provided by the department and other relevant state government agencies.

It is appropriate that the Department of Natural Resources and Environment Tasmania, which has key responsibilities in relation to the implementation of management and recovery actions identified in the recovery plan, provides input and feedback to Australian Government officials in the development of the draft plan. Comments have also been sought from other relevant government entities, including the Department of State Growth, as appropriate.

I am advised that the recommended changes to the draft recovery plan by my department were to provide a balanced approach that acknowledged cumulative and diverse threats across the species range but did not diminish the impacts of forest harvesting. My department, and I as minister, have not received a final version of the recovery plan and hence it is currently not clear how the departmental and other stakeholder comments have been incorporated into the final plan.

Time expired.

SITTING DATES

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

That the House at its rising adjourn until Tuesday, 6 September 2022 at 10 a.m.

Motion agreed to.

MATTER OF PUBLIC IMPORTANCE

Ashley Youth Detention Centre

[11.28 a.m.]

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

That the House take note of the following matter: Ashley Youth Detention Centre.

The commission of inquiry heard yesterday in evidence on the Ashley Youth Detention Centre from AYDC assistant manager Fiona Atkins that right now at Ashley there is one child serving a sentence and there are 10 children on remand awaiting a court appearance. This goes to the minister's answers to our questions earlier this week about looking at alternative youth justice options. The evidence is right there. The majority of children who are sent into that house of horrors do not need to be there. There have to be alternatives. The evidence the commission of inquiry heard is that there are only four youth workers on at present and they need between 10 and 11.

The commission of inquiry has also heard from Peter Graham, who is the coordinator of the Working with Vulnerable People Unit. Mr Graham told the commission how the registrar - he is the registrar - tasked with assessing and registering Working with Vulnerable People cards had been given a list of more than 300 people in 2020 who had been flagged as a possible risk to children who held Working with Vulnerable People registration. Of that 300, 33 were current and previous staff at AYDC. Of this 33, 28 held a current card in 2020 and 23 still hold a valid card.

That information came to light during evidence and Mr Graham said he had difficulty in obtaining information or records in relation to the staff and that he was unable to access information about whether particular people could remain registered to work with children, and this including Ashley workers. Mr Graham said these were allegations 'of the greatest kind' and not being able to get the information prevented him from risk-assessing whether they should have their cards suspended or cancelled so they could be removed from the settings. Damningly, he said:

It is my view that the leadership of the department didn't see this for the crisis that it was. There are multiple grave allegations about current staff that got a 'business as usual' response from the former Department of Communities.

In further evidence, counsel assisting the commission, Rachael Ellyard, pointed out that Tasmania Police did not receive a notification about an alleged child rapist until November 2020, a delay of 10 months after the Department of Communities Tasmania had been alerted by whistleblower and Ashley clinical psychologist, Alysha. Throughout that time, this man - who we will call Lester - continued to work at the centre on alternative duties. Tasmania Police was first notified about this alleged paedophile at Ashley in 2012, some eight years before he was ultimately stood down.

Each day the commission of inquiry hears evidence on the Ashley Youth Detention Centre that is more and more damning. We know that Alysha first reported suspected historical child sexual abuse from a then existing senior AYDC staff member, and the director told her

not to go to police and said she was being hysterical. Of course Alysha has been utterly vindicated. Every word she has said about that place and every allegation she has made has been confirmed to be true.

The commission of inquiry has now heard that Alysha's response was appropriate given the circumstances and the seriousness of the allegations. Then a lawyer for the then manager at AYDC denied Alysha had reported another separate child sexual assault incident and yesterday, in evidence before the inquiry, it was confirmed that she had and the then manager's lawyer told the commission of inquiry yesterday that he had overlooked her email alleging serious sexual assault.

At every step of the way, this whistleblower has been proven correct and we owe her a debt of thanks for how she has revealed the harm being caused to children and young people at Ashley, the enormous problems with some staff, the epic and tragic failures of management and massive issues in the former Department of Communities Tasmania. I believe this Government and people in Communities Tasmania owe Alysha an apology.

We know that UNICEF Australia and Amnesty have called for Ashley's closure, as has the National Children's Commissioner. I am going to pause here and very carefully say that the Greens have been very disappointed in the Tasmanian Commissioner for Children and Young People's failure to advocate for Ashley's closure earlier. The evidence of the need to close that place has been there for decades and multiple commissioners for children and young people have called for its closure. The Noetic report in 2016 put forward the preferred option, which was to close Ashley and have two therapeutic facilities in the north and south. It has been disappointing, to say the least, that we have not had more vocal advocacy for the closure of Ashley from our own Commissioner for Children and Young People and in fact it has been the National Children's Commissioner who has stepped up right now to advocate for those children.

No delay in the closure of Ashley is justifiable. I was reassured yesterday to hear the minister say that that house of horrors would be closed by the end of 2024. What we need to see in place is a therapeutic trauma-informed response that gives those children and young people the chance that they deserve and ultimately makes our community happier, healthier and safer. Those kids deserve our full attention every day. We cannot be allowed to forget what they have endured over generations.

I look forward to having a further update from the minister on progress towards Ashley's closure and perhaps to respond to our request on behalf of Alysha for an apology.

Time expired.

Mr JAENSCH (Braddon - Minister for Education, Children and Youth) - Mr Speaker, I thank the Leader of the Greens for bringing this matter forward today. It is a matter of public importance and great interest.

So far, until recently, we have in this place resisted a rolling commentary or responses to the evidence presented in the commission of inquiry. It is important that we maintain that discipline and let the commission do its job, let witnesses put their stories forward and put them on the record, and not seek to judge or justify or contest them in the debate here.

We owe it to everyone who has had the courage to step forward with information not to second-guess it, and to let the healing but painful process of the commission do its job, and learn everything we can from it. I look forward to the findings and recommendation of the commission in due course.

On the strength of that, I will not add my commentary to the matters raised in relation to evidence from the commission over this current period. Suffice to say, it is a very difficult time for everybody involved in the whole system - victims/survivors and also those whose work and whose receipt of care is impacted by the current level of interest and speculation surrounding these matters. I will leave it at that.

Ms O'Connor raised a few other matters in her contribution, particularly about the processes for dealing with allegations against personnel associated with Ashley.

Importantly, our Government is absolutely committed to responding appropriately to all allegations of abuse in government institutions, whether they relate to historical or current-day matters. Anyone who has information relating to the abuse of children and young people in institutions, or in our community broadly, must report the matter to police. All allegations of misconduct against staff are subject to thorough review and investigation.

I confirm that all allegations of misconduct that have been identified to date in relation to Ashley Youth Detention Centre and our other government institutions have been taken seriously, and have been - or are being - thoroughly assessed and investigated.

This has included taking necessary action to stand down employees while investigations are underway, preserving a presumption of innocence but applying an abundance of caution - a precautionary approach at all times when we are talking about people dealing with vulnerable children and young people.

The Government has also established the commission of inquiry. That in itself is a major step to ensure transparency and to shine the light on every corner of this system, and to respond to what it finds. I am advised that the Department of Communities Tasmania has robust governance arrangements and detailed processes in place when allegations against current employees are raised. We will continuously endeavour to ensure they are fully upheld. We will ask questions, as the public has a right to - as you do in here, Ms O'Connor - to ensure our processes are being complied with to the letter.

The governance processes ensure that the safety of a child or young person is the primary consideration when responding to the allegation; that support is made available to a complainant who makes a direct disclosure of abuse to the department; affording fair and due process to state service employees against whom allegations have been made; and notifying Tasmania Police and the registrar for working with vulnerable people - and, in the case of contemporary allegations, notifications to the Strong Families Safe Kids advice and referral line.

The Department of Communities also commences its own assessment and investigations in relation to an employee's employment. This can include taking immediate action to remove the person from the workplace, or to vary their duties.

There was also reference to staffing levels currently at Ashley. I confirm that as part of the regime of safe management of the people in Ashley, and for the safety of both detainees and staff, there are certain staffing ratios that must be met. These are assessed prior to the commencement of each shift. As with any frontline service, Ashley experiences fluctuations in staffing levels from time to time. A number of factors have impacted staff ratios recently, including COVID-19 and personal leave requirements, stress leave and other matters.

We have to acknowledge that, in itself, the storm of commentary around Ashley, and the speculation and judgment of people that is felt by everybody who works there, and everybody who is incarcerated there at the moment, has an impact on our staff, and their ability to continue working to their full capacity.

At times when required staffing ratios cannot be met, young people can be housed in their rooms with appropriate support from staff. There is no room-sharing at Ashley, and every room has an ensuite bathroom and a television.

While there are challenges, centre staff do continue to support young people when restrictions are in place, including through exercise breaks and access to phone calls, and schooling.

Ongoing psychological support through our telehealth services has also been made available to young people on a weekly basis. A psychiatrist attends Ashley monthly, and a GP every week as part of their practice. They also provide primary mental healthcare to the young people in there.

We will continue to wrap support around Ashley - the young people detained there, the staff who do their difficult work providing care and supervision for them through staff fluctuations, through this period of inquiry, planning for the future of our youth justice facilities and the reform of our youth justice system.

Mr Speaker, I thank the member for bringing this as a matter for discussion today.

[11.42 a.m.]

Ms WHITE (Lyons - Leader of the Opposition) - Mr Speaker, I rise to make a contribution to the matter of public importance brought forward by the Leader of the Greens on the Ashley Youth Detention Centre.

At the outset I will just say that what we have seen reported through the media about evidence provided to the commission of inquiry from those who had an engagement with the Ashley Youth Detention Centre - whether they be former detainees or staff or department officials - has been incredibly concerning, harrowing and at times very distressing.

I have not had the opportunity to listen to the broadcast from the commission of inquiry over the last two days in the same way other members in this place have, given the debates we have been having in the Chamber, which have not permitted me that opportunity. The same goes for our shadow minister, who has been dealing with debates in the other place.

As the Leader of the Greens has, I acknowledge and recognise the bravery of Alysha, who has been in large part a catalyst for the commission of inquiry's establishment - particularly with the evidence that she has shared from her time as an employee at the Ashley Youth

Detention Centre, and how she has had to fight for those kids, and really fight the Government. I know what a significant personal toll and cost that has been for Alysha. It is important we all recognise that for whistleblowers in this state raising matters on behalf of vulnerable people, it is incredibly hard - and it is made harder when the Government blocks you at every turn, which is certainly the experience Alysha has had.

She has had to fight the Government to bring to light these failures. The commission of inquiry is now exposing them on a much bigger scale than any of us could have imagined. I join with the Leader of the Greens in acknowledging Alysha's bravery, and agree that she has been vindicated through this process. The Government should apologise to Alysha for the stress and distress they have caused her, and her family.

The processes at the Ashley Youth Detention Centre have failed. They have failed children, and they have failed whistleblower staff who have attempted to draw attention to those failures to protect children and to make improvements. It is a good thing the Ashley Youth Detention Centre is closing.

I was reminded by my colleague, Ms O'Byrne, that when she was the minister in 2012 in an Estimates hearing, she discussed the fact that the then government was looking at options to shut Ashley because of the concerns the government had about it as a detention facility and its ability to provide therapeutic care to young people in detention and the best rehabilitation for those young people. The government at that point had started consultations with the unions, with the workforce and was gaining expert advice about how Ashley could be closed and replaced, in a similar way to the Government's announcement that has been made now.

The Government is one-third of the way through the time line it announced for the closure of Ashley. We still do not have much detail from the Government about what will replace it. I recognise the comments provided by the minister yesterday in this House about the ideal model of youth justice the Government would like to see established. I support that.

There were many good things the minister shared yesterday, which we agree with, particularly when you think about the evidence shared yesterday in the commission of inquiry that Ms O'Connor referenced that currently there is only one child in detention at Ashley Youth Detention Centre but there are 10 on remand. It is an inappropriate place for children to be on remand. If we can find alternative solutions for that, which is what the minister has indicated the Government is seeking to do, that is highly preferable.

The other point I make is that it remains unclear what and how the Government is communicating with and supporting the young people who are at Ashley, as well as the workers who are at Ashley, about the transition toward closure. There are process improvements that need to be put in place immediately to address the evidence we have heard through the commission of inquiry and other evidence that has been brought to light in recent times to make sure those children are safe and the workforce is appropriately trained and supported to do its job.

It is vital that there is transparency about the decision making and also open consultation with those who are employed at the Ashley Youth Detention Centre about what the transition to closure means for them and how they will be supported or trained in that transition process. There are people who work there who are good people, who are doing their very best in those roles, who deserve to be supported through this process. Unfortunately, the way Ashley has

been characterised it could cast aspersions on every worker there. I know that is not the case, just like I know there were very good people who used to work there and no longer do. They too might be feeling similarly cast as villains in this sorry saga.

The Labor Party expects that the minister and the Government need to properly consult and support the existing workforce with open communication. It is very important that they are supported and know what is expected of them as the transition to closure occurs.

Having said that, I come back to where I started, which is recognising how, in a large part, this commission of inquiry started because of two very brave women, Tiffany and Alysha; Alysha, in particular, with her evidence regarding the culture at the Ashley Youth Detention Centre and the failure for these children. I recognise them once again.

[11.49 a.m.]

Dr WOODRUFF (Franklin) - Mr Speaker, we brought this matter of public importance on today about Ashley because, like many Tasmanians, we have been watching the very harrowing testimony at the commission of inquiry for a number of months. It has detailed the shocking harms that have been wrought on young people at Ashley Youth Detention Centre. It has outlined brutal physical and sexual assaults and oppressive treatment by guards. It has clearly shown there has been a pattern of mismanagement and cover-ups over reported abuse and harm to children over many decades, including recently.

We welcome this Government's agreement to close Ashley. It is something the Greens, many people in Tasmania and past children's commissioners have been calling for. We welcome that.

We have been concerned this week and have questioned the minister about the time line for the closure. It is meant to be in two years time. We are concerned as there is a serious mismatch between the minister's stated assurances that things are different in Ashley now and what we are hearing.

We heard evidence from Alysha this week that there are now 11 young people in Ashley in and out of isolation; 10 of those children are on remand. Only one has been sentenced. The youngest of those is 11, and 10 other young people, none of whom, except for one, has been sentenced with anything. There are only four staff to deal with children who have serious trauma and serious need for support. Enormous therapeutic support is required.

The minister said they will wrap support around Ashley until something better exists. It is not matched by the reality. As a parent who is parenting young people, I know the sort of support young people and children need, when they are in extreme distress. An 11-year-old who does not have their parents with them, who suffered in all probability enormous abuse, possibly from when they were born, to have them in a facility in and out of isolation with four adults in charge and 10 other young severely traumatised people around them, is horrifying. It makes me feel sick as a parent, on behalf of those young people and on behalf of all the victims/survivors who have survived the torture of being in Ashley.

We are more than concerned that the minister has no idea about the reality of being needed to be cared for in that situation. He said that Ashley is the worst but the best option the Government has for young offenders.

The minister is seriously failing to have an imagination about this. If you asked any person in Tasmania, 'If you had the resources of the state, if you had the millions of dollars that will go to Ashley Youth Detention Centre for the next two years and you have 11 young people, one of them an 11-year-old, what would you do to support them? How much money would it take?' I am not an expert but it is reasonably obvious. You could get 10 houses and you could get two highly trained adults in each house, they would have one child, there would be other appropriate safeguards for the children and there could be one-on-one intensive support.

You might find that some of the children are better placed together, not separately, three might be better than two. You would workshop that with a child, you would have trauma support, you would have psychological support and you would have the possibility for an education, a direct home-schooling education. Would that not be wonderful? How much would that cost? I do not know, but it is nothing compared to the reality of what we are pouring into a facility with guards and fences and solid walls and isolation cells for children. This is the best the minister can do.

He said the Government would act on alternative options if they exist. They do exist, minister, but you just choose not to employ them. You choose to have the situation as it is and to go on and talk about plans for therapeutic models as though we have a future where we can just push this off, but today there are 11 children in Ashley and you, minister, are responsible and you are failing them. It is on your head that there are only four adults to look after 11 children.

The Commissioner for Children and Young People said we are at an all-time low in terms of staff that are available to work on the floor. We have concerns about the Commissioner for Children and Young People taking so long. It is good she has made the statement that Ashley should close. We do not understand why it came after the Government made the announcement but we are very happy. It was after the National Children's Commissioner made their statement, but we are happy that it has happened, albeit belated, and we expect to have some pretty strong statements for those children over the next few years.

Time expired.

[11.56 a.m.]

Mrs ALEXANDER (Bass) - Mr Speaker, I also rise to speak in relation to this sad situation we are facing in the twenty-first century in a state that has so much to offer but unfortunately we have had these issues happen.

In looking at this situation, a few things came to mind and also looking around Australia at what has been happening over the last two and a half years. We need to take a little bit of stock and prepare for the impact of the measures that have been taken over the last two and a half years that have impacted vulnerable people in our community.

As we know, many of these young people who end up in the justice system come from families that have their struggles, they are broken families, and quite often endure perpetuated family violence and other terrible situations. We know that over the last two and a half years, whilst many of them would have relied to a certain extent on some regular interaction with schools and regular supports, as much as possible through the schooling system, we know that that capacity was really limited for them in that time.

Accessing more regular meals at school, accessing counsellors or anything else the schools may provide was limited to them. Whilst it was easier for people from more well-to-do families or families that could afford a laptop or a separate room for those kids to continue engagement with education and support systems and services, a lot of children did not have that opportunity and became more and more disengaged and lonely, therefore associating with other criminal elements in society and unfortunately ending up in situations that took them to places like the Ashley Youth Detention Centre.

It is interesting looking at the dialogue that has occurred in our community ever since this terrible culture was brought to light and how the Tasmanian community has reacted around the situation that has been presented. I had a discussion recently with a homeless person in Launceston. He has been homeless for a long time and lives in a tent, together with another person who is also homeless on and off, either in a tent or safe space. With an increased number of youth recently roaming the streets and causing disruption, they said that one of the things that is happening is that their tents have been broken or burnt or kicked. They have taken it upon themselves to take photos of groups of youths. I was with Ms Finlay and we worked with some of these instances together and they showed us photos of these groups of youths that have caused this loss for these homeless people. It is a very complex issue.

Dr Woodruff - You're just adding to the narrative that it's the children's fault.

Mrs ALEXANDER - No, it is not the children's fault. Nobody said it is the children's fault. My view is that when it comes to children and animals there is no such thing as a young person who is born bad. Everyone, when they come into this world, come very genuine and very innocent. It is what adults and what the environment does to them that ultimately influences their behaviour.

Dr Woodruff - I agree with that.

Mrs ALEXANDER - If at that very early stage there is no family support or community support, there is disjointed support, then they will fail because the pressures, as they grow up, of the environment and everything else will eventually contribute to that young person's behaviour and how they see life, how bitter they are, how aggressive they are, and how emotionally disturbed they are.

In saying this, that is why Ashley Youth Detention Centre has demonstrated that culture is something that causes a lot of trauma. That is basically what it is. Culture needs to be addressed in any workplace and it is more imperative than ever. In a place such as the Ashley Youth Detention Centre that culture was at the root cause of how young people were viewed with a poor understanding of their complex needs.

There is an immediate reaction to say it needs to shut down but in doing that, what are we replacing it with? We need to understand who the staff are going to be, and how we are recruiting, and the type of training and the type of complex understanding that people who will be dealing with these cases have to have. As a government which is ultimately responsible, we need to be satisfied that we are putting in place the right supports for these people to learn and re-engage in society and be properly supported.

I read a recent interview that former premier Lara Giddings did on *ABC Mornings*. She was basically responsible for Ashley between 2006 and 2008 and she acknowledged that there were two inquiries into Ashley -

Time expired.

Matter noted.

HOMES TASMANIA BILL 2022 (No. 35)

In Committee

Continued from 18 August 2022 (page 93).

Clause 10 -

Application of purposes of Act and housing principles

Ms O'CONNOR - We were proposing to make a second amendment to clause 10. I think it is captured in the legislation, so I withdraw that particular amendment.

Mr BARNETT - I thank the honourable member.

Amendment withdrawn.

Ms HADDAD - I have some questions about clause 10, just for my understanding, and for the minister to put on the record some of the thinking behind the drafting of the clause.

Clause 10 talks about the need for Homes Tasmania to balance the need for provision of housing and housing support services and the level of debt that can be incurred. Part of clause 10 - I think towards the end - talks about the need to do that with a mind to securing the long-term social and economic requirements of Tasmania. We all know that the costs of housing and homelessness are high in terms of actually providing housing and services, but also the other tangible costs to the rest of the system that flow as a result of people being homeless.

During Homelessness Week, at an event the minister and I were both at, the chair of the board of St Vincent de Paul estimated it costs the state government around about \$800 000 a week from the state budget in those broad costs that are influenced by homelessness, and if people are securely, safely and affordably housed, costs in other areas of state budget expenditure reduce, so costs to acute health and education and other social community services like mental health would decrease.

Minister, could you speak about how much debt you have anticipated would be sustainable, and also how it would be accounted for?

We did have some discussions in the last debate on the bill around state budget versus GBE budget estimates hearings. How will that debt be accounted for, and how will it be repaid? I say that in context of the former Commonwealth housing debt that the state had - in excess of \$280 million - and the fact that this was an unsustainable debt that the state was unable to

service. I am wondering what the debt profile is likely to look like from the minister's perspective.

Mr BARNETT - Thanks very much to the member for her question on clause 10. The bill is set out in two parts, which I touched on earlier. The first part sets out the purposes and function of the legislation, and the second relates to the operational part of that. Then we have the consequential Homes Tasmania bill as well.

This is the application of the housing principles. Clause 10 places consideration on Homes Tasmania for how it carries out its purposes and functions. This is where the principles that parliament is setting are really important, and the rest of the powers of the authority will be tested against that.

In response to the feedback in consultation, as well as by members during this debate, we have made it clear in the purposes of the bill that housing is a fundamental basic human need. That has been included in the clause in response to feedback, including from the Greens.

We made that change to the purposes of the bill, and I am pleased it is in there. It makes it fundamental. Housing is a fundamental need that enables people to live fulfilling lives and participate in and contribute to their communities. I have said, publicly and privately, that we want people to achieve their potential, and families to achieve their potential. Housing is a key ingredient to success in terms of getting them on that track to achieve their potential.

Ms O'Connor - It is the foundation.

Mr BARNETT - A foundation, yes. It is a fundamental foundation for that effort to achieve potential in people's lives. I recognise and acknowledge that, which is why we accepted that feedback and named housing as a basic human need in the clause. That principle drives the Homes Tasmania legislation.

You asked about the debt. From the federal government, I am pretty sure it was \$153 million - and all the savings out of that go back into housing and housing services in Tasmania to support homelessness, to support our housing efforts. In those first few years, \$15 million a year was injected back into housing and homelessness services, rather than that money going into - I will not say a big black hole in Canberra, but it was a debt, and it has been forgiven.

I put on record my thanks to Michael Sukkar - I think he was assistant treasurer at the time - for his support for that, and my predecessor, Mr Jaensch, for his negotiations with that. I acknowledge Senator Jacqui Lambie's advocacy for it as well and others who supported it.

It is a net benefit for Tassie and our efforts going forward to provide services and housing and homelessness services in Tasmania. I hope that assists the member. I am happy to provide further advice, but hopefully that will help in better understanding the relevance of clause 10.

Clause 10 agreed to.

Clause 11 -

Functions and powers of Homes Tasmania

Ms O'CONNOR - Minister, I would like to explore through this clause the threshold question, which is how will the Homes Tasmania statutory authority operate in a way differently from Housing Tasmania within a government agency? This question has not yet been answered, and is something the Greens are really struggling with in the context of this bill.

We are always wary of government moves to externalise key government functions and responsibilities. It is a kind of contracted outsourcing. This clause, which is about the functions and powers of Homes Tasmania, is really the kicker clause, in a way, because it guides how Homes Tasmania will operate, presumably, to deliver those better social and affordable and community outcomes that we all want to see.

The question to you, minister, is when this clause says that it is a function of Homes Tasmania:

to support, and fund, the provision of appropriate, affordable and safe accommodation to eligible persons, and persons on low or moderate incomes, in the short, medium or long term;

that is what Housing Tasmania does now. Within the constraints of funding, with the albatross of the Commonwealth-State housing debt removed from our housing agency's neck, Housing Tasmania has, over many decades, performed a really critical function in our society and has provided people with homes, hope and security. What is it about a new Homes Tasmania statutory authority that would make Housing Tasmania better able to do those things? That is a question we really want answered.

Mr BARNETT - I thank the member for that question. We touched on it in the second reading debate and it is a fundamental question as to why we wish to establish a housing authority and what is different. They are good questions and I welcome them. One of the reasons we are doing it is because what we are doing is not good enough. We need to do better. The case for change has been made.

Ms O'Connor - I am not sure it has.

Mr BARNETT - Cases for making change are raised here pretty regularly and in the community and we need to do better. I believe we are all on the same page here in that we need to do much better.

In regard to the establishment of the authority, we are seeking to do a whole range of things but, in particular, build more homes faster. At the homelessness forum I went to last Friday in Hobart with the Leader for the Greens and others, I shared that my ambition was to build more homes faster. If you had one dream, one ambition, what would it be? That was certainly one of them and that is at the top of the list.

We need to be more flexible and agile. We need an authority, a business model that will allow us to do that. The model we have set up will allow us to partner with the key stakeholders to make that difference: the key stakeholders in the building and construction sector to get

those houses out of the ground. We now have an MOU with the building and construction sector to streamline the process, cut the red tape, find the workforce over the coming years through to 2025 and then beyond to get those homes out of the ground more efficiently and faster.

With regard to the community service providers, we are going to partner with them in providing the homes and the services and this will all happen through a whole range of areas. We have already established the reference group, we are meeting regularly and getting their feedback. They have identified not just the opportunities but the challenges in the planning space. We talked about that and it was clearly front and centre at the reference group in terms of residential tenancy and a whole range of areas to streamline the process.

I can assure you that the level of commitment, feedback and support we are getting from the community service providers and others is very encouraging. In answer to your question, the key ingredient with regard to what is different, as I indicated last week, is that we now have an asset base. We have already had the asset base but it has been valued by the Valuer-General at \$3.5 billion and the authority will be able to leverage off that from time to time for specific purposes, consistent with the purposes set out in the bill, to deliver more homes and services to homeless and vulnerable Tasmanians.

I have highlighted the importance of transparency and accountability through the ministerial statement of expectations. I have tabled a draft and am happy for feedback from members and others in the community on that prior to that then being made available to the board and getting that official sign-off in a month or two's time once the board is established, subject to the legislation passing through this parliament.

We have a current system which is based on 1935 legislation. It is antiquated and out of date. We need to move into the twenty-first century and make a contemporary, agile, flexible authority and process that allows us to build those homes faster. We need flexibility in a whole range of elements, including access in funding swiftly to get the job done and accessing that funding to borrow and build new housing supply.

I do not want to ever forget about the here and now. Tonight, with others, I and my parliamentary secretary, Ms Alexander, will be at the Salvation Army sleepout in Hobart. I know they are doing it in Launceston as well and I thank the Salvos for the leadership in promoting the services to care for vulnerable Tasmanians in the here and now today. They need our help and support and we need to provide that flexibility and agility to respond in an optimal way.

With the skills-based board, advice coming through from the community service sector and advice and feedback coming through from the building and construction sector, this is the sort of entity we need. That is why we have set it up the way we have. It will deliver the expertise, skills and experience to deliver on the Government's agenda as set out in the ministerial statement and the corporate plan, and we will talk about that shortly, I am sure. There will be monthly reporting, annual reports, so there will be accountability.

Having those key brains, those key people and those key entities represented around the table, brings expertise and skills to govern and guide the housing outcomes we need and ensuring transparency in public reporting. I know that is important to the member. I might leave it there, and thank you for the question.

Ms O'CONNOR - Thank you, minister. I will say it again: I did attend the housing and homelessness forum on Saturday, also attended by you, the federal minister Julie Collins, and the Lord Mayor on the panel. I left that event feeling more optimistic than I have in this space for at least the last eight years anyway.

I have no doubt, minister, that your intent here is very sound. I guess the issue is that all of those capacities you talked about are things that Housing Tasmania can already do. Housing Tasmania can already partner to deliver projects; that is how Common Ground facilities were built, how Trinity Hill was built, how we got Stainforth Court cleaned up and transformed into Queens Walk. That was the work of a unit within Housing Tasmania, the Housing Innovations Unit, which was very business focused and able to enter into those partnerships with businesses.

I have not read anywhere any ringing endorsement from the community sector for this approach. I read a cautious welcome of a renewed focus on delivering more social and affordable housing and maintaining community supports, but certainly in the submissions from Shelter, TasCOSS and the Tenants' Union of Tasmania, I read a series of reservations about this approach.

I totally agree that the Homes Act is antiquated, and no-one is saying that we should try to tuck up an act that is 80-odd years old, but it would be possible to rework the Homes Act to a contemporary standard for a contemporary Housing Tasmania inside government.

The question to you, minister, is a mechanical question to try to understand how things would be different in the way that Homes Tasmania operates, because as I understand it, it would not take legislative change for Housing Tasmania to be able to borrow. That is a policy decision of Government.

Now that we have established Housing Tasmania's publicly funded asset base has an estimated value of \$3.5 billion, then they would most certainly be able to leverage extra funds. I understand the borrowings would be through TASCORP and there would have to be some Treasurer oversight of those borrowings.

Minister, I will keep the questions really simple. Right now, the Director of Housing can enter into partnerships with housing providers, construction companies and property developers. Right now, there are agreements in place with community service providers to deliver the range of housing and homelessness services.

What is the difference between what is happening right now and what you call partnerships? I cannot see a difference. You would still have to have an authority that had the statutory weight, the advice and the backing of Crown Law to procure, construct, supply, and deliver services. All of those capacities are there. What is the difference?

Even if you just narrow it down to the contracts. There are often three-year contracts, regrettably, with community service providers that deliver specialist homelessness services. How would it work differently from what Housing Tasmania does now, to make sure that we have a front door through Housing Connect and Colony 47? We have our excellent specialist homelessness services providers locked in, on contracts, delivering services, government funded. What would Homes Tasmania be doing to ensure service continuity, presumably with many of the same providers? What is the difference?

Mr BARNETT - Thank you very much for the question. There are different parts to that question and I would like to respond to each of the parts.

Regarding the community service providers. Consultation feedback during the process was broadly supportive of the need for change and broadly supportive of the direction for where we want to go. I draw your attention to the article in the *Mercury* from Colony 47's Danny Sutton about six weeks ago outlining the need for change and the merit of the approach we are taking. We want to work in partnership.

The board is a skills-based board. This has not ever been done before in Tasmania.

Ms O'Connor - That is why we are wary.

Mr BARNETT - I commend Housing Tasmania, represented here in the Chamber, and thank them for their work and support and service, but this is a totally different approach. This is establishing an authority with a skills-based board, with advice and information coming to it from the community services sector and the building construction sector, as set out in the ministerial statement of expectation.

There will be improved partnerships. There will be greater collaboration. It will happen. The entity will be able to lease, transfer, buy, sell and borrow on that \$3.5 billion asset. They cannot do that at the moment. Perhaps there is some legislative change on that matter -

Ms O'Connor - I think it could be done through Treasurer's instruction. I personally think it could. It has been a policy decision of Government.

Mr BARNETT - That may be possible, but we are wrapping all this into the authority to give it that opportunity to do so on terms and conditions. That is a key point.

Another key point is, we have to do things differently. If you have that skills-based board with that information, advice and feedback coming to it, decisions could be made through the authority. I am thinking in particular of urban renewal. I have been involved in recent weeks and months with the four Hobart mayors: the Lord Mayor and then Kingborough, Clarence and Glenorchy. We met again yesterday about the Greater Hobart Plan. A key part of that is urban renewal and infill and the importance of our growing population.

Ms O'Connor - Do not forget urban trees.

Mr BARNETT - Urban trees. Thank you very much for that, member for Clark. Thank you for that encouragement and helping advise the Government.

We are pleased to be able to release in the very near future the Greater Hobart Plan for 30 years. It will include more urban renewal, improved infill, a vision of where we want to go for greater Hobart. This is terrific. State and locals are working together on how that should occur. The authority will be able to work in accordance with that Greater Hobart Plan. There will be involvement in the renewal and development of those key urban areas.

I met with the Victorian Minister for Housing when I was in Melbourne a few weeks ago and toured the Nightingale project in Brunswick. It was done totally differently from just

rolling out those monstrous Housing Commission blocks which are, in hindsight, such a sad decision. They are doing it differently with parks, community areas, children's playgrounds.

I doubt that is just going to happen in Tasmania. This is going to happen in a way that is supported by community stakeholders, supported by the building construction sector. It will be supported because of the brains trust we have in and around that board. We have great ideas and partnerships and collaboration coming through to that board. It will have the power to borrow. It will have the power to lease, transfer, buy and sell. It will be a streamlined approach. I am very encouraged by that. I am very encouraged by the feedback.

We can deliver more houses faster. We have a plan, the most ambitious ever, to get 10 000 homes by 2032, so we need a flexible, agile entity. At the moment we do not have that. We recognise the great service that is provided but we need to do things differently. That is the key point I want to make.

Ms O'Connor - Do you want to talk through the community service providers and how those contracts will be dealt with?

Ms HADDAD (Clark) - Chair, I welcome the opportunity to drill down through the functions of Homes Tasmania and endorse much of what the Leader of the Greens said. I share many of the concerns she raised. They are many of the reasons we are opposing the bill.

I touched on it in my second reading contribution but from my reading of the bill and the research I have done, all the current powers of Housing Tasmania will be moving to Homes Tasmania, but no new powers will be given to Homes Tasmania. In my view there will potentially be added hindrances to the operations of Homes Tasmania that are not currently present in the work of Housing Tasmania.

I agree with the minister that we need to act innovatively and to do things better. We all know countless of Tasmanians who are suffering and who are homeless. I believe that innovative work can be and is being and has been done by Housing Tasmania as part of the State Service. Common Ground is one example. Some of the work with youth foyers is another example.

I have a fundamental worry about moving these functions out of the State Service. They will still be a government statutory body, but I have concerns about moving the responsibility for the provision and supply of housing and the management of housing out of a government agency and into a new body that already has, in my view, the expertise, skills and experience to deliver that work in a different way.

The minister spoke about the need to partner with community service providers and with construction and building companies, but those partnerships already exist and happen routinely. Indeed, the community sector housing supply would not be possible without those partnerships being in place, so those partnerships already exist and are leading to the supply of housing.

The minister spoke about the need of urban renewal to be part of the greater landscape of looking at the future provision of housing and working with the Greater Hobart mayors. It is encouraging that that work is being done, but the planning system and the rules that surround the planning system and interactions with local government - those functions are not moving to Homes Tasmania. The fundamental question I believe has still not been answered by the

minister is how would the functions and powers of Homes Tasmania be any greater than the functions and powers of Housing Tasmania currently?

Ms O'Connor - Except for the borrowing power, which is explicit.

Ms HADDAD - That is a good point. Thank you, Ms O'Connor, because I do have a question about that and it touches on the question I had about the debt profile in clause 10.

The minister has said he will be able to leverage off that asset base which potentially cannot happen now. The question I had earlier was relevant to my question on clause 10 which was about the ability to leverage off the asset base and effectively borrow against the assets the Government owns. How will that debt be serviced? Part of the reason the Commonwealth housing debt was eventually wiped by the former federal government, through the advocacy of Jacqui Lambie predominantly, was the difficulty Tasmania had in servicing that debt. I know in the community services sector housing providers service their debts through tenant rents. Will that be how any new debt that the Government or Homes Tasmania enters into for supply of housing be serviced, or through other ways?

I also had a specific question around the wording of clause 11 - not just clause 11 but throughout the bill - and the concept of low or moderate incomes. I note that that is not defined. I wondered whether there are some parameters around the use of that term 'low to moderate incomes'?

Clause 11 is a key clause because it sets out the functions and powers of the new body. I feel like it was a missed opportunity to continue to speak about the focus needing to be on social and emergency housing as well. I know that is in the minister's mind. I know it is in the ethos of the bill and the ethos of the future new statutory authority, but considering this is the clause dealing with functions and powers of the organisation, a focus on social and emergency housing feels like it is missing to me, from the wording.

There are some thoughts and worries about the functions and powers and the future operations, but those two specific questions were around the parameters and the definition of 'low to moderate incomes' for use in the bill and also how that debt Homes Tasmania will in future be able to enter into through leveraging off the asset base will be serviced.

Mr BARNETT - Thanks very much for the many questions on that clause. I will attempt to respond to those and come back if we need to add to that.

Personally, on the borrowing, as I have said and acknowledged to Senator Lambie as well as minister Jaensch and Michael Sukkar, that has made a huge difference for Tasmania and that money is now being ploughed back into services and support for more homes and homelessness services in Tasmania.

With regard to the debt, there is not an expectation that Homes Tasmania would borrow funds over the long term as most borrowings, I am advised, would be used to support specific projects, and any housing developed by Homes Tasmania does not provide a positive return as the rental income is based on the household's income. That is typically lower than the cost paid to maintain a home's rates, insurance, maintenance, water, property management, et cetera. Therefore borrowing money over the long term to build such homes would worsen Homes

Tasmania's financial position, as larger proportions of future allocations would need to be reallocated to repay the debt and interest. It needs to have the consent of the Treasurer as well.

Leverage is created, I am advised, under the current approach of capital grant funding with the community housing providers. Under that model, the community housing providers borrow funds and fund the projects using those funds, the capital grants and their own equity. That is how those arrangements work with the community service providers. The borrowed funds are repaid from their operational surpluses which are boosted by Commonwealth Rental Assistance payments.

Ms O'Connor - That model will not change with regard to how the community providers cover their debts?

Mr BARNETT - Yes, and we appreciate the Commonwealth's rental support through that.

Ms O'Connor - Can you confirm that nothing will change about the way that community housing providers leverage, borrow and repay?

Mr BARNETT - I will get to that in a moment. I am advised the payment of Commonwealth Rental Assistance is the key difference between the public and community housing models. It means that while the public model runs at a loss, the community housing one can generate surpluses.

With regard to community service providers, I am advised that Homes Tasmania will not be responsible to manage the service agreements with the community service providers but the agreements will be managed by the relevant agencies across government. One example would be an agreement to operate Neighbourhood Houses. Homes Tasmania may provide facilities such as Neighbourhood Houses, meeting rooms or consulting rooms under lease to those providers.

Ms O'Connor - Hang on, Neighbourhood Houses belong to the state, not to community housing providers.

Mr BARNETT - Yes, that is again across government. Those agencies across government are providing those services.

Ms O'Connor - Who will manage the Better Housing Futures contracts?

Ms Haddad - They will still be managed by Homes Tasmania, surely?

Mr BARNETT - I am dealing with the debt and the community service providers or housing providers. I think I have covered that.

I can assist the members with regard to the collaboration the authority will have with business, local councils and government bodies. They will be working with them on a consistent and ongoing basis, with local councils to develop more above-shop apartments and release more land for residential development, with government agencies to better utilise government-owned buildings, with the not-for-profit sector to deliver more social housing and

housing support services, and with local businesses to deliver innovative housing solutions like prefabricated modular dwellings.

We are doing the tiny houses campaign at the moment and that is progressing well. The authority will also work with local hospitality providers to provide emergency crisis accommodation and private property owners to deliver more affordable private rentals. The collaborative focus is certainly essential to achieving our objectives. If you want to flesh out some further questions, I am happy to assist.

Ms O'Connor - I have run out of opportunities to speak on this clause but we still have not got to the bottom of how those contracts with community service providers will be managed and who will manage them.

Ms HADDAD - That is my main concern too. We talked about it last week when I was asking questions about the definitions part of the bill. I was feeling like I was becoming a bit of a pedant but I was asking questions about Homes Tasmania's role in providing community support services. The minister clarified that the authority will not be responsible for providing community support services, for example, mental health, Neighbourhood Houses or the population health contract that the Government at the moment manages, but Homes Tasmania would have the responsibility of providing that premises.

The question that is still unanswered - if I just step back a minute and think about it from a whole-of-government perspective. The government provides funding to the community services sector through the Department of Communities, Department of Health, DPAC, State Growth, through a range of different government agencies that provide funding to the community services sector. The minister spoke a bit about that with Neighbourhood Houses, so Homes Tasmania might have a role in providing the asset for the premises, but not in managing the contracts.

Right now, Housing Tasmania manages contracts with Centacare Evolve, Salvation Army housing, Mission Australia Housing, Housing Connect, Colony 47 and everybody else that provides housing and housing support services.

The question is, will Homes Tasmania be the contract manager for all those community services, community sector contracts, that exist now and are managed by Housing Tasmania?

Mr BARNETT - I think there are slight cross-purposes here, because we have community service providers and community housing providers.

Ms O'Connor - We want to understand both.

Mr BARNETT - Yes, all right. With the community service providers, I gave an example of Neighbourhood Houses where Homes Tasmania, going forward, provide the asset and might lease premises, but then government, through Communities Tasmania or the Department of Premier and Cabinet, provides funding support for Neighbourhood Houses to then do the good works that they do. That is a community service provider. That is different from a community -

Ms O'Connor - Are we going to have different arrangements for management of Neighbourhood Houses? Will there be different arrangements in place in future for the management and operation of Neighbourhood Houses as well?

Mr BARNETT - Let me be very clear: not to my knowledge. The advice is a resolute no. Please do not get confused with community service providers - which I shared an example of with Neighbourhood Houses - and community service operators like Centacare Evolve, Anglicare, CatholicCare and -

Ms O'Connor - And the community housing providers.

Mr BARNETT - Yes, community housing providers.

Ms O'Connor - Community housing providers and the entities that deliver specialist homelessness and housing supports.

Mr BARNETT - Yes.

Ms O'Connor - How will the new Homes Tasmania interact with those two cohorts of service delivery and housing supply?

Mr BARNETT - My understanding is that they stay the same. They continue to operate in the same way, but let me double check. Yes. The answer is yes, that is confirmed.

I will draw your attention to the clause in the bill in a minute, but just to clarify, Community services, as defined in the bill - for example mental health services, Neighbourhood Houses - are not the same as community housing providers.

Community Services are funded by other agencies, so there is no change there. The other agencies continue to do what they are doing. They might change their arrangements, but that is for other agencies to determine in due course. That is separate to community housing providers. The community housing providers provide the houses. There is no change with Homes Tasmania going forward.

To assist, there is a definition of a community support service in section 5 of the bill, and a definition of a community support provider on page 13 of the bill. Hopefully that is available to peruse as well.

Clause 11 agreed to.

Clause 12 -
Delegation

Ms HADDAD - Minister, could you explain your expectations around delegation and how it will operate once Homes Tasmania is up and running - whether your expectation is that your delegation as minister will move to the board, or whether the board's delegation will move to the CEO, whether different directors will be able to hold different delegations? It is a genuine question wanting to know a little more about your expectations around how delegations will operate.

Mr BARNETT - Thank you. Clause 12 relating to delegation permits Homes Tasmania to delegate the performance or exercise of its function or powers, except the power of delegation and the power to borrow money. As minister, I certainly do not intend to move delegations to the board, but it is important to note that I will remain responsible.

I am not sure if I can add to that, but if you have any further questions, feel free.

Ms HADDAD - Is this the section of the bill that will allow the board to delegate their responsibilities to the CEO, and further, potentially, to other people who work in Homes Tasmania, or is that covered somewhere else in the bill?

I might be mixed up between different sections that deal with delegations.

Mr BARNETT - I am looking at clause 12 and seeking clarification. The board would need to authorise financial delegations within the organisation, yes that is right. The board does remain responsible. I think the clause states pretty clearly that it needs to be in writing, to a person who is specified in the instrument, that the performance and exercise of any functions or powers of Homes Tasmania under this act.

Clause 12 is the delegation clause. The answer to your question is yes.

Clause 12 agreed to.

Clause 13 -

Homes Tasmania to comply with Treasurer's Instructions

Ms O'CONNOR - Minister, it would be good to have, on the record, a step-through as to how this would work:

Treasurer's Instructions issued under the *Financial Management Act 2016* apply to Homes Tasmania as if it were an Agency within the meaning of that Act.

Are Treasurer's instructions being prepared?

I understand you are not the Treasurer, and it is slightly unfair to ask you this, but presuming you and the Director of Housing have had some conversations with the Treasurer and people from treasury and finance, what should we expect to see in a Treasurer's instruction to the new statutory authority?

Would it relate to the power to borrow specifically, or would there be other elements to Treasurer instructions that guide Homes Tasmania in the procurement and engagement in contracts with providers?

You have to give up the darts, Mr Tucker.

Mr Tucker - No, it is all the fibres in these things.

Ms O'CONNOR - Sure. Masks are bad for you.

Mr Tucker - We have to get rid of the masks.

Ms O'CONNOR - Feel free to catch COVID-19 again.

Mr BARNETT - Homes Tasmania is not subject to the Financial Management Act 2016, but it does provide that the Treasurer's instructions issued under the Financial Management Act 2016 will apply to Homes Tasmania as if it were an agency in the meaning of the act. I think that covers that. Clause 13(2) authorises the Treasurer to modify the application of the Treasurer's instructions to Homes Tasmania. The current Treasurer's instructions relate to issues such as financial control, financial reporting and budget matters. How that may roll out in time is a matter for the Treasurer in consultation with the board and/or the CEO.

Ms HADDAD - I had a question also about the Treasurer's instructions. You touched on it then, minister, that there can be modifications to Treasurer's instructions or even exemptions from Treasurer's instructions.

Are there any existing modifications or exemptions that Housing Tasmania relies upon that will be transferred across to Homes Tasmania? Will Homes Tasmania continue to enjoy any of those modifications or exemptions that it might require to do its work?

Mr BARNETT - I am advised that there is nothing current that would transfer over to the new Homes Tasmania board or the CEO of the new Homes Tasmania.

The Treasurer's instructions would apply as and when appropriate in setting out financial control, financial management, particular arrangements, procurement measures, but there is nothing there now that would transfer over. That is the advice I have received. That would be a matter for the Treasurer in consultation with the board and Homes Tasmania.

Ms O'CONNOR - Are you saying, minister, that the Treasurer has the authority to enter into direct discussions and negotiations with the statutory authority in relation to Treasurer's instructions? Is the Treasurer like a de facto shareholder in Homes Tasmania?

Minister, I heard what you said before that there is no direct transfer of existing Treasurer's instructions that are with Housing Tasmania to Homes Tasmania. They have to be redrafted and agreed. Is this the part of the act that fundamentally will enable the new statutory authority to borrow? I know that there are other parts of the act which permit borrowing. What sort of Treasurer's instruction do you foresee being issued to Homes Tasmania? Similar to the ones that it has now; fundamentally different from what it has now? What are we talking about here in terms of Treasurer's instructions?

Mr BARNETT - This mostly relates to management procurement arrangements. It does not relate to borrowing because that is in a separate section of the bill. It is more about financial management procurement. The Treasurer would go through the responsible minister. At the moment it is me, but whoever the minister is at the time, it would go through the minister.

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

HOMES TASMANIA BILL 2022 (No. 35)

In Committee

Resumed from above.

Clause 13 agreed to.

Clause 14 -

Homes Tasmania Board

Ms O'CONNOR - This is the clause that establishes the Homes Tasmania Board and it says that :

- (1) The Minister is to appoint a board of directors of Homes Tasmania that consists of no more than 6 and no fewer than 4 members.

I move - That page 32, clause 14(1) be amended

Leave out '6 and no fewer than 4'

Insert instead '8 and no fewer than 6'.

I acknowledge that the minister has an alternative amendment proposed which no doubt we will get to shortly, but this is an important amendment from our point of view. They are all important but this goes to how functional and able the Homes Tasmania board will be to meet the objectives of this act and the expectations of this parliament but, more importantly, the Tasmanian people.

We do not understand why all the community sector submissions which pointed out the board will be too small have been ignored. We would like to understand from the minister why Shelter Tasmania, the peak organisation for housing and homelessness, has been ignored when it says in its submission on the draft bill:

The skills appropriate to provide Board level guidance and governance on housing and homelessness services need to be specifically described (section 14). The current reference to 'skills and experience in community development or welfare' ... is too general and could be consistent with a Board lacking any real expertise and experience in homelessness services, housing support or tenancy management for vulnerable and very low-income tenants ...

The number of Board members in the draft bill, (4-6 including the Chair) is insufficient given the broad remit of the new Housing Tasmania.

which we now know is intended to be Homes Tasmania.

The Board could include skills such as finance, legal, construction, residential development, energy efficient homes and organisational

management as well as the necessary experience in homelessness services, not-for-profit housing and tenancy management and support for vulnerable and very low-income households. A Board of four members including the Chair could not cover these areas. We suggest an appropriately skilled Board would need at least 6 members, excluding the Chair. For comparison, see the range of skills listed in section 37A(2) of the *Forest Practices Act 1985*.

Shelter Tasmania has called for the size of the board to be expanded. So too has TasCOSS, whose submission said:

The number of Board members in the draft Bill (4-6 including the Chair) appears insufficient given the broad remit of the new Housing Tasmania.

The submission goes through the skills that will be required and it says:

The Board must also retain the necessary experience in homelessness services, not-for-profit housing, tenancy management and supporting vulnerable and very low income households. A Board of four members including the Chair as permitted by the draft Bill could not cover these areas. We therefore believe a Board of 6-8 members will be needed.

The Tenants' Union of Tasmania has also apparently been ignored on this issue. It says in its submission that:

The Bill currently provides for a board of directors 'that consists of no more than six, and not less than four, members.' We do not believe that a board with four members is capable of having the requisite knowledge to carry out its tasks. It is likely that the board will require skills and expertise in finance, law, governance, construction and residential development.

... we strongly believe there should be representation from two persons with expertise in homelessness and residential tenancy either through lived experience or having researched or worked with the homeless and with residential tenants. ... we strongly recommend that membership of the Board is increased to 6 - 8 members.

You have the peak organisation that represents tenants in Tasmania, the peak community sector body, the Tasmanian Council of Social Services, and the peak housing and homelessness organisation, Shelter Tasmania, all as one on this issue, minister, acknowledging the weight of the responsibility that this parliament, should it pass this legislation, will place on the shoulders of the board of Homes Tasmania.

We do not want to be in a position where we are setting this entity up to fail. If you have a board that can be constituted of four members, including the chair, it will fail, because that is not enough expertise around the table to ensure good governance and that the objectives of the act are met.

Minister, I see that your amendment - I will just read it in - is a proposal to leave out '6 and no fewer than 4', and insert instead '7 and no fewer than 4'. With respect, that is a miserly concession.

Ms Haddad - It would still only be four.

Ms O'CONNOR - Exactly. It does not take away the issue that has been raised by community sector organisations which have more collective experience and knowledge of housing and homelessness in this state than all of us in here put together, including, I think, the people from Housing Tasmania.

Minister, I believe you should accept our amendment in good faith because it has been put forward by the organisations that want this legislation and the new structure to succeed. They are not convinced that this is the path forward but they want it to work. We all want it to work. If you are pig-headed about this and just vote it down, you will find that you will be ambushed again upstairs, just as you were on the anti-protest bill. You will be ambushed again because the community sector will lobby members in the other place who will see the sense of what they are saying, because none of us want Homes Tasmania to fail.

Given that the Government does not have the numbers upstairs and I am sure Labor has been listening to the concerns raised by community sector organisations around the board's membership and make-up, you could save yourself that embarrassment and accept this amendment in good faith and it will be one less issue you will have to deal with upstairs.

Ms HADDAD - I can indicate that Labor will be supporting the amendment put forward by the Greens to increase the size of the board. I will not reread into the *Hansard* the statements made by Shelter Tasmania, the Tenants' Union and TasCOSS that the Leader of the Greens has read in, other than to say that I have also read and acknowledged those concerns and I support those concerns.

I said in my second reading contribution that I have misgivings about the make-up of the board, including construction companies and private sector interests. I have a fundamental opposition to the fact that that is the case.

I acknowledge that the minister has made a change to this clause since the exposure draft of the legislation to include the need for sector expertise. That is one positive. The change notwithstanding, I am opposed to the bill. I have concerns about the board that I will come to later in the debate.

One question I had for the minister was about the make-up of the board. Acknowledging that clause 14(2)(c), sets out that 'skills and experience in the provision or the management of housing and homelessness services' will be one of the skills required, I would like more assurance from the minister, on the record, that this will be mandatory, and that it would not be possible for the board to operate without somebody who has that sector experience - and also whether it is anticipated that this might be someone who has in the past worked in the sector, or is currently working in the sector.

One of the questions I asked the minister in Estimates was specifically about that - about the need for sector experience to be represented on a board like this, and also for the lived experience of people who have the experience of homelessness to be represented on a board like this.

Prior to coming to parliament, I served as a volunteer on the boards of several community sector organisations in the health space, Women's Health Tasmania and TasCAHRD, and I was

a staff member in the alcohol and drugs council at the time we changed the constitution of that organisation to include board members who had lived experience accessing alcohol and drug services.

The benefit of having that lived experience represented on the board was immeasurable, because while we all have our skills in this place, people working in the agency have amazing and specific skill sets. People in the sector do as well. My personal view is that if you really want to know if a system is working well or not, you talk to the users of that system.

The minister made it clear at Estimates that this was not going to be the case. There would not be somebody with lived experience of homelessness actively sought to sit on the board, which I think is a shame. I invite the minister to give us information about how that lived experience of people who have been homeless - or are homeless, or accessed homelessness services - will be heard by the board.

I might come to some other questions as well. I have probably spoken a little on the clause, but also on the amendment. I reiterate we will support the amendment. A governance board of seven - which is what the Government has put forward in their alternative amendment - is a very small board. A board of six - with the potential of being only four - is a very small number of people around the table making very significant decisions. I would prefer to see a larger board. I recognise that is something that was called for by the sector.

We will be supporting the Greens amendment. If I have the opportunity, I will come back to some other questions about the board later in the debate on this clause.

Mr BARNETT - Thank you to the members for their goodwill and intent to make this bill work and make the authority work so they can deliver for Tasmanians in need. It is appreciated. There are a number of things I need to flesh out with regard to the board and this amendment.

Like Ms Haddad, I had a number of years on City Mission in Launceston, and I appreciated the honour of supporting them in that way on the board. I have also volunteered for more than 12 years at my local church, helping and caring for homeless and vulnerable Tasmanians on about a monthly basis. I have learnt a lot in that space and continue to learn a lot in this role.

The board make-up is partially accepted in the views that have been expressed. In terms of an increase, I will now foreshadow my amendments on behalf of the Government, to take into account the views that have been expressed.

In clause 14, proposed subsection (1):

Leave out '6 and no fewer than 4'.

Insert instead '7 and no fewer than 4'.

Speaking more broadly to the amendment that pushes it to eight: on behalf of the Government, we cannot accept that. We think it is too large, but I appreciate the intent.

Ms O'Connor - It is up to eight, a minimum of six.

Mr BARNETT - Yes, up to eight.

Ms O'Connor - It is not too large.

Mr BARNETT - Let me just flesh that out. I appreciate where you are coming from. We have listened to Shelter Tasmania. We have amended clause 14(2), to take on board that feedback, particularly with respect to skills in subsections (2)(a), (b) and (c). You will see that is a requirement. Let us be clear that it is not a representative board. There is a bit of confusion in the community, perhaps, but this is not a representative board. It is a skills-based board, and it is important that good governance does apply. We have created those advisory committees, which have been established through my statement of expectations, and that will happen.

With the board, it is important to ensure a skills-based board governs Homes Tasmania, so we can leverage the knowledge, skills and experience needed to provide the strategic direction of oversight to address those housing challenges. The board will be responsible for preparing a corporate plan each year, covering a three-year outlook which will outline the authority's objective, policies and programs, the strategies and targets for achieving those objectives, and the authority's financial plans.

The board will oversee how the authority exercises its functions and powers to ensure its business affairs are managed and conducted in accordance with sound business practice, and in a manner that achieves the objectives in the corporate plan.

The authority must act in accordance with legislation and the ministerial statement of expectations, as well as any other ministerial directions.

It will prepare an annual report at the end of the financial year, which will detail the authority's performance in relation to its corporate plan. That will be tabled in the parliament for scrutiny and review.

The corporate plan and the annual report will be tabled here in the parliament for scrutiny and oversight.

I have mentioned earlier that it will be subject to budget Estimates. This means its executive management will be available, with the responsible minister, at the Estimates table for scrutiny by members of this place while Estimates allocations are negotiated each year. This year, up to three hours was allocated to this portfolio for scrutiny. I thought that might be helpful to note, just so you are aware.

In the usual course of events, the CEO and the chair would be available for scrutiny and expected to attend those processes. That is in line with usual Estimates processes each year following the state Budget.

Ms Haddad - Is that during regular Estimates, not during GBE Estimates?

Mr BARNETT - No. Regular Estimates after the Budget each year.

As I said, on skills required by the board, changes have been made in response to that feedback. The bill makes the minister responsible for ensuring that the directors appointed to board together possess those skills in subsections 2(a), (b) and (c).

A key component in guiding board decisions is the ability to recognise when specialised knowledge and advice is required to meet our housing needs. Homes Tasmania will need to undertake projects that will often require specialised knowledge and expertise.

Homes Tasmania will also be responsible for providing specialist housing and homelessness services. It is crucial that these complex services, and the policies and programs that support them, are well informed, designed and delivered in the most effective way possible to meet the needs of those receiving them.

That is why we changed the bill to provide the board with the power to establish committees to provide advice on specific matters.

A number of the stakeholders have provided feedback during consultation on the draft bill raised that need to ensure the board has access to timely and expert advice as well as lived experience where appropriate. This is why we included this provision in 14(4) -

Schedule 1 has effect in respect of -

- (a) the Homes Tasmania directors; and
- (b) the meetings of the Homes Tasmania Board.

I have specified the two committees in my statement of ministerial expectations. I expect the board to establish, to inform itself. I have also specified that I expect those committees to meet at least half of the required board meetings each year. That can be raised if the board is not engaging in these committees to my satisfaction.

I recognise the importance of having appropriate skills to guide the organisation and accept the intent of this amendment. Hence, my amendment to increase six to seven. A large board that can impact the efficient and effective decision making, which, in the case of Homes Tasmania could impact on the delivery of more social and affordable homes for Tasmanians. Speaking in support of what I have just said and my own amendment, the board of Hydro Tasmania and TasNetworks, both very significant Government business enterprises in Tasmania, managing very significant asset values, operate with boards of five. Five people on those boards -

Ms O'Connor - Forestry Tasmania has six.

Mr BARNETT - Sustainable Timber Tasmania?

Ms O'Connor - No, that is not its real name.

Mr BARNETT - I think we are concurring on that, five or six. There are a couple that have seven. I have taken on board the feedback during the second reading from Shelter Tas and a few of the stakeholders, but we are not willing to go eight, because we think that is -

Ms O'Connor - Why do you not change the four to five?

Mr BARNETT - We think that is going a little too far.

Ms O'Connor - Why do you not show real good faith and change the four to five?

Mr BARNETT - I am showing a lot of good faith here and have responded. That is where we are at the moment. The large organisations, Hydro and TasNetworks, both have boards of five. I will draw that to your attention and I appreciate your feedback.

Ms O'CONNOR - Minister, I hope and pray that upstairs they fix up this clause so that the board has sufficient capacity. I take on board what you say about reference groups and being able to reach out - if you like - for advice and assistance. It is a bit different, I think, from a Hydro Tasmania board. A Hydro Tasmania board is there to ensure that Hydro functions and continues to generate and deliver electricity. It is quite a singular objective that that board has. Hydro Tasmania has to operate as a business, comply with Commonwealth and state laws and all that. With Homes Tasmania, we are talking about a more complicated social objective which is, at the risk of woman-splaining to you, which I do not want to do, about the delivery of social and affordable housing, supporting the community housing sector to grow, the delivery of specialist homelessness services, as well as a kind of overarching responsibility for creating liveable communities. The complexity of the work that the Homes Tasmania board will have to do, I would argue, is more than a Hydro Tasmania board.

Obviously, I have never sat on a corporate board and I am pretty sure I never will. Given what the community sector is saying about the need for a range of skills to be represented on this board, the points Ms Haddad made about being able to engage with people with a lived experience of housing stress and homelessness is really important. I am not sure, minister, why you did not give slightly more than a millimetre and go from five to seven. You would have comforted other members of this House, first that you are listening to the community sector, second that you are seeing commonsense, and that we have functional boards with Hydro Tasmania and TasNetworks with five members on them, including the chair. It is sort of a board of four with the chair, even though they all make up the board.

Mr Barnett - Can I respond?

Ms O'CONNOR - Of course. You are the minister, but I only get two cracks at this particular part.

Mr Barnett - I think you will appreciate my response.

Ms O'CONNOR - Okay. We are still going to move our amendment, but I am very interested in your response if you think I will appreciate it.

Mr BARNETT - I have listened very carefully and I put a lot of credit and faith in our community service providers. In my contribution I said I appreciate the intent and good will you and Ms Haddad have demonstrated. We are trying to get the best possible outcome for Tasmanians who are vulnerable. We need to ensure that we have a robust, well experienced, well skilled board. It is set out in the bill, so there is no change there. We shook hands a few days ago when we were working through those first few amendments on a range of matters. I am happy to increase from four to five -

Ms O'Connor - Wow.

Ms Haddad - That is great. That is really good.

Mr BARNETT - and make it five to seven. It does not mean a massive amount as in four to seven, five to seven. I cannot envisage the board being at four. I can envisage it being between five and seven. I have amended my amendment and I pass that to the Clerk.

Ms O'Connor - I will just dispatch our amendment first.

Mr BARNETT - That is my Government amendment. Whether you want to respond to that, or if you are happy with that, it is up to you.

Ms O'Connor - I will respond by a way of interjection. I would not mind our amendment being dealt with, and then we can go to the minister's and accept that amendment.

Mr BARNETT - Mr Deputy Chair, I move -

That clause 14(1) be amended by omitting '4' and inserting '5'.

Ms O'Connor - Thank you, minister, but I do not think my amendment -

Mr Barnett - Do we need to deal with the Greens' amendment first or my amendment?

Ms O'Connor - I removed it and then you moved on. I am just seeking guidance. I think you have not amended our amendment. Yours is a stand-alone.

Ms Haddad - Yours is a new amendment.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIR - The question is that the minister's amendment to the amendment be agreed to.

Ms O'CONNOR - Chair, point of order, I am now officially confused. I got up on this clause and moved an amendment -

Ms Haddad - We have to vote on that amendment.

Ms O'CONNOR - Then the minister talked about his amendment, but I did not understand he had amended my amendment. His was a separate amendment.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIR - Ms O'Connor, the minister moved his amendment to your amendment.

Ms Haddad - We need to vote twice because there are two different amendments.

Ms O'Connor - I did not realise you had amended our amendment, minister. I thought yours was a standalone.

Ms Haddad - No, he needs to put his own amendment.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIR - That is what we are voting on.

Ms Haddad - But the minister's amendment is not an amendment; it is a second amendment.

Ms O'Connor - It is an alternative amendment. I am not fussed. I just want to understand what is happening.

Mr DEPUTY CHAIR - The question is that the minister's amendment to the amendment be agreed to.

Ms Haddad - What is the minister amending?

Ms O'Connor - What is the minister's amendment to the amendment?

Mr DEPUTY CHAIR - It is that:

The minister is to appoint a board of directors of Homes Tasmania that consists of no more than 7 and no fewer than 5 members.

Amendment to the amendment agreed to.

Amendment, as amended, agreed to.

Ms HADDAD - Thank you for your guidance through that slightly confusing voting progress. I want to acknowledge that that is a positive sign of goodwill from the minister that you do not see every day in this place. I was happy to support the Greens amendment. The way the minister has listened to that feedback from both the Greens, the Labor Party and the community sector is a very refreshing thing to see in this place and we have reached a positive outcome that the board will now be a board of between five and seven members. That does not happen every day in here. I for one am pleased to acknowledge that is very good thing we have seen the minister do today, so thank you for that.

I have two other questions around the make-up of the board. One is a bit of a foundational question. When you were planning for the establishment of Homes Tasmania and thinking about the legal structures you would put in place to replace Housing Tasmania, what thought was given to the board of governance, which is the way you have gone, versus having an advisory board or a different governance structure?

I am interested in some of the policy thinking behind the decision the Government landed on in regard to creating a governance board to sit over the work of Homes Tasmania as opposed to any other kind of governance structure such as an advisory board or something else. Also does the minister have in his anticipation any idea of what the board's pay is likely to be?

Mr BARNETT - I thank the member for her questions and I think I can answer both. We have thought long and hard about the structure of the authority and the board and that is why we landed on a skills-based board. We thought a representational board was not the way to go but we made sure through the minister's statement of expectations that their views would be represented. They are absolutely honoured and respected and the community service providers do a fantastic job and I have so much admiration for them. They go beyond the call. They are made up of people of goodwill. They would not be in the game if they were not people of goodwill who wanted to care for their fellow Tasmanians. I honour them and admire them, not to mention all the volunteers involved. A few days ago, I was at Hobart Mall after parliament and a St Vinnie's van was down there and they had the medical van as well making

medical services available. It was fantastic, so I acknowledge the volunteers as well. They are wonderful people.

As to the governance arrangements, we did think long and hard about that. We have set up those committees to report to the board and get feedback for the board members. We have thought about the corporate plan, the annual reports and the importance of transparency and openness. We have thought about the relationship with the minister and government still having a role in terms of policy direction and giving direction from time to time. All those things were taken into account.

I can also advise in terms of funding, based on the feedback we have had through the department and based on advice, the new authority will continue to receive Housing-related funding previously committed to the Department of Communities Tasmania through the budget of \$204 million this year and \$438 million over the course of the forward Estimates.

As to board fees, that is being sized by the Department of Premier and Cabinet so the chair, I am advised, would have a role determined at a maximum rate of \$60 749, directors have been determined at a maximum rate of \$34 080 and the board would meet a minimum of six times a year but I imagine there will be many more times than that. We have just set a maximum of five to seven board members, so if you add all of that together it depends on how many board members there are, but it would be well over the \$200 000 for board fees each year.

I can advise that Watermark Search has been appointed to advertise for those board members and I think the cut-off date for those applications or expressions of interest to be on that board was in the last few days. I can also advise that there has been a lot of good interest in those roles and I believe there is going to be a selection panel. There will be an independent chair appointed to that selection panel but it will be made of very senior people across the State Service, including from the Department of Premier and Cabinet, Department of Communities, and State Growth to appoint those board members subject to the agreement of the minister, no doubt in consultation with the Cabinet. I hope that assists.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 14, as amended, agreed to.

Clause 15 -

Functions and powers of Homes Tasmania Board

Ms O'CONNOR - Minister, are you able to explain why, in the functions and powers of the Homes Tasmania board, that they are to meet the objects of the act and can do all things necessary and convenient to perform its functions under the act but there is no reference here to that social imperative that is threaded all through the Homes Act 1935 and is, in the most part, threaded through this act?

Perhaps the minister could explain why there is not a similarly worded element to this clause to what we get at the front, which is that the objects of Homes Tasmania, or the purposes of the act, are to increase the opportunities that enable people to satisfy their basic human need for housing. Why was the decision made not to thread that social imperative through the work of the board?

Mr BARNETT - Thank you for the question. That is because clause 10 - and the purposes of the legislation - set up the legislation. An absolutely foundational message came through clause 10 and the purposes of the legislation. We took the feedback on the board, and we did make changes. We had a good discussion about those housing principles that are set out in clause 10. They are fundamental.

Everything that sits underneath that - all the operational structures, the functions, responsibilities, operational matters of the CEO and Homes Tasmania - must meet the purposes of Homes Tasmania, the bill.

It is fundamental. It is a fair question, but that particular clause has to be consistent with the purposes. That is another reason the 1935 legislation is antiquated, out of date. You do not want to keep repeating the fact that it has to be consistent with these objectives all the way through the act.

We have one key part to the legislation, and then the other key part is the operational nature of Homes Tasmania - how it is operated.

Clause 15 is the functions and powers of the Homes Tasmania board, and the clause transfers the powers of the Director of Housing to the board. The board must act in accordance with a statement of expectations. Delegations are allowed, and advisory committees may be established.

The other thing to emphasise is that the role of the ministerial statement of expectations is important. I put it on the record. I am happy for feedback on that. That obviously has significant influence over the board and where it is going, and its role - and again, the role of the advisory committee.

It is really more operational, whereas the clause 10 that we gave a good going-over a few days ago really is the key to the purpose of the Homes Tasmania.

Clause 15 agreed to.

Clause 16 agreed to.

Clause 17 -

Director must disclose interest

Ms HADDAD - My questions on clause 17 go back to my contribution on the second reading around the change in definition of 'housing provider' to include commercial players - construction companies and potentially real estate agencies. I have a fundamental, philosophical objection to that.

I hasten to add that I understand the importance of partnerships with private sector entities to increase supply of housing. I understand and know that those partnerships already happen, are well established, and could continue to happen even without the redefinition of a housing provider to expand the scope of a housing provider to include those commercial players.

That is a preamble to my questions on clause 17. It is clear that construction companies that build houses and real estate agencies could potentially be appointed as directors of Homes

Tasmania. They could also be the companies that are beneficiaries of that work. Potentially, they could be building homes on behalf of Homes Tasmania, while also sitting as a board director.

This section makes clear that they would need to disclose any material interests. That is a pretty standard expectation of any board of governance. If you have a conflict of interest or a material interest in something that is being discussed at that meeting, you need to disclose that interest.

Schedule 1 requires a director who has disclosed such an interest to absent themselves from the discussion or decisions. That is good, healthy and good governance. However, there is potentially a kind of 'out' for that very situation. In schedule 1, clause 8, the Homes Tasmania board could potentially determine that those provisions do not apply:

- (1) Unless the Homes Tasmania Board otherwise determines, a Homes Tasmania director who has made a disclosure required under section 17(1) in relation to a matter must not -
 - (a) be present during any deliberation of the Homes Tasmania Board in relation to the matter; or
 - (b) take part in any decision of the Homes Tasmania Board in relation to the matter.

On first reading, that should satisfy me that if a board director was also the owner of a construction company that stood to gain a big contract from Homes Tasmania, they would not be able to sit in the room making that decision to award themselves that work.

However, I am a little worried about the beginning of the expression of that part of schedule 1, which would potentially allow the Homes Tasmania Board to ignore that. 'Ignore' is not the right word, but unless they otherwise determine. That implies they could determine that it is okay for that person to remain in the room and to potentially be making decisions to award a Homes Tasmania contract to build houses to their very own company.

The minister knows what I am trying to get at here. I want some comfort from the minister around potential conflicts of interest, particularly considering - notwithstanding that the board size has been increased - that it is still a relatively small board. It is still a relatively small sector, and a pretty small construction sector too.

There are many opportunities in a small state like Tasmania for there to be lots of connections and potential conflicts when it comes to awarding government contracts. I invite the minister to give some comfort to the parliament and the community about how potential conflicts like that might be handled.

Mr BARNETT - Thank you for the contribution and remarks on that clause. As minister and the Government, we take this matter seriously. A director must disclose their interests as set out in the clause. A fine not exceeding 100 penalty units is applicable if a director breaches this section. Under schedule 1, which was referred to by the member, the minister may remove the director from office if they breach this section.

There are checks and balances right through this legislation. I am reflecting on your observation that there is a philosophical view being expressed. We probably do not share that, so we can agree to disagree there.

They are entitled to be on the board, as long as they manage the conflict of interest and the board is fully aware of that conflict of interest. Just because they are from the private sector does not mean they cannot be on the board. Because they are involved in real estate does not mean they cannot be on the board. Because they are involved in some history and background in the property construction sector does not mean they cannot be on the board.

Yes, the board directors are appointed by the minister. They hold their office on the condition of that appointment. The directors are appointed for not more than three years, and may only be reappointed for two further consecutive terms. They cease to hold office when they die, resign or are removed.

I add this into the record for this place and the other place. The minister may remove a director for a variety of reasons, including where the director is absent from three consecutive board meetings without a reasonable excuse, becomes bankrupt, is convicted of a crime punishable by 12 months imprisonment or more; is convicted of an offence under the Homes Tasmania Act; fails to disclose a material personal interest; has benefited from or claims to be entitled to a benefit from a contract made by or on behalf of the board, with limited exceptions; and finally, is unable to perform their duties adequately or competently. The board must keep accurate minutes of its meetings and where the director discloses a material personal interest in a matter, they must not be present during deliberations on the matter or take part in any decisions about the matter.

You raise some fair concerns but I hope I have alleviated some of those concerns, particularly in terms of how that conflict of interest is presented or potential personal interest is represented.

There are disclosure requirements. I am obviously a former fellow of the Australian Institute of Company Directors, and I know the importance of fiduciary duty. I have also been on the City Mission board and other boards and it is really important that we get this right. Those responsibilities are becoming more and more onerous for directors in this twenty-first century, as I think they should be.

Directors must disclose the nature of any material personal interest in matters being considered or about to be considered by the board. The duty applies in all matters except where the interest only arises because the director is a State Service officer or an employee, or where the matter relates to a contract for goods or services ordinarily supplied by the authority. Where a director discloses a material personal interest in a matter, they must not be present during those deliberations, as I said earlier, and the minister may remove that director from the board if they fail to disclose a material personal interest. The disclosure obligation is enforceable by way of a fine.

I concur that those checks and balances are really important. We are on the same page there, but you cannot not have people on the board just because they are from some particular sector, some private business, or some private background. I wanted to share those remarks and I hope that assists the Committee.

Clause 17 agreed to.

Clauses 18 to 21 agreed to.

Clause 22 -

Staff of Homes Tasmania

Ms HADDAD - I either touched on this in my second reading contribution or possibly asked questions at Estimates; I cannot quite recall where I asked this before. The minister made some comments that staff would remain State Service employees and I want to drill down on that a little bit more.

I want to ask the minister more questions around how people would be employed by Homes Tasmania and specifically whether people will remain on the award they are currently employed under. I understand that there would be some employees who are under the HAHS award and some under the State Service award. Homes Tasmania does not exist yet, so it will not be a signatory to those awards. Will Homes Tasmania need to become a signatory to those awards? Also, how long will the conditions of the State Service Act apply to those people moving across to Homes Tasmania?

The reason that this is in my mind is the experience of what happened to TAFE Tasmania staff when those changes were made. They were given similar advice that the State Service Act would continue to apply, but once that transition began, my understanding is that there was a period of time for the State Service Act conditions to transfer across to those staff members who are now under an agreement with Fair Work Australia, and any new people employed by TAFE Tasmania will be now employed under that new agreement. Is it anticipated that it will be a similar transition for Homes Tasmania staff and they will move across to a Fair Work Australia agreement, or will they remain on the awards they are currently on? If so, how would that transition be managed?

Mr BARNETT - Thanks very much for the question. I think it came up during the second reading debate, so I appreciate the remarks of the member. Clause 22 sets out the appointment of the employees for Homes Tasmania. I think I said on the second reading there will not be any job losses and our plan is to focus on strengthening our housing effort. We will transition to the new authority and staff of Homes Tasmania will be employed under the State Service Act 2000. They will remain public servants. All staff will remain employed under the State Service Act and the employment conditions of staff will not change. The specific award the staff work under is not covered under this legislation, as that is addressed through the Tasmanian Industrial Commission. That is the advice I have.

Ms HADDAD - Will Homes Tasmania need to become a signatory to the HAHS Award? Is that how it will happen?

Mr BARNETT - We obviously cannot predict what the Tasmanian Industrial Commission is likely to do and that is a matter for the union as well as Homes Tasmania. I think there is an understanding that that is where they want to go and take that to the TIC but I cannot predict or pre-empt any decision of the Industrial Commission.

Clause 22 agreed to.

Clause 23 -
Statement of Expectations

Ms O'CONNOR - We have a late amendment and I apologise to the minister for flopping this on his table moments ago; I should have seen it earlier. I move -

That clause 23(3) be amended after paragraph (a) by inserting the following paragraph:

'(A) is to be prepared in consultation with the broader social housing sector; and'

I take a moment to commend the minister on the draft statement of expectations. It is a bit longer than statements of expectation I have seen from ministers for other entities that are part of the Crown to some extent, but so it should be. We are moving this amendment because we think it is a common sense amendment. It has been proposed by the Tenants' Union of Tasmania, which says in its submission:

The statement of expectations is integral to the governance and overall direction of the Housing Tasmania Board. We strongly believe that the minister should be required to consult with the broader social housing sector in the development of the statement of expectations. We recommend the insertion of a new subclause ...

which is before us now.

Common sense dictates that a minister in preparing a ministerial statement of expectations will have numerous conversations with numerous people in the housing and homelessness sector and so too, we presume, with the CEO of Homes Tasmania. The consultation will happen in developing a ministerial statement of expectations. It is something that should be formalised because it is the 'nothing about us without us' philosophy. If the Government is presenting its policy direction to Homes Tasmania and the board, that policy direction, which will be about tackling housing and homelessness, needs to be informed by the housing and homelessness sector. We encourage the minister to accept this amendment.

There is much to commend this statement of expectations, but might the minister consider having another look at it because it has the word 'draft' shadow-printed on every page. One of the things that is missing, in our view, is time lines, key objectives, the need for Homes Tasmania to deliver twenty-first century housing that is climate resilient, energy efficient, thermally efficient for winter and spring. We think there is not enough emphasis in here on how critical the quality of the homes that we build or retrofit is to people's capacity to adapt to a change in climate. Everyone in here who thinks about it knows that it is the poor, it is the economically marginalised who will be most disadvantaged and at risk as the climate gets hotter and hotter.

We have an opportunity through this statement of expectations for the minister to tell Homes Tasmania that in future the Government and the minister expect them to build homes that are the right homes for a heating planet. We saw during the Dunalley bushfires how the way we built homes in the past did not keep people safe in the event of a big bushfire. It certainly did not protect those homes. We have to have a rethink about how we build homes,

where we build them and what we build them out of. That would definitely help inform the minister's statement of expectations.

There is another section in here, and perhaps the minister can help clarify this, about governance and performance. The minister says:

To meet my ministerial obligations to parliament and the public on the functioning of the housing system, I expect Homes Tasmania to provide me with regular information on its operations and performance and to bring to my attention in a timely manner information regarding any significant issues affecting the Homes Tasmania work.

Is the existing process, where Housing Tasmania has a regular weekly meeting with the minister, going to be in place? What level of contact, minister, do you expect to have with the CEO of Homes Tasmania and/or the board for that matter? Specifically, the CEO and the key advisers of Homes Tasmania? Perhaps you could address our proposed amendment, explore the possibility of including more direction around climate resilience and adaptivity in the statement of expectations and also let the House know how often you would be expecting to be briefed on this key part of your portfolio by Homes Tasmania?

Mr BARNETT - We are getting a bit of consensus happening here, because I am not disagreeing with you. I am agreeing with your intent. I might be able to agree with you in total, depending on how you respond to my remarks. There is a lot of common sense with respect to the importance of the minister consulting on an ongoing basis with the housing and homelessness sector.

Ms O'Connor - Yes.

Mr BARNETT - It is a vital ingredient to the success of this new structure and the way we want to go forward. There needs to be regular on-going consultation between the housing and homelessness sector. When I say that, I mean the broader sector.

I am making that point, and then I have a suggested form of words to your amendment, which we might be able to shake hands on.

Regarding the minister's ongoing involvement with Homes Tasmania, I expect that to be very similar or the same to what is happening now, which is regular weekly meetings. I do not know what future ministers would do. You can ask them at the annual opportunities. My expectation as a minister is to have regular meetings, at the moment regular weekly meetings. I do not get to every single one, but my office does. Also regular engagement with the board. I expect any minister to want to have regular engagement with a board such as this.

Regarding your comments on climate change, I have already included the importance of sustainability in the minister's statement of expectations. I have already included energy efficiency rating seven.

Ms O'Connor - And resilience is in there somewhere.

Mr BARNETT - Yes, resilience is in there. Energy efficiency rating seven is in that ministerial statement of expectations. It is pretty well worded, but we have 'draft' on it. It is not going to be final until it is signed off with the minister once the board has been appointed.

I am moving in that direction, to just let you know. So that is going to your amendment and I have amended your amendment, so let me read this to you, and see if we can shake hands.

Mr Chairman, I have an amendment to this amendment. I move -

Leave out 'broader social housing sector'

Insert 'housing and homelessness sector'

Ms O'Connor - Perfect, great, that has got it.

Mr BARNETT - I am passing that to the Clerk. My handwritten amendment of your amendment. There we go. We are shaking hands. People might be somewhat astonished but we are working very well to get to a landing point that I am trying to respond to sensible common-sense approach to get a good outcome here. Thank you.

Ms O'Connor - Thank you, minister.

Ms HADDAD - That is a really positive step in the right direction, and I acknowledge again that the minister is working in good faith in the parliament in a way that parliament should operate.

I am happy to support the Greens' amendment, and the minister's amendment to the amendment. I repeat my comments about the importance of consulting with people with lived experience of homelessness. The minister has outlined the way the committees will work that will advise the board. That is positive. It is very important that the voices of community members who are homeless, or who have been homeless in the past, are heard loudly in the work of Homes Tasmania and in the work of the board.

By extension, I hope the intention with this addition to the clause dealing with the minister that the statement of expectations would include consultation with those committees as a minimum or further consultation with people who have lived experience of homelessness at times when that ministerial statement of expectations is altered or updated.

I had some other questions on clause 23 just generally, but we should deal with the amendment first and then I can speak again.

Mr BARNETT - Yes, I will conclude my answer and flesh it out a little bit more. I have a reference group made up of the community services sector, the building construction sector, local government - I think all the key stakeholders in that space. I appreciate their input and their value. We have had further meetings after that in workshops working through the opportunities and the challenges and there will be more meetings together and in smaller groups identifying opportunities and challenges, where those gaps are, environmental standards, where we need the houses, what size, what shape, to meet the various important cohorts we have talked about earlier: women, children, young people, old people, people with disabilities and the like.

Be assured there is a lot more work to do, but as minister I will be very engaged. I appreciate the feedback on that reference group. Consulting with the housing and homelessness sector is very important.

Amendment to the amendment agreed to.

Amendment, as amended, agreed to.

Ms HADDAD - Some broader questions I had around clause 23 and the statement of expectations. I acknowledge the minister is seeking feedback on that draft statement of expectations that I am sure will be forthcoming from the sector and the community, but I note in the bill, and I think it is referenced in the statement as well, that it can be altered, revoked and changed. Indeed, it is expected that that will be the case. I am wondering how often the minister thinks that might occur, whether that might be an annual process or more frequently than that or less frequently: any kind of indication you might have right now of your expectations of how often that statement might be changed.

The reason I ask is that in clause 25(1) that deals with the corporate plan, the corporate plan is expected to be something that lasts for a period of three years, notwithstanding that that can also be altered and changed. I am wondering how those two documents will interact. I want some comfort that if in the event those two documents might have some conflicting expectations it is not creating conflict or uncertainty for the organisation or the sector funded by Homes Tasmania, because in some ways there will be two governing documents that will be directing or guiding the work of Homes Tasmania.

It is a general question, first about how often that statement of expectations might be reviewed or changed and how it will interact with the corporate plan and whether the corporate plan itself is required to reflect any updated statement of expectations or vice versa.

Mr BARNETT - Thanks for the question. My expectation is that the statement of expectations will be tabled every year. It is an annual statement of expectations, but that does not disallow the minister from providing instructions to the board from time to time if there is a public purpose or a particular issue or challenge that needs to be met, or an opportunity to be seized. There is a discretion there for the minister, but that is the expectation.

In respect of the corporate plan, it is for three years but it is to be tabled each year and there can be scrutiny of that. It has to be tabled in this parliament but it would go for a three-year period, so it is tabled and then it is a rolling three-year period. You would have to think there would be a parallel understanding and commensurate reflection between the ministerial statement of expectations and the corporate plan and they would be consistent. There would be no point in having an inconsistent approach. That is the way it is planned to operate.

Clause 23 agreed to.

Clauses 24 to 27 agreed to.

Clause 28 -

Funds of Homes Tasmania

Ms O'Connor - Minister, I half expected you to move an amendment to clause 26.

Mr Barnett - To clause 26? No, to 44. What were you thinking?

Ms O'Connor - It says in clause 26, so an alternative to our amendment to 44.

Mr Barnett - Okay. You are very clever to pick that up. I am waiting for clause 44.

Ms O'Connor - I can count, minister.

Mr Barnett - Can we go back to clause 26, please?

Mr BARNETT - I move -

That the Committee do report progress.

Motion agreed to.

Progress reported; leave granted to sit again.

Mr BARNETT - I move -

To recommit clause 26.

Motion agreed to.

Clause 26 -
Annual reports

Mr BARNETT - This is an alternative to clause 44. We are on clause 26, annual reports. It is responding to amendments moved by the Leader of the Greens in clause 44 about the Public Works Committee and having that committee review the work of this entity, Homes Tasmania.

I appreciate the intent of the amendment to increase parliamentary oversight, checks and balances and scrutiny of Homes Tasmania when it comes to building construction projects. I cannot support that amendment, as I have indicated privately, but I want to set out my reasons for that. The Public Works Committee does not currently apply to Housing Tasmania. It is a role under the powers of the Director of Housing. By accepting this amendment, it would create an additional regulatory approval burden to deliver housing at a time when Tasmania can least afford it. The amendment is proposing a significant further restriction on approvals processes to those that exist currently.

History shows us that housing developments have not been adversely affected by not going through this parliamentary process, and projects have been adequately scrutinised through usual reporting processes - including through right for information provisions and, of course, budget Estimate processes. These will all continue to apply for housing projects under this legislation.

There are also provisions in this bill that provide additional oversight to previous years. The bill provides for oversight and transparency for major projects undertaken by the authority, and those done in collaboration with other organisations. The corporate plan must include a

statement of the authority's financial plans for the relevant period, and must outline the major strategies to be used and targets to be met by Homes Tasmania.

A draft corporate plan only takes effect when the minister, in consultation with the Treasurer, approves it - and unless otherwise authorised by the minister, the authority must act in accordance with the corporate plan. The board will develop the annual report, which will be tabled in the parliament. The annual report must report on the authority's performance in relation to the corporate plan, and must include the authority's financial statements.

The annual report must include, among other things:

- financial statements
- the Auditor-General's report
- details of each ministerial direction given to the authority, and the action taken in response
- details of the ministerial statement of expectations enforced during the relevant period, and action taken by the board in relation to the statement
- a summary of the corporate plan enforced during the relevant period
- a report on the targets to be met by the authority in achieving its objectives, policies, programs and financial plans
- any other information the minister has requested.

The relevant monetary threshold in the Public Works Committees Act 1914 is currently \$8 million for building and construction projects. The Public Works Committee process simply reports on project decisions and how quickly they should be carried out. It does not comment on the policy decision as to whether to undertake the project.

One of the key reasons we are proposing the creation of the housing authority is to expedite the supply of houses. We need to support Tasmanians in need. There are currently a number of acts, schemes, policies and procedures that are impeding the fast delivery of new housing supply, and which present challenges to achieving the Government's ambitious social housing build program.

That is why we are working closely with a ministerial reference group, with the aim of fast-tracking development approvals as appropriate, subject to planning approval procedures and guidelines for those housing developments. If progressed, these amendments would be introduced to parliament once they have been developed. That is in terms of planning in particular.

My point in raising this is that one of our key goals is to increase the speed of approvals and developments, rather than add red tape or additional hoops to jump through. While saying this, accountability and transparency are important. I am committed to ensuring Homes Tasmania has appropriate checks and balances in place, and I will say more on that shortly.

The proposed amendment by the Greens to clause 44 has the potential to place the authority at a commercial disadvantage and significantly reduce the ability of Homes Tasmania. There will be better ways to achieve the aims of the amendment.

We do not support the Public Works Committee oversight, but as a government we support the amendment that I will pass to you now for clause 26, which I circulated earlier to the Greens and the Labor opposition.

Our argument for this is to basically pick up agreement with the intent, in terms of scrutiny. We think there is a range of mechanisms in place to share intended projects with the parliament and the community, including through the planning process. I appreciate these types of major building and construction projects could be provided with additional transparency. I accept the intention of the Greens amendment, as I understand is to provide insight prior to major projects proceeding, as it is the role of the public works committee.

I propose that those clauses be amended as set out in clause 26, proposed subsection (2). As I said, I have circulated that. It allows what is considered a major building construction project to change, and to set the bill up to last the test of time. Where a dollar amount or description is set in legislation it can quickly become outdated and tedious, reducing the value of its intention.

I know you may want to quiz the definition of 'major building construction'. That will no doubt change over time, but I will give members a few examples to understand where the minister and the Government is coming from.

The Tasmanian Government is committed to reducing housing stress through a range of projects, programs and supports that will assist more people to access affordable long-term homes, as well as emergency accommodation where required.

The key projects the Government is currently developing include:

- Launceston Women's Shelter expansion - \$5.9 million
- Devonport Men's Shelter - \$2.5 million
- Wirksworth Estate Integrated Aged Care project - \$15 million
- Hobart - \$17 million
- Burnie - \$14.2 million
- Launceston - \$8.9 million
- Youth foyers, Burnie crisis shelter - \$7 million.
- Rokeby's Men's Shelter and the new Bethlehem House, which I am advised is \$31.2 million.

I hope that assists the Committee.

Our amendment is to clause 26, proposed subsection (2), paragraph (c), subparagraph (ii):

Insert 'and' after the semicolon.

In clause 26, after subsection (2), paragraph (c), after subparagraph (ii), insert new subparagraph (iii):

(iii) any major building or construction project, excluding residential projects, that Homes Tasmania undertakes for the purposes of this Act, as defined in the statement of expectations;

Ms O'Connor - I guess the question is 'major'. What does major mean?

Mr BARNETT - It is as set out in the statement of expectations. The statement of expectations is going to set out the plans for the various projects in this coming 12 months or less. It will be set out there because 'major' will change over time.

Ms O'Connor - Will 'major' be on a financial threshold?

Mr BARNETT - Not necessarily, but it will be a major project that is supporting older people or supporting Youth2Independence, the new foyers. It will be in the statement of expectations, and will be made quite clear for anybody who is reading it to understand what is major, according to the minister.

What is 'major' will be outlined in the ministerial statement of expectations - whatever is major to the minister of the day at the time. It is obviously tabled once a year. That ministerial statement of expectations will set out major building or construction projects. It will be made clear in that statement.

Ms O'CONNOR - Minister, we are comfortable with this amendment and appreciate that you recognise the need for a reasonable level of transparency about how Homes Tasmania expends money.

We will still move our amendment to clause 44 because, given the new arrangement where Homes Tasmania is likely to have more contact and face time with private developers, we think there should be maximum oversight, but this is fine.

Can you let us know when you expect to finish the statement of expectations? A lot of this hangs off what will be in the substance of the statement of expectations. I think this amendment is fine. There is some ambiguity again about 'major'. It is a step forward in transparency terms.

I might have missed it when you said it, but when do you expect to have a statement of expectations finalised?

Mr BARNETT - There are two parts to that question. It is when the board is appointed, so immediately the board is appointed the statement of expectations will be finalised and agreed. As to the second part, I draw your attention to the term 'major' and you asked about a dollar figure. I am not going to limit myself as minister, but I will say the Public Works Committee major is defined as \$8 million, I am advised. Hopefully that will assist to guide the minister and ministers into the future, but the minister will outline in the statement of expectations what those major construction projects will be.

Ms HADDAD - I thought I had better indicate the Opposition's support for the Government's proposed amendment and acknowledge the need for a strong level of transparency when it comes to the work done by Homes Tasmania, how it is funded, who is awarded contracts and so on.

When I was reading through the amendments put forward by Ms O'Connor, and I know we will come to the amendment to clause 44 later, I am a big advocate for increased transparency around government decision-making. However, I did have some concerns about expanding the scope of the Public Works Committee to look at that work because of the potential to slow down the work of Homes Tasmania. While I have some reservations about whether the structure of Homes Tasmania will in fact increase the ability to act faster and in a more agile way, I know the minister's intent is getting houses out of the ground which will be able to happen faster once Homes Tasmania is established.

I definitely want to see increased transparency around decision-making, but I wonder whether having a Public Works Committee process overlayed over the work of Homes Tasmania might, in fact, have an unintended consequence of slowing down some of that work, particularly when it comes to acquiring land and making decisions around applying to councils for permits and that kind of thing. I probably put that a bit clumsily but we understand the intent of this amendment to clause 26 and are happy to support it.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 26, as amended, agreed to.

Clause 28 -

Funds of Homes Tasmania

Ms O'CONNOR - Minister, this is where I hope we might drill down into some of the financial arrangements. This is the clause that describes the sources of Homes Tasmania's income. It is any money that is transferred to it under this or any other act; received by way of fees, levies and charges; otherwise received by it in the course of performing its functions and exercising its powers; and received by it, or the Homes Tasmania Board, from any other source.

I remember how hard it was to make the Housing Tasmania budget work. As minister over four years, it was a constant tension between the amount of revenue we had and the amount of money we had to return to the Commonwealth, this quite mobile maintenance budget that sometimes you had tap into to make the budget of Housing Tasmania balance. I am sure I remember that there were some years where there was an arrangement between Health and Human Services, under which Housing came, to assist Housing Tasmania to effectively break even.

The House should understand exactly what the likely income sources are for Housing Tasmania. Perhaps the minister could confirm first of all that Homes Tasmania will remain the landlord of Housing Tasmania properties and therefore the rent that tenants pay to Housing Tasmania now will go into the Homes Tasmania budget. Perhaps the minister could also confirm that the money that comes to the state under the Commonwealth/State Housing Agreement from the Commonwealth will go into the Homes Tasmania budget and explain what other foreseeable revenue sources there are for Homes Tasmania.

The worst of all outcomes would be if we are establishing an entity which is financially incredibly marginal and then has to either access funds the Treasurer can make available or go to TasCorp for a loan. There is a lot of language in here about Homes Tasmania borrowing, which sets off little alarm bells with me if there is in another time with another CEO and another minister, a capacity for Homes Tasmania to borrow when it is not prudent to do so. To

understand what the financial foundation and viability of Homes Tasmania will be is really important, given how hard it has been for Housing Tasmania to have budget viability.

On that, there is an agreed rate of rent, a basically flat rent rate which as I recall was 25 per cent of income after tax. It is all a bit vague now, but at some future point Homes Tasmania might have outstanding borrowings to repay, interest rates may have gone up, so Homes Tasmania will have to raise rents in social housing properties. To have some fleshing out of the financial foundations of this proposed new statutory authority would be very helpful.

Mr BARNETT - Thank you for the questions. I understand where you are coming from and want to allay some of those concerns. Money from the Tasmanian budget will be going to Homes Tasmania, with \$204 million this year and \$438 million over the forward Estimates and whatever funds that would otherwise have been going to Housing Tasmania will go to Homes Tasmania.

With respect to the Commonwealth, the National Housing and Homelessness Agreement likewise will go to Homes Tasmania. That is Commonwealth funding that will go to Homes Tasmania so there are no issues there. You were talking about the 25 per cent income. My understanding is it is before tax, not after tax.

Ms O'Connor - Can you confirm, minister, that it would be your intention that that rent rate, which we worked quite hard to get into place, would be maintained?

Mr BARNETT - My understanding is that the percentage is there for a reason, to support those who are vulnerable or financially in need. I do not have an expectation that that would change. It would still be based on those eligible Tasmanians, as set out in the legislation, and subject to any decisions made that are to meet the objectives of our legislation.

That percentage is not set in legislation, it is set out in policy. The policy is driven by the legislation and the objectives of the bill.

Ms O'Connor - Homes Tasmania would remain the landlord, and still be collecting the rents which would go to support the operations of Homes Tasmania?

Mr BARNETT - Correct.

Ms HADDAD - I have similar concerns. I raised them when I was asking questions on earlier clauses about how Homes Tasmania will service the debt. The minister has spoken about the capacity of Homes Tasmania to borrow against the Government's asset base, the homes and properties it owns, which the minister said was valued at \$3.5 billion. That is a significant asset base.

I am not sure whether I understood the minister's earlier answer, but I need to be further satisfied about how Homes Tasmania will service that debt. The former Commonwealth housing debt was almost impossible for the state Government to continue to repay. That is why that ended up being wiped and that money put back into housing. That is a positive thing.

Like Ms O'Connor I worry what the future financial landscape will be for Homes Tasmania if and when it starts to accrue a significant debt to TASCORP. A later clause allows the statutory authority to borrow money from the private sector. I am not sure whether

parliament is satisfied with how that debt will be serviced. Minister, could you flesh that out a little more?

A second question that probably does not belong in this clause, but came back to me when you mentioned the National Affordable Housing Agreement (NAHA), so those federal funds will continue to flow to Homes Tasmania under the NAHA and any other bilateral funding agreements. Who will have the responsibility now of negotiating those funding agreements? That happened at the senior executive level of Housing Tasmania in the past. Will the responsibility of negotiating with future iterations of the NAHA or other federal funding agreements fall to the minister or the CEO, or will the board have a role in negotiating those funding agreements? If it is the latter, that is a departure from how federal-state funding agreements are historically negotiated, given that it will be a commercial board.

Mr BARNETT - Thank you for all of those questions. Let me deal with clause 29.

It allows the Treasurer to lend money to Homes Tasmania in accordance with the specifications in the clause. An example of where money may be lent is to develop land for residential purposes without using capital appropriation set aside for social housing.

They will be able to borrow, buy the land and then get that repaid from the sale of the lots. It has to be approved by the Treasurer.

Ms Haddad - The purchase and the sale?

Mr BARNETT - Yes. Regarding funding and finances, the new authority will be an entity in the public non-financial corporation sector.

Entities in the sector provide goods or services that are primarily market, non-regulatory, and non-financial in nature. They are partly or primarily funded through revenue from sales or goods and services. The PNFC entity, the new authority, will be partly funded through revenue obtained by leasing social housing premises.

However, like Communities Tas, the authority will also receive funding from the Tasmanian Government. All budget housing related appropriations currently assigned to the Department of Communities Tas will transfer across to the the authority.

Negotiations with the federal government will continue as is now through Treasury. It negotiates on behalf of the state with the national homes and housing authority, and that will continue, I am advised, in the same way. The authority will have the power to lease, transfer, buy and sell assets and when borrowing requires the Treasurer's support to do so. It would normally be for a short-term purpose, for buying property, developing and selling. It would be on terms and conditions approved by the Treasurer.

Clause 28 agreed to.

Clause 29 agreed to.

Clause 30 -

Borrowing from person other than Treasurer

Ms O'CONNOR - Minister, who else would Homes Tasmania want to be borrowing from if they have access to the public account, presumably through the Treasurer and TASCORP? Is the chair of TASCORP Don Challen? My understanding is that TASCORP is uniquely placed to negotiate good low-cost borrowings because it has the heft of the state of Tasmania behind it. I do not know if Housing Tasmania has ever borrowed in the private banking sector? To me this is a new arrangement. If it is not, please tell me but it goes back to the issue.

Mr Barnett - The National Housing Finance Investment Corporation is the national entity for which we will be able to borrow. I can explain.

Ms O'CONNOR - That was a Morrison government-established lending body for the social and community housing sector, is that right?

Mr Barnett - They are about to, I understand, reform it somewhat at the federal level. Whatever the new entity is will be given that opportunity on terms and conditions.

Ms O'CONNOR - You would agree, minister, that clause 30 does not prevent Homes Tasmania, a board or CEO in the future potentially from going along to Westpac or ANZ or CommBank and borrowing money? Why were you not more explicit about who it can borrow from?

Mr BARNETT - I am advised that ability is already in the Homes Act. It is there to provide some flexibility. The example at the moment is the National Housing Finance Investment Corporation. The federal government might have a different entity in the future. It is the same as what is in the current Homes Act. It has been brought forward to provide that flexibility. I am advised Tony Ferrall, the secretary of Treasury, is chair of TASCORP.

Ms O'CONNOR - Thank you minister. Your understanding is it is not the intention of this clause to enable Homes Tasmania to borrow in the private banking sector, which we know has its' own intractable problems because of failures of government to regulate.

Can you confirm this clause is not intended to permit Homes Tasmania to borrow funds and enter into debt with the private banking sector?

Mr BARNETT - As minister, I cannot rule anything in or out other than to say that the Treasurer must approve. There needs to be accountability and scrutiny over all these sorts of things. It is not my understanding that would be happening anytime soon, but it is already in the current legislation, where the powers have been transferred over to Homes Tasmania. That is all I can say at the moment. I do not think it is any different. I do not think we should be ringing any particular alarm bells and it does require the approval of the Treasurer.

Ms O'CONNOR - I am not trying to be alarmist minister, I just am looking for some clarity so this entity is financially secure.

Clause 30 agreed to.

Clauses 31 to 35 agreed to.

Clause 36 -

Transfer of Crown land

Ms HADDAD - Clause 36 deals with what needs to happen for Homes Tasmania to acquire Crown Land or for Crown Land to be transferred for the use of Homes Tasmania and the minister would need to publish that in the gazette for that transfer as long as the Treasurer and the minister for crown lands approves it. Presumably that is three ministers involved; the Minister for Housing, the Treasurer and the Minister for Crown Lands. I wondered what role will be had by other effective ministers, for example, if that crown land is land for transfer is being occupied or used by the Department of Health or the Department of Education, whether those relevant ministers would need to be involved with the decision on the transfer of that land.

Mr BARNETT - Yes thank you very much. I think the clause does set that out, but in short, the crown lands minister would need to liaise with the owner of the land. If it is an education department property, the minister would need to liaise with the minister for education with respect to that property being transferred and as you have rightly noted, with the agreement of the Treasurer and the minister.

Ms HADDAD - I had a further question that relates to this clause and also a little bit to the following clause. It is not clearly spelled out the transfer would need to be made with the benefit of social and affordable housing and I wondered if that is the intention of those clauses on the understanding that minister, the purpose of the act is around social and affordable housing, but whether that transfer of crown land is specifically intended for the purpose of social and affordable housing or whether it could be transferred for other purposes too.

Mr BARNETT - Thank you for the question. The bill is in two parts. The first part relates to the purposes and it is absolutely critical we understand that all the operational parts in the second part of the bill are all subservient to the purposes of the bill. It cannot be for any purpose other than what is set out in clause 10 and set out in the purposes of the bill.

Clause 36 agreed to

Clause 37 agreed to.

Clause 38 -

Power of Homes Tasmania to acquire land

Ms HADDAD - This is the part of the bill that deals with the ability for Homes Tasmania to acquire land, to buy land presumably, on the private market. This is something that Housing Tasmania already has the power to do and routinely needs to do to rapidly as well. If the Government, through Housing Tasmania is looking at buying land on the private market, like any other buyer of land in the private market, they need to act swiftly and they have the power to do that now.

Perhaps the answer will mean I do not have the concern. The question I have is will the abilities for Homes Tasmania to acquire land in the future mirror the capacity that Housing Tasmania does now? My understanding is that up to a certain amount, Housing Tasmania can simply make that decision to buy land or the director of Housing can make that decision without needing to get the approval of the Treasurer, for example.

I also want to know whether or not the board will have a role to play in the decision to acquire land on the private market. One of the potential real blockers I can see in this new structure is that at the moment, travelling along and doing their work Housing Tasmania through the director of Housing can make a decision to very swiftly purchase land. If they are waiting for a board meeting, that might not happen for a number of weeks or even months to make that decision and would actually have the effect of slowing down the capacity to acquire land when they have that opportunity arise.

Mr BARNETT - I understand where you are coming from, but it has to be understood the board has its responsibilities as directors and the CEO and the various management officers subject to the CEO underneath that will no doubt report to the board on a regular basis and a consistent basis in accordance with this legislation and any other rules or regulations.

The legislation we have outlines a delegation arrangement. The CEO would have certain powers and responsibilities and functions and can delegate underneath that. The board can delegate at least some of its powers to the CEO to buy and sell land. It would depend on what those judgments are, those decisions made, with respect to those delegations.

I cannot pre-empt that as minister. They need to respond to the objectives of Government and the ministerial statement of expectations, which is to get houses out of the ground as soon as possible. They have a big agenda and they need to respond to that and need to set up their arrangements and put them in place to ensure that occurs with the appropriate scrutiny and transparency. I expect them to operate as a business with a business model which is sustainable and delivers more houses out of the ground.

The delegations as set out in this legislation will allow for that and we must ensure they meet those purposes set out in the legislation, consistent with the roles, functions and responsibilities, also set out in the legislation.

Clause 38 agreed to.

Clauses 39 to 41 agreed to.

Clause 42 -

Sale of premises before cost of subdivision is determined.

Ms HADDAD - Chair, I have a question about the capacity for Homes Tasmania to sell land and it relates to this clause, but it may well relate to other clauses in the bill that deal with the disposal of land. Can the minister outline what the rules and expectations will be around the sale, generally, of land by Homes Tasmania; whether that land sale could be to any person or whether it will be limited to eligible persons as defined in the bill; and also, whether there is any stipulation or expectation on what the funds raised through those sales will be used for?

We spoke on an earlier clause about the financial sustainability of Homes Tasmania in the future, and the Leader of the Greens asked some similar questions about how the finances will work. Could the minister, in relation to this clause, but also other clauses dealing with the sale of land, give the House some more information about what the rules will be, around who Homes Tasmania will be able to sell land to, and also what that revenue will be used for?

Mr BARNETT - Thank you so much for the question. My advice is that it is a carryover from the Homes Act 1935. They can sell it to anyone, for delivering on the purposes of the act. The purposes are set out, as you know, in clause 10, and related to those objectives, livable communities may require selling land on an open market, but the ultimate goal ties into services and functions of the act. The powers, roles, and functions have been taken over from the previous legislation, but it may be done differently. As long as they are meeting the purposes of the act, they will have that discretion. They are subject to a board and to this act; they are subject to scrutiny not only by me and my office on a regular basis, but also parliament through questions, through a corporate plan and through the annual report. I do not think I can add any further at this stage.

Clause 42 agreed to.

Clause 43 agreed to.

Clause 44 -

Power to enter into partnerships, joint ventures, &c.

Ms O'CONNOR - Chair, I move an amendment to clause 44. I propose -

Page 64, clause 44, after proposed subsection (3).

Insert the following subsection -

- (4) Sections 15 and 16 of the *Public Works Committee Act 1914* apply to building or construction works undertaken by a partnership, trust or joint venture entered into under this section, as if the building or construction works were a public work for the purposes of the *Public Works Committee Act 1914*.

Mr Speaker, we move this, as the minister has flagged, because we want to see maximum transparency around the operation of Homes Tasmania and the expenditure of public funds in delivering new social and affordable housing, and the expenditure of public funds when they are married to a public-private partnership where you have two sources of funds, but some of that money is public money.

I do not buy the argument from the minister, reinforced by Ms Haddad, that the Public Works Committee process would slow down the construction of social and affordable housing. If Homes Tasmania and the board are organised, and they have a major project that they are working through, and there are timelines for delivery, well then, you just take it to Public Works, as early as you can, to get that oversight and sign off.

The Public Works Committee Act 1914, another antique - and it is clauses 15 or 16 that I think would apply here, as it says in the amendment:

- (1) The Committee shall, subject to the provisions of this Act, consider and report upon every public work that is proposed to be undertaken by a general government sector body, except any public work which hereafter may be withdrawn from the

operation of this Act by a resolution withdrawing same adopted by each House of Parliament ...

It defines 'general government sector body' as -

- (a) a Government department within the meaning of the State Service Act 2000; and
- (b) any State authority classified as an entity within the general government sector in the Treasurer's annual report;

I am sure, should the Homes Tasmania bill pass, that in the Treasurer's annual report - I think it is in the schedule to the annual report - there will be a note there that Homes Tasmania is a State authority. A State authority is defined in the Public Works Committee Act, as:

... a body or authority, whether incorporated or not, that is established or constituted under a written law or under the royal prerogative, being a body or authority which, or of which the governing authority, wholly or partly comprises a person or persons appointed by the Governor, a Minister or another State authority, but does not include a Government department within the meaning of the State Service Act 2000;

Clearly, Homes Tasmania, by definition, would be captured by the purview of the Public Works Committee. It will be a State authority. It has a board and a CEO, that are signed off by the minister. As the minister said earlier, the threshold for public works on building and construction is \$8 million and I think it is \$15 million for roads and bridges.

I do not buy that Public Works will clog up the delivery of social and affordable housing. There is a multitude of other issues that are more likely to make it difficult, including issues with planning assessments with what are likely to be pressures in and around communities, where housing is proposed for bushland - so, we will see more land clearing, for example. You will have some community organisations that potentially provide a blockage to work. You will have people who do not want a major housing project like a homelessness facility in their neighbourhood.; although thankfully, I think that is much less of an issue.

Section 16 of the act says:

- (1) No public work to which section fifteen applies (except such works as have already been authorized by Parliament or hereafter may be withdrawn from the operation of this Act by a resolution withdrawing same adopted by each House of Parliament), the estimated cost of completing which exceeds the relevant monetary threshold in relation to such work, and whether such work is a continuation, completion, repair, reconstruction, extension, or new work, shall be commenced unless it has first been referred to and reported upon by the Committee in accordance with this section.

We are not talking about other people's money - we are talking about an entity that will be funded through the wealth of the people of Tasmania. We are talking about an entity which has an asset base, now established, of \$3.5 billion and that is an asset base that was paid for by the tax payers of Australia and the people of Tasmania. The people of Tasmania own those homes, even though the Act currently vests them in the Director of Housing and it will vest those homes in the Homes Tasmania board, as I understand it. We are not buying that this an impediment. We think it would provide some comfort to Tasmanians, when millions of dollars are being spent, that there is an oversight mechanism that goes beyond the Treasurer of the day, the minister of the day, an annual report, or very rarely when it happens - which I am sure it will at some point - an examination by the Auditor-General of Homes Tasmania's operations and accounts.

We strongly commend this amendment to the House.

Mr BARNETT - I thank the member for her remarks, contribution and the amendment that has been put. I shared earlier that the Government has responded to the intent of that and moved a government amendment to allow for further scrutiny of major works and construction. I outlined the importance of that and I thank the House for the support of that particular amendment which I think picks up a lot of the intent of where the Leader of the Greens is coming from and what is behind this particular amendment.

I noted before and I will note again that the Public Works Committee does not currently apply to Housing Tasmania. Homes Tasmania will have a whole range of scrutiny opportunities through the budget estimates process, right to information, laying down of the corporate plan with the three-year plan, the annual report and there was a mention of the Auditor-General's report. There is a whole range of areas where it can and will be scrutinised.

The purpose of this legislation is to get houses out of the ground sooner. That is a key objective. We want no stone left unturned to make this happen as soon as possible; we want to expediate the supply of houses that we need to support Tasmanians -

Ms O'Connor - I think you mean expedite.

Ms O'CONNOR - Expediate, have I invented a new word, expediate?

Ms O'Connor - I think you might have.

Mr BARNETT - Sounded good, well we can check it out, put it on Google and see what Google says.

It is the same as expedite, which is to do it as quickly as possible, going through all due processes, but as quickly as possible. I have referred to the ministerial reference group; I have referred to the committees in getting all that advice and input. I have referred to Homes Tasmania which is a public non-financial sector entity that provides goods and services that are predominantly market non-regulatory and non-financial in nature and are primarily funded through revenue from sales to consumers of those goods and services.

I also outlined earlier the importance of that entity. I used examples of Metro Tasmania, TasNetworks, the Port Arthur Historic Site Management Authority. As a PNFC, Homes Tasmania will retain all those earnings within its structure to reinvest back into its activities. It

certainly will not be paying a dividend to government in that regard. Therefore, the structure ensures that all funds are used for the purposes of the act, not transferred to other purposes.

The establishment of a Public Works Committee oversight is, well it is an oversight. It is over the top and I think we have absolutely picked up the intent of it. I did think about it very carefully, as I said to the member, I think it was last week, I take onboard and I have given feedback. I have responded positively to a number of amendments today: the size of the board and in providing more scrutiny.

The Government is trying to listen and respond, but with respect to this particular amendment unfortunately we cannot support the amendment.

The Committee divided -

AYES 3

Ms Johnston (Teller)
Ms O'Connor
Dr Woodruff

NOES 19

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

Amendment negatived.

Sitting Times

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

That pursuant to Sessional Order 18A for this day's sitting the House shall not stand adjourned at 6 p.m. and that the House continue to sit past 6 p.m.

I have indicated to the Greens, Labor and the two Independents that we want to get the Homes Bill and the consequential bill done tonight. How long it takes is entirely up to the House.

Motion agreed to.

Ms HADDAD - I indicate that I only have a handful more questions and I am by no means trying to be obstructionist with this bill but I genuinely feel the responsibility to get this information out onto the public record.

I have some general questions about clause 44 which we have dealt with an amendment to. The partnerships that Housing Tasmania already enters into with private sector organisations but also with community housing providers, this question has come through some people working in the sector. Can you give further information to the House about partnerships intended under this clause? Will they mostly be with organisations governed by Community Housing (National Law), recognising that with the new definition of housing provider including construction and building companies and the like, whether or not there is any impact on those partnerships by virtue of this clause?

Further, with that changed definition of housing provider including those private sector entities, will those private sector entities now be governed by Community Housing (National Law) and will they be defined as tier 1, tier 2 or tier 3 providers or will they sit outside of that Community Housing (National Law)? They do not need to sit within it now because they are not defined as a housing provider but after this bill passes, they will be defined as a housing provider. It is a general question. I should have asked it earlier in the definition section but can I have a further fleshing out of the intention of broadening that definition?

Mr BARNETT - The purposes of the act make clear what the powers and responsibilities of Homes Tasmania is all about. Whether they are working in partnership or joint venture or whether with any other entity, that is not the important thing whether they are a private sector entity from a building construction sector, that does not make them untoward or inappropriate in any way, shape or form.

Ms HADDAD - No, that is not my meaning by asking that question at all. I am wondering what the application of the Community Housing (National Law) will be on those commercial entities now they are defined as housing providers.

Mr BARNETT - If they are subject to any federal law, they must act in accordance with that legislation with that law. They must act in accordance with the corporations law as set out under federal law. Any state law that is relevant to those private operators is relevant to them if they are acting in partnership or joint venture with Homes Tasmania which is an entity in and of itself. They must abide by the terms and conditions of any agreement that they sign or execute.

There is nothing surreptitious here. My understanding is similar to powers outlined in the Homes Tasmania 1935 legislation. It is not out of the ordinary, and I think the clause outlines pretty clearly what can and cannot be done. I am not sure that I can add too much more to that. Those partnerships, joint ventures and agreements can be made, and they need to comply with both federal, state and local government laws.

Clause 44 agreed to.

Clause 45 agreed to.

Clause 46 -

Power of Homes Tasmania, &c., to enter on lands

Ms HADDAD - My question about clause 46. This is the part of the bill that empowers Homes Tasmania, or those who are authorised by Homes Tasmania to enter into Crown land, or enter onto the land for various purposes. I wonder, whether this is confined to the purpose of building homes, or whether this applies also to entering into occupied homes that are managed by Housing Tasmania. If so, what the notice period will need to be given to those people occupying homes, or to landowners affected by the powers given in clause 46.

Also, whether there was any consultation in the drafting of this clause with the Aboriginal Land Council, or with the aboriginal community, and whether there is an intention for consultation with the Aboriginal Land Council or the aboriginal community in the future, when exercising the powers under clause 46.

Mr BARNETT - I am advised that this clause is a carry-over from the Homes Act 1935. As long as it is consistent with the purposes of the act. As I have said, it is in two parts, this legislation, and section 10, and the purpose of the act override and are all-encompassing. So all the functions, roles, responsibilities. All the clauses set out in the second part of the act are subject to those purposes, and that needs to be consistent with those purposes.

You made reference to the indigenous community. From a Government point of view, they are a very important sector of the community. They should be acknowledged and respected, and honoured in the appropriate way, that we do as a Government. We have a very strong advocate in the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, Mr Jaensch.

We expect the board, through the CEO, and the various management and officers of Homes Tasmania to act in a way that is consistent with state law, consistent with federal law, consistent with the standards that we believe are appropriate to be upheld whether that is engaging with the Tasmanian Aboriginal Corporation or any other aboriginal entity. They are important and they need to be recognised as such, and I expect those standards to be complied with in every respect.

Clause 46 agreed to.

Clause 47 -

Homes Tasmania to provide residential premises to certain persons other than eligible persons.

Ms O'CONNOR - This is the clause which we will be voting against. It enables Homes Tasmania to provide residential premises to public authorities or industrial undertakings for their workers.

We acknowledge that these provisions exist in the Homes Act 1935, but to our knowledge, they have never been used - well certainly not in the last eight years and certainly not in the four years prior to that. We would like to understand why it was thought necessary

to include a provision in the new Homes Tasmania legislation that enables Homes Tasmania to, for example, be asked by MMG Pty Ltd to provide some housing in and around Rosebery.

There is nothing in this clause that would prevent that. It is simply about if Homes Tasmania is satisfied that a person is carrying on or about to carry on an industrial undertaking permanently requires residential premises for its or the person's employees, Homes Tasmania may, with the consent of the minister, erect residential premises and sell or lease them to a public authority or a person on terms and conditions that the minister approves.

We do not understand why the authority and the capacity of an entity which has been established to provide affordable housing, secure housing to people who are living at the margins or economically becoming marginalised should be able to provide housing for private companies, industrial undertakings. It is an uncomfortable clause in the existing legislation. It remains an uncomfortable clause. We do not support Homes Tasmania becoming a tool for private companies who can go to the minister or the board and say, 'We need to construct ...'. Actually, there was a classic one up near Wesleyvale a few months ago, a plan to basically build a fruit pickers slum, that would have been described as affordable housing. The fruit growing company that wanted to build this fruit picking slum site, a long way from the town of Wesleyvale, could have quite easily argued that their business was marginal without having workers on site.

In the same way the Chinese state-owned company MMG could go to government and say, 'Well, we are having trouble attracting workers to Rosebery, there is a housing shortage here, will you build us some homes?'. Within this legislation, Homes Tasmania could do that.

We totally do not support it. It is an odious provision and a diversion of Homes Tasmania's resources and should not be in the legislation.

Mr BARNETT - I thank the member for her queries and concerns about the bill. As I think I said earlier, or you have indicated, it is a rollover from the existing legislation. It is actually in this bill for good reason. That is because Homes Tasmania must abide by the purposes set out in the bill. I have made that clear many times. If the clause which you were quoting is complied with then it is required to have the consent of the minister. I draw that to your attention.

Ms O'Connor - I do not think that is relevant because if you had the Resources portfolio and the Housing portfolio -

Mr BARNETT - Okay, I am just making the point that is one point that I think is valid; that you must have the consent of the minister. I know you are targeting a particular industry which I represented for many years, resources, but I am going to choose another one.

What about nurses? What about teachers? What about police? If there is a particular housing need to support those sectors of the community - which is to benefit the community - I think it is appropriate.

I am arguing strongly that there are 'eligible persons', which are set out in the bill and the definition of the bill. There is also a reference to people on low and moderate incomes, and that is different from the Homes Act. I am just drawing that to your attention. It does broaden

the functions and powers of Homes Tasmania to provide housing assistance to eligible persons and to low and moderate income earners.

We are doing things a bit differently. Going forward, we are going to have to do it a bit differently to what we are now.

Ms O'Connor - You could try regulating short stay. That would be different. That would free up some homes.

Mr BARNETT - I appreciate where you are coming from, but I am just giving you some examples about key workers, whether it is health, police, or education. Yes, there might be some productive industries. You mentioned agriculture and the seasonal workers.

It is a broader role than has been undertaken since 1935. We are talking about home ownership. Increasing home share. I know that is a different matter, but that is part of the remit of this bill; it allows for support for increased home ownership, private rentals, urban renewal. Urban renewal is an area where I expect the board to be more focused. They are going to get some advice from all around Australia, maybe elsewhere around the world, and apply a relevant approach to Tasmania - to the greater Hobart area, for example, under the 30-Year Greater Hobart Plan.

Broader powers than previously in that sense, but always limited by the purposes of the bill, which is set out in section 10.

We cannot agree with that particular amendment. Well, it is not an amendment; you are just advising that you do not support that clause, which, as I say, is consistent with the previous bill. I am just outlining that we need to be doing things differently, and it does need the consent of the minister.

Ms O'CONNOR - I will respond to that. In clause 3, the purposes of the act very much focus on eligible persons. Then it talks about development of short, medium and long-term strategies to increase the opportunities for eligible persons. You have talked about facilitating ownership leaseholder occupation of residential premises by eligible persons and persons on low to moderate incomes. Then it talks about ownership for eligible persons. It talks about the acquisition of land to provide housing to eligible persons. On it goes, and yet this clause - which you say is consistent with the purposes of the act - says -

Mr Barnett - It must be, has to be.

Ms O'CONNOR - But it is not. It says, if Homes Tasmania is satisfied that:

- (b) a person who is carrying on, or about to carry on, an industrial undertaking -

permanently requires residential premises for its or the person's employees, Homes Tasmania may, with the consent of the Minister -

Build those premises. And the clause is:

47. Homes Tasmania to provide residential premises to certain persons other than eligible persons.

So, it is not consistent with the purposes of the act. It is definitely not. You can try arguing that, but we do not buy it.

I note that you focused on public authority. Absolutely, Homes Tasmania should have a role in making sure we have enough key worker housing, when that is necessary: accommodation for teachers, for example, in remote and rural areas. That is a very different thing from - and I will call it what it is currently - a public housing entity building homes or selling or leasing homes to an industrial undertaking. It is right out of what I think the average Tasmanian would think was the purpose of Housing Tasmania, or Homes Tasmania, should it become that.

Minister, I know you probably have not applied your mind very much to this, because it is just one of many clauses in the act. We have not proposed an amendment. I have not railed at you about it, but it is still jarring that this is in this legislation and we vehemently do not support it. The Greens are just sick and tired of seeing public money, public servants, public resources dedicated towards enabling private profit and it happens on this island all the time, so we do not support this clause and we will be calling for a vote on it.

Ms HADDAD - Chair, I had some similar questions and some similar concerns on this clause. The questions I was going to ask the minister has gone through it a little already, is perhaps what the definition of industrial undertaking is. I do understand under the Homes Act there have been times where Housing Tasmania has been able to have a role to play in housing for things like essential worker. I know there used to be the Officer Next Door program: housing for essential services like doctors, nurses, teachers in remote areas. There is an argument that at least there is a role to government in that regard.

I want to drill down more on the use of the words 'industrial undertaking' and have the minister share his view on what that would include. People are right to be concerned about the potential scope of this clause once operational. Second, I wanted to ask the minister where the onus sits to establish that no other accommodation is available. Who has that responsibility of determining when this clause sorry, I know the minister is getting advice - so I will just pause my comments.

My second question was also in terms of activating this clause where the onus will sit to establish that there is not any other suitable accommodation available. Would that be the responsibility of for example, the Health Department employing nurses or the Education Department employing teachers? That of course has an impact on my first question which is, what is the definition of industrial undertaking? How far will this clause be able to reach?

Mr BARNETT - Thanks very much to the member and members. I can acknowledge the concerns, but I have said earlier that it does require the consent of the minister for that to proceed. With respect to industrial, there is no specific definition in there, so, it is obviously as commonly defined. I draw your attention to clause 11 which lists eight functions of Homes Tasmania. Those functions primarily relate to eligible persons and persons on low and moderate incomes covering areas such as supporting and funding provision of appropriate, affordable and safe accommodation, developing plans for the strategic acquisition and

development of land, managing or facilitating the management of residential accommodation, and managing home purchase assistance schemes.

Other functions relate to areas such as research, policy development, information gathering and reporting. That is another matter of course, research and policy development etcetera, another function that is allowed, is again consistent with the purposes. Clause 11 provides a non-exhaustive list of the powers of Homes Tasmania. Other powers are found throughout the act. The powers listed in this clause include, among others, the power to acquire, hold, dispose of and otherwise deal with property, enter into contracts, appoint agents and attorneys, act as an agent and engage consultants for Homes Tasmania to do all things necessary or convenient to be done in connection with all incidental to the performance and exercise of its functions and powers. You might be thinking of a massive big housing development, but I am making the point it might be just one home, it might be three homes, it might be much larger.

Ms O'Connor - Why should the state be funding any homes for private businesses?

Mr BARNETT - I made the point earlier that it is supporting and funding provision of appropriate, affordable and safe accommodation. There obviously has to be a community benefit flowing to meet the needs of those people who do not have the housing, whether it is police or nursing.

Dr Woodruff - That is not an industrial undertaking.

Mr BARNETT - It could be if they are involved in some business.

Dr Woodruff - A police industrial undertaking.

Mr BARNETT - Well, I take the police. In the health or education sectors, it might be a business. I think you are saying just because it is part of a private undertaking, they are bad. That is an ideological approach, which is unfair. There should be a balanced, reasonable approach across the board. You are saying that they must be for a public entity or public government enterprise. We have to be able to help those for a broader purpose of delivering housing for those who need it in Tasmania, whether it is a private sector or charitable sector or a government sector.

We are agreeing to disagree on that. We are not able to help those workers and employees if we are not able to have this power in the bill.

Mr CHAIR - The question is that the clause, as read, stand part of the bill.

The Committee divided -

AYES 11

Mrs Alexander
Ms Archer
Mr Barnett
Mr Ellis
Mr Ferguson

NOES 11

Dr Broad
Ms Butler
Ms Dow
Ms Finlay
Ms Haddad

Ms Ogilvie
Mr Rockliff
Mr Shelton
Mr Street
Mr Wood (Teller)
Mr Young

Ms Johnston
Mr O'Byrne (Teller)
Ms O'Byrne
Ms O'Connor
Mr Winter
Dr Woodruff

PAIRS

Mr Jaensch

Ms White

Mr CHAIR - The result of the division being 11 Ayes and 11 Noes, in accordance with standing order 257 I cast my vote with the Ayes.

Clause 47 agreed to.

Clauses 48 to 52 agreed to.

Clause 53 -

Leasing of land & c., not immediately required

Ms HADDAD - Chair, I have a question about clause 53, similar to clause 66 which deals in a similar way but around the sale of land not immediately required. The clause stipulates that if Homes Tasmania is satisfied that land or land and premises that is vested in them or that they hold is not immediately required for the purposes of the act, that they can sell or lease that land under this clause.

Can the minister indicate how that will be determined, who will have the responsibility of determining what 'immediately required' means, and what the time frame might be for making that decision about whether land is immediately required?

Mr BARNETT - It is to provide flexibility for Homes Tasmania to operate as an entity to meet the purposes of the act. For example, there might be leasing of property, say a bowls club or a workers club or something, until such time as further developments or other developments take place. They need flexibility rather than sitting there doing nothing.

This clause is used where Homes Tasmania leases on an interim basis, commercial premises that is intended for future residential development. You have to provide that opportunity and for decision-making around that, so the board, the CEO and whoever is delegated to make that decision. They have to do it effectively in accordance with the rules and responsibilities set out for the board. Likewise for the CEO and management team and those who might be delegated to make that decision.

Clause 53 agreed to.

Clauses 54 to 63 agreed to.

Clause 64 -

Sale or transfer of land to housing providers

Ms HADDAD - Chair, this is the part of the bill that will allow for Homes Tasmania to sell land or transfer land to housing providers. For the purposes of the act, that is clear, but just coming back to the fact that housing provider will now encompass also commercial property developers and construction companies. It looks, from reading this clause, like it will allow for the sale of land or premises to commercial operators for them to on-sell them to any person, rather than to an eligible person. I just wondered if the minister can give a bit more information to the House about the intention of this part of the bill. Is there are any expectations on the purpose of that sale? Is my reading of that correct: that Homes Tasmania will be able to sell land to a commercial provider for them to on-sell to another person and if there are any limitations intended for those potential sales and to whom? I might have another question on that but I will leave it there for now.

Mr BARNETT - I think I know where you are coming from and I know the answer as well. It is relevant to, but again, is consistent with the purposes of the act. It is fundamental to the relationships that the Homes Tas with the community housing providers to leverage funding to deliver as many houses as possible. At the end of the day, we have got to get the houses out of the ground and built. They will have different ways of doing that and how that is done is really a matter for them, so long as it is consistent with the purposes of the legislation. How to be only for enabling it for eligible persons, so can on-sell but only if, for eligible persons. It also allows for mixed developments between social and affordable housing and open markets, livable communities; there is a range of opportunities. Again, it must be consistent with the purposes of the act. It has to provide that flexibility and that is why the clause is drafted the way it is.

Clause 64 agreed to.

Clause 65 agreed to.

Clause 66 -

Sale of land & c., not immediately required

Ms HADDAD - I know the minister has already gone through the parts of this clause that are similar to the question I asked on 53 which is: who will determine what 'immediately required' means? I had a further question, specifically on the sale of land. It does relate a little bit to 65 as well, which is why I hesitated over clause 65: whether or not there is going to be stipulation of the use of the proceeds of sale. Should they be used for social and affordable housing or purposes of the act or can they be used for other purposes?

Mr BARNETT - Yes, I think it is consistent with what I have been saying throughout. The bill is in two parts. It has to be consistent with the purposes of the act. We need to provide Homes Tasmania with the flexibility to do what it needs to do, so clauses 65 and 66 are written that way. Clause 66 allows Homes Tasmania to sell certain land specified in subsection (1) at the price and on the terms and conditions it thinks fit, where such land is not immediately required for the purposes of the act.

Further guidance on determining whether land is immediately private is provided in subsection (2), and clause 65 again follows the same theme. It must be consistent with the purpose of the act as set out in those first few clauses of the act, particularly clause 10.

Clause 66 agreed to.

Clauses 67 to 70 agreed to.

Clause 71 -

Guarantee by Treasurer

Ms O'CONNOR - I move an amendment to clause 71, proposed subsection (1).

Leave out 'the Treasurer'

Insert instead 'If the Treasurer is satisfied that it would further the objects of this Act, the Treasurer'

And it continues 'may execute a loan, a guarantee or a payment of any loan'.

This provision in the legislation provides a broad power for the Treasurer to guarantee any loan for housing up to the aggregate value of \$3 million. The purpose of this is unclear, and perhaps the minister could explain what the purpose is of the broad power being given to the Treasurer. Our amendment simply would require the Treasurer to be satisfied that executing a guarantee would further the objects of the act before executing a guarantee.

I hear what the minister is saying about how, a number of the issues we have raised here, you can find some comfort in the principles of the act and how it hangs off that, but there is nothing in this clause that obviously requires the Treasurer to be operating within the objects of the act.

Perhaps the minister could address our amendment and explain why this broad power has been included.

Mr BARNETT - The amendment is acknowledged and I can understand the intent and where you are coming from. You know what I am about to respond to you with: that the power is restricted in this bill, specifically on this section, but all of the sections after the first part of the bill to the purposes of the act.

I agree with the intent of where you are coming from. I do not believe it is necessary. As I have said throughout the debate, the bill is structured in two parts with the purposes and functions governing the use of its powers. This means that all powers in the bill are fettered by its purposes and functions. They are constrained. There is an alleyway there and all the purposes and functions of the Homes Tasmania must proceed through that alleyway in accordance with those directions. In essence it means that the effect of this amendment has already been achieved in the structure of the bill.

I take on board where you are coming from. I really do not think it is necessary. It is not a show-stopper. It is important to note these powers are directly comparable to existing powers in the Homes Act 1935. I draw that to your attention to assist you in that regard.

Ms O'Connor - I thought we were modernising the provisions in that act though.

Mr BARNETT - Thank you for that interjection. I know how hard you are trying and you are very persuasive on many occasions and we have shaken hands, in a whole range of areas with respect to this bill. We have some very good outcomes, I am just giving you a pretty big heads-up, but I do not think it is really necessary at this time.

Ms O'CONNOR - I hear what you say, minister, but this clause sort of hangs in the back of the act and there is actually no reference. There is no reference in here to the Treasurer having to be assured that guaranteeing a loan is for the purpose of increasing the supply of social and affordable housing or the availability of land.

Minister, I take on board what you say and I know you are not going to support it, but this clause 71 hangs out there on its own. It could have come from any act. There is no reference to the purposes of the act, or of the objects of the act, the need to increase supply. There is no reference to housing or anything else that this act is about. That is why we put it forward, because it would just tighten up that provision and help the Treasurer's mind focus on why you might lend that money. However, I hear that it does not have support.

Ms HADDAD - Chair, the Opposition will be happy to support the amendment put forward. I listened to what the minister had to say, but I cannot foresee any harm in including this wording in clause 71. Indeed, we have heard the minister speak a lot about the purpose of the act and the intentions of the act. Stipulating in this clause the need for the Treasurer to also have the objects of the act in mind when making a decision, has the capacity to do good, not harm, and for that reason the Opposition will support this amendment.

Amendment negatived.

Clause 71 agreed to.

Clauses 72 and 73 agreed to.

Clause 74 -
Grants

Ms O'CONNOR - Chair, I move an amendment to page 105, clause 74, after proposed subsection (4).

Insert the following subsection -

- (5) Sections 15 and 16 of the *Public Works Committee Act 1914* apply to a grant of money under this section, as if the grant of money were a public work for the purposes of the *Public Works Committee Act 1914*.

The minister and my colleagues understand why we are putting this forward. We think that with such significant sums of public money being distributed, particularly when there are partnerships with private entities, that they should be examined by the Public Works Committee. We do not buy the argument that that would clog up the works and I have told the minister this is a really important amendment to us - as was the previous one - to give the Public Works Committee oversight of Homes Tasmania's spending on major projects - projects with a cost of more than \$8 million.

The Greens have really wrestled with how to respond to this legislation. I always want to see Government being able to deliver more, and better, and faster Government services and affordable housing. The truth is, Chair, that we could free up thousands of homes tomorrow. We could do that, if you regulated short stay accommodation; if you acknowledge that there are thousands of vacant properties on this island; and if we had the courage to do what even the Victorian Government has done which is to tax vacant residences.

I want so much for us to be able to support this legislation and we have had very constructive conversations with the minister about this bill. I genuinely believe that Mr Barnett is going to be a terrific housing minister because he gets it and he cares but I cannot see that this structure will deliver what needs to be delivered. Anytime Government starts to put parts of itself external to itself you lose a bit of oversight, you lose a bit of transparency and you lose something about the essence of Government and its responsibility to look out for people and provide services, supports, homes, hospitals, schools for civil society.

The minister knows how much we have wrestled with this legislation. I note that it has broad support from the community sector. I would say it is tepid support from the community sector. I have made a conscious choice not to publicly go out and have a crack at this bill because I wanted to get a briefing, to understand how it might work, what was protected and retained but through the course of this debate, particularly around key principles on transparency like the Public Works Committee, the issue of enabling housing developments for private companies, I am really worried as a former housing minister that this is not the structure; and yet, although I am not religious, I hope and pray that it is.

We do not think it is a big ask for the Public Works Committee to have oversight of Homes Tasmania, given that they have a \$3.5 billion asset on their books. This is an entity that we will now give much greater authority to, to borrow money through public financing, but also potentially private financing. This is an entity that, I suggest, will have much closer relationships to private developers. This could be a good thing as long as there is a very high level of probity, transparency, and oversight. I am just not seeing the oversight mechanisms that should be in place. I commend the amendment to the House.

Mr BARNETT - I appreciate the manner and goodwill in which this debate has been conducted. Before I respond to the remarks that you shared, I will quickly comment on the previous one about the Treasurer. I draw your attention to clauses 29 and 30, which deal with borrowing from the Treasurer and borrowing from a person other than the Treasurer and note that it ties into the functions and powers of the bill. That is the point I have been sharing throughout the debate: about the importance of the purposes of the bill in the first part of the bill and the second part - operational matters. I know that you would like to be clearer.

I draw that to your attention with respect to the clause 74 amendment. Of course, that is consistent with the earlier amendment which we did not support, but I did think about it in advance and I brought forward an amendment, which -

Ms O'Connor - You did.

Mr BARNETT - you and the Labor Party supported, for which I am very grateful, and I did try to respond in goodwill -

Ms O'Connor - You certainly have - in good faith, and with goodwill.

Mr BARNETT - and we have an outcome where there was an agreement that major projects and construction would be included as part of that plan, and be subject to scrutiny in the parliament. I have indicated my expectation of regular meetings with the authority and also subject to parliamentary scrutiny on a regular, ongoing basis when here as Minister for Housing.

Therefore, I am with you on the importance of where we are going to care for Tasmanians who are vulnerable and caring for the here and now, as well as getting the houses out of the ground. Now, with respect to the latter, this is where I am concerned about this particular amendment. We just cannot support it because I do not want unnecessary obstacles in the way. I agree with you, with respect to transparency and openness and scrutiny. I outlined earlier in the debate how that would be done through the statement of ministerial intent; the corporate statement that would be tabled each year which would be for a three-year period.

The Auditor-General's report would be scrutinised and you would have opportunities to share your thoughts and views, so I have outlined that in response to your earlier amendment. The Public Works Committee does have a role to play, but it does not apply now, with respect to Housing Tasmania. We are establishing a public non-financial sector entity, I have outlined again the role of that, and I think there are sufficient oversight mechanisms.

I implore you to please consider the merit of change. There is a case for change for this bill. There is a case to improve how we care for homeless and vulnerable Tasmanians. Based on the feedback I have had from the sector, and the sectors in this space, I believe that we can make that change. We have a reference group; we have the community housing providers. We have those that provide the community support, and the goodwill in this community is enormous.

I am absolutely astounded by the level of goodwill and support, and I will be there in a few hours' time with the Salvation Army for the sleepover. I am really looking forward to it. I am looking forward to the roundtable we are going to have after touring their facilities in Hobart, over the course of several hours, subject to parliament concluding and being allowed to get out and join the Salvos for that, and then sleeping over.

I am urging members in this place to think carefully about how they want to proceed and I am encouraging support for this bill. We are going through committee, and we have had a lot of support, a lot of goodwill. We have shaken hands on many occasions and we have got good outcomes. On this particular amendment, the Government cannot support it, but I do commend the rest of the bill to members and urge support.

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

The Committee divided -

AYES 3

Ms Johnston (Teller)
Ms O'Connor
Dr Woodruff

NOES 19

Mrs Alexander
Ms Archer
Mr Barnett
Dr Broad
Ms Butler

Ms Dow
Mr Ellis
Mr Ferguson
Ms Finlay
Ms Haddad
Mr Jaensch
Mr O'Byrne
Ms O'Byrne
Ms Ogilvie
Mr Rockliff
Mr Shelton
Mr Street
Ms White
Mr Winter
Mr Wood (Teller)
Mr Young

Amendment negatived.

Clause 74 agreed to.

Clauses 75 to 77 agreed to.

Clause 78 -

Advances to housing providers, housing support providers and other persons

Ms HADDAD - This is one of the parts of the bill that deals with advances of money to the sector, presumably also to commercial providers for the purposes of the act. Homes Tasmania will be able to make advances to housing providers for them to sell or lease residential premises for the purposes of the act, including mixed developments that we heard the minister speak about earlier, to eligible people and to others.

I want more information about how those advances will work, some more detail about the likely recipients of those advances and how that loan will be managed. Will Homes Tasmania become the mortgagor/mortgagee, the person responsible in the way that a bank is responsible for a mortgage? I reiterate the concerns I had before about whether Homes Tasmania is able to borrow money from the private sector. The minister made it clear that is not the case, that they would not be able to borrow from commercial banks.

I want to have more of an explanation about how those advances of money will work. Is it simply a replication of how grants funding to the sector operates now or is it more in the sense of the Government lending money, in which case, who manages those loans?

Mr BARNETT - I understand where you are coming from. I am advised these provisions are in the Homes Act 1935. There needs to be some flexibility, agility there. The MyHome home share program is perhaps an example of where they need to be agile. Advances are loans, not grants, so I draw that to your attention.

Housing providers are who they are, and again they must be subject to the purposes of the bill.

Clause 78 agreed to.

Clauses 79 to 101 agreed to.

Clause 102 -

Homes Tasmania to obtain reports from inspectors and valuers

Ms HADDAD - Will this be restricted to the Valuer-General, or will other valuers be able to conduct those reports and evaluations?

Mr BARNETT - Yes, that is my understanding. It is the Valuer-General or other valuers.

Clause 102 agreed to.

Clause 103 -

Register of purchases, tenancies and advances

Ms HADDAD - This is my last question on the bill, to everybody's relief, I am sure. Will that register or list be publicly released or publicly available?

Mr BARNETT - My advice is that this is a carryover from the Homes Act 1935. It is not publicly reported at the moment.

Ms HADDAD - Is it your intention to retain that for this state of affairs?

Mr BARNETT - I have not formed a view on that. I am happy to consider it.

Clause 103 agreed to.

Clauses 104 to 115 agreed to.

Schedules 1 and 2 agreed to.

Title agreed to.

Bill reported with amendments.

HOMES TASMANIA BILL 2022 (No. 35)

Third Reading

[5.59 p.m.]

Mr BARNETT (Lyons - Minister for State Development, Construction and Housing) - I move that so much of standing orders be suspended as would prevent the bill from being read the third time forthwith.

Motion agreed to.

Ms HADDAD (Clark) - Mr Speaker, I will speak briefly on the third reading. I do want to express my appreciation for the minister's candour throughout this debate. I think he has taken seriously many of the concerns that have been raised by us and by the Greens, and by extension on behalf of the sector, and recognise that he has accepted some amendments and operated very much in goodwill. I definitely get the impression minister Barnett does have very goodwill when it comes to working on the housing portfolio, working with Housing Tasmania - or Homes Tasmania as they will be - and with the sector.

Mr Speaker, unfortunately we will continue our position of opposing the bill. As I said earlier, it is my fundamental belief that the things the minister is hoping to achieve through the formation of Homes Tasmania could be achieved simply through revising the Homes Act, the old act - which absolutely does need review and modernisation.

However, I think that could be achieved without moving the responsibilities of Housing Tasmania effectively out of government. I have already put on the record, many times, my concerns around the board and the redefinition of housing provider. I will not reiterate those now.

Mr Speaker, there is no doubt that absolutely more needs to be done. We all know we are in an unprecedented housing crisis, but it is my concern that with some of the structures put forward in the bill - notwithstanding the fact that we have been able to go through the bill in a forensic way - there will still potentially be delays, and potentially more red tape for Homes Tasmania in the way that they conduct their work, that I think could have an unintended effect of slowing down the provision of housing.

Many of the questions that I put on the record, unfortunately, did not dissuade me of that belief.

Mr SPEAKER - Member for Clark, I do need to remind you of the standing orders, which simply say you can make a short contribution, but you cannot go back through the whole reading again.

Ms HADDAD - Okay. I just wanted to reiterate our position, Mr Speaker. I will finish there in that case.

Mr O'BYRNE (Franklin) - Mr Speaker, I will make a brief contribution. I will reiterate my opposition to this bill philosophically. I support the role of government and government making decisions and having control over public housing. Therefore, I philosophically disagree with creating an arm's length authority.

I have made this argument on the second reading. I did not feel that I could contribute into the committee stage. Okay, I will be brief.

Mr SPEAKER - The same thing, Mr O'Byrne. That is brief.

Mr O'BYRNE - I will be opposing the bill on the basis of the arguments put forward in my second reading.

Ms O'CONNOR (Clark - Leader of the Greens) - Mr Speaker, a brief statement. From the outset, we really wanted to support this legislation, and we really want this minister to be a successful housing minister.

Through the course of the bill, this minister has been really constructive and helpful. We want to help him be a good minister, but I think this bill is not the mechanism for doing that. With a really heavy heart, we will not be supporting this bill.

Mr SPEAKER - The question is that the bill be now read for the third time.

The House divided -

AYES 11

Mrs Alexander
Ms Archer
Mr Barnett
Mr Ellis
Mr Ferguson
Ms Ogilvie
Mr Rockliff
Mr Street
Mr Tucker
Mr Wood (Teller)
Mr Young

NOES 11

Dr Broad (Teller)
Ms Butler
Ms Dow
Ms Finlay
Ms Haddad
Ms Johnston
Mr O'Byrne
Ms O'Byrne
Ms O'Connor
Mr Winter
Dr Woodruff

PAIRS

Mr Jaensch

Ms White

Mr SPEAKER - The result of the division being 11 Ayes and 11 Noes, in accordance with standing order 167, I cast my vote with the Ayes.

Bill read the third time.

**POLICE OFFENCES AMENDMENT (WORKPLACE PROTECTION) Bill 2022
(No. 15)**

Bill returned from the Legislative Council with amendments

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

That the message be taken into consideration tomorrow.

Motion agreed to.

HOMES TASMANIA (CONSEQUENTIAL AMENDMENTS) BILL 2022 (No. 36)

Second Reading

[6.08 p.m.]

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

That the bill be now read the second time.

As the Homes Tasmania Bill 2022 is the primary legislation driving the need for this bill, I have addressed its purposes and outlined the substitutions this bill makes in my second reading speech for the Homes Tasmania Bill 2022.

I commend the bill to the House.

Ms HADDAD (Clark) - Mr Speaker, I was joking when I told the minister I had a long speech written on the consequential amendments bill. I do not. I just wanted to finish what I was unable to finish on the third reading of the last bill.

That is that. I do recognise the goodwill of this minister in hoping to make a change and nobody denies that there does need to be significant change in how we deal with housing. The Housing Crisis is worsening by the month and by the year in Tasmania and more does need to be done.

My fear is that removing the functions of a government agency from government and putting them, ostensibly, at arms-length, could create more problems than solutions. I do have faith in the people who work at Housing Tasmania and who will transfer to Homes Tasmania to do their absolute best. I know how hard the people in that agency work. I know how hard the people in the Community Services sector work, every single day, to service the needs of vulnerable Tasmanians who are in need of housing, of housing support services and of community support services.

As I said, in my second reading and as I asked at Estimates, when I asked the minister what the policy planning, or the master planning, was behind the establishment of Homes Tasmania, it was made clear to me that it did not commence until after former premier Mr Gutwein made the announcement in his state of the state address in March.

I feel like this minister has been left with the responsibility to implement Mr Gutwein's thought to implement a statutory authority that he announced in his state of the state address in March.

I am not confident a lot of master planning went into it prior to that announcement by the former premier. A lot has gone in since. The result of that is the statement of expectations and the bill we have just had a very lengthy debate on. I hope that Homes Tasmania can achieve the things that the minister hopes it does, but I have worries about what it means for staff of the former agency and their conditions as well as ongoing potential effects on the sector and on housing supply.

I hope I am proven wrong, but for the reasons I have put forward in the previous debate we will also be opposing this bill.

Ms O'CONNOR (Clark - Leader of the Greens) - Mr Speaker, this bill hangs off the back of the bill that has just passed this House. It contains a very sad little provision in the schedule, which is that the Homes Act of 1935 is repealed. This is a piece of legislation that was born in the Great Depression when so many Tasmanians were struggling and there was so much hardship in our community.

The parliament, our predecessors at that time, obviously recognised that the state of Tasmania has an enormous responsibility and a really important role in making sure that the people of Tasmania have somewhere to call home. When people cannot afford to buy their own home and so many cannot now - I am certain that during the Great Depression many more could not - then the state has a key role to play. All around this island, housing communities were born of the Homes Act 1935. It came from a time when government built things. Sure, mistakes were made: bad planning, communities isolated from transport, schools, shops, opportunities, but a lot of really positive change has happened in the last 10 or 15 years in those communities too, some of it as a result of the reforms enacted by the previous government, carried through by this Government, and overseen by the good people at Housing Tasmania.

I have friends who work, who have professional lives, very successful people by many metrics and they grew up in Housing Tasmania homes. We should be really thankful for the operation of the Homes Act of 1935 for all it has given this island and its people, for the social and economic foundation it has provided to our fellow Tasmanians.

I do not know what will happen to this legislation in the Upper House. I do not know what will happen to the consequential amendments, but I would like to take this opportunity to say vale to the Homes Act 1935 should this legislation pass. The fact that such an antique we are still talking about now, tells us that it was an act of strength, that had real heft behind it. It is an act that fulfilled its purpose very nobly.

I am very sad to see schedule one of the consequential amendment bill. I recognise that this amendment bill amends a number of acts in order to make numerous statutes consistent with the operation of the new Homes Tasmania statutory authority. I, too, want to thank the minister for being, well, certainly the best I have ever seen him in debate on a bill. I have seen the minister out at community events in the housing and homelessness space and he just glows.

This portfolio is the best of this minister. Although we were not able to support the legislation, we passionately want to see this minister succeed.

Bill read for the second time.

Bill read for the third time.

ADJOURNMENT

[6.16 p.m.]

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

That the House do now adjourn.

Huon Valley Flood Recovery Effort

Tina Kitchener - Tribute

Mr STREET (Franklin - Minister for Hospitality and Events) - Mr Speaker, I rise to acknowledge the hard work and leadership shown by the Huon Valley Council in coordinating the recovery and clean-up efforts following the recent floods that have impacted much of the region. Dean Young and I received a briefing from the Huon Valley Council Acting Mayor, Sally Doyle, Deputy Mayor, Sue Clark, and Infrastructure Manager, Lachlan Kranz, last Friday.

As local MPs, we were there to listen, but also to offer any help that the Tasmanian government can provide. It was pretty disheartening to hear about people's homes being flooded and the damage to many local roads, bridges, and drains. The council's works teams are out there working hard to repair the damage and I want to take this opportunity to say thank you to the women and men who are getting that work done.

As Lachlan described it, the two days of flooding have created a year's maintenance budget in one weekend. One of the hardest hit was Scrubby Hill Farm Market Garden, which was totally inundated and many crops destroyed. Scrubby Hill Farm and the Geeveston Community House have organised clean-up events throughout this week with another session being held this Saturday, 27 August from 9 a.m.

Details on how to register for the clean-up are available on the Scrubby Hill Farm and Geeveston Community House Facebook pages and I encourage anyone who is able to head down there and lend a hand.

The council has acted swiftly to support the community. The Huon Valley Hub has been setup as a one-stop shop so all locals can get advice and help for flood assistance. They are hosting a drop-in session at the Huon Valley Hub this evening between 4 p.m. and 7 p.m. for affected community members.

Support and counselling services have been on site, including the Tasmanian Lifeline, Red Cross, Business Enterprise Centre, Housing Connect, RACT, Rural Business Tasmania and the Salvation Army. In an important gesture, the council have offered free access to the Southbridge Waste Transfer Station for those households directly impacted by the storm and flash flooding.

We can all agree that across the state, the local government sector plays a vital role to assist the community to recover from disaster, as well as build resilience against future emergencies. Disasters disrupt our lives in many ways and recovering from a crisis and finding new ways to live, work and play can take some time. Working together, we can support each other through these sorts of difficult times and I acknowledge the important roles that councils play in these situations.

On behalf of the Tasmanian government, I thank the Huon Valley Council for their leadership in connecting the community and I thank the dedicated workers and volunteers who are ensuring people in need receive the care and support they need when they need it.

Before I sit down I want to do something that the person I am going to speak about right now is going to hate. Tina Kitchener has worked in my office for the six months I have been

a minister as my executive assistant and diary manager and has worked her last day today for the Government.

Tina started with us back in 2014 when we came to government as Rene Hidding's office manager. She was going to retire in February this year. When I became a minister, she generously offered to stay for another six months and prolong her time at work and put on hold her retirement plans. She leaves today. Like I said, she will hate that I am even mentioning it, but for anybody who has come into a ministerial role, they would all know that your head spins for the first couple of months as you try to get everything organised. Tina is an absolute marvel in terms of organising me, but also in creating a culture within the office that has made everybody feel welcome and valued as well, something that, obviously, I have tried to promote in my six months in the job.

To Tina and her husband, Paul, enjoy retirement, and enjoy the trip overseas next month that you have planned. As I said to you today, please Tina, do not be a stranger, come back and see us because we do not just value the six months work you did for me, we value the work that you did for eight years for the Government.

Science Week - Activities

[6.20 p.m.]

Ms OGILVIE (Clark - Minister for Advanced Manufacturing and Defence Industries) - Mr Speaker, Science week has once again thrilled and inspired audiences across Tasmania this August, opening with the Beaker Street Festival street party at TMAG in Hobart. Dr Karl, who we love, wowed audiences at the Odeon Theatre and then joined some of Tasmania's most accomplished scientists on a road trip to four iconic locations, including Cradle Mountain. Beaker Street finished in style with a spectacular dark-sky party at Spring Bay Mill in Triabunna.

Over the weekend, the Festival of Bright Ideas on the waterfront in Hobart was a sold-out event with schools and families immersed in the wonderful world of science through hands-on workshops and mind-blowing stage shows.

This year, the team at Science Made Beerable, worked with four Australian independent breweries to deliver a beer tasting event, exploring the science behind brewing and beer. With a sold-out live event in Hobart as well as watch parties on the mainland and on-line, this event is going from strength to strength.

Dr Martin George from the Hive conducted two star-gazing events at the Ulverstone Secondary College. The audience were able to see Saturn, star clusters and nebula and Alpha Centauri through telescopes and those there on Tuesday evening were lucky enough to have perfectly clear skies, something we specialise here in Tasmania.

South of Hobart, specialisations were held for one of the world's longest living things, the Huon pine and also in the Huon Valley, a STEM tour visited four local businesses using problem-solving to find innovative solutions in aquaculture, agriculture, engineering and technology.

New migrants to Tasmania enjoyed a trip to the Marine Discovery Centre at Woodbridge to learn about our natural marine wonders and threats such as micro and macro plastics,

something the House will know I have been on about for quite some time, and discussed career pathways in science.

The 16th annual Science Meets Parliament dinner was held, providing an important showcase for excellence in science research and STEM activities in the state by connecting scientists directly with Tasmanian members of Parliament to share knowledge and discuss the opportunities and challenges of STEM. It was a great night and everybody enjoyed it. We were having bids for the most exciting science discussion that we could have next year. There were some threats of bringing penguins but I think that was only in jest.

It is not over. Science Week has grown into a festival that cannot be contained within seven days and there are still events to come. Travelling across the north of the state, the performance, Imagining lutriwita's Deep Time will tell a geological story from over a billion years ago to the mountain-crushing ice age that brought the arrival of the palawa people. These performances will be in Lilydale, Queenstown, Wynyard and Launceston in early September.

A junior keeper's program at Wings Wildlife Park at Gunns Plains will run on 27 and 28 August and give young people in the region an insight into working behind the scenes with the largest collection of Tasmanian wildlife in Australia.

I was also fortunate to launch the Tasmanian STEM Excellence Awards for 2022 during Science Week. I encourage all STEM teachers, researchers, communicators and innovators to get their applications in or encourage a friend to do it. It is a great opportunity to celebrate the talent of our STEM community, to celebrate science and to celebrate all things that we do well in Tasmania. For more details on that, see the State Growth website.

Over one million people attended Science Week events across Australia this year and we can all be proud of the quality and quantity of events held in Tasmania. I share with the House my sincere thanks to the volunteers, event holders and science communicators across Tasmania who brought their love of science to our communities, right across our beautiful state and Australia this August. I thank everybody who works in science, who likes science, who likes stargazing, who got out and went to events, who participated in this amazing week. I look forward to it growing in breadth and scope as we move forward together for another year next year.

Racing - North West Track Upgrade

[6.24 p.m.]

Ms O'CONNOR - (Clark - Leader of the Greens) - Mr Speaker, I rise tonight to respond to Ms Ogilvie's Dorothy Dix question about the North-West Track upgrade and particularly her statement that the new track would mean, and I quote: harness and greyhound racing has a long future.

I remind the House that we have never seen a business case for this track upgrade. It will be publicly funded. The committee looking into cruelty and the greyhound racing industry recommended, at the very least, a straight track.

During her answer, Ms Ogilvie went on to sledge the Labor Opposition in a fairly pathetic attempt at an attack, I must say, over a record breaking E-petition which the Greens tabled on

behalf of tireless greyhound welfare advocates. I had the absolute honour of tabling that petition, Mr Speaker, the largest ever parliamentary E-petition, which had more than 13 500 signatures. Those 13 500 petitioners recognised the inherent cruelty of greyhound racing. I am sure many of the signatories - in fact, I know it - are from Ms Ogilvie's and my electorate of Clark. The petition specifically noted that the welfare of these sensitive, sweet dogs is a matter for everyone. I quote:

Opposition to the cruelty in the greyhound racing industry cuts across politics and that greyhounds are rescued and rehomed by Tasmanians of all political affiliation.

This is a fact that Ms Ogilvie needs to acknowledge, especially as one of the branches of her own, new, current party, raised the matter at the Liberal State Council. There is a huge well of love and care for these beautiful dogs among the extended Liberal Party family. I know plenty of greyhound lovers who are self-confessed Liberal voters.

At the Liberal State Council on the weekend, the Launceston business branch put forward a motion to end the funding of greyhound racing by taxpayers but regrettably, even for her own party members, the racing minister's response to the petition was as outdated as the industry itself is. We have been reassured by the minister that animal welfare is a high priority for the Government. Lip service. We hear this all the time. 'The greyhound and the racing industry are investing more money than ever before into animal welfare'. Well, here is a minister speaking more for the industry than she is for the animals.

The industry has gone on a PR blitz since the petition was tabled. They know their social licence is frayed and worn, and their days are numbered. This is why 6593 greyhounds have been seriously injured on Australian tracks in 2022, and 107 greyhounds have died at tracks across Australia this year. Eleven of those were in Tasmania, and here is the list of dogs: Bashful, Blondie, Estonia Chrystal, Yarramundi Hoover, Just Mates, Winky Hugo, Husky Shiraz, Chifron Blazer, Fly Calypso (a tragic story at the north-west track), Dark Titan and Masani Bale.

Of those 11 tragic premature deaths, only four of them were listed in stewards' reports - the only public record. The others came to light because of questions the Greens put on notice at Estimates. Those questions were provided to us by dedicated greyhound welfare advocates who trawled through the data and recorded the dogs who suffered serious injuries and are never seen again. Those dogs are not recorded by Government as track deaths because they are killed off site. They are proof more dogs are dying than are reported by Government and industry. That is not even to mention the injuries, many of which mean the dogs are killed later or stop racing and if they are lucky, they find a new home.

A beautiful interstate example of this is Blue the Grey from New South Wales who arrived in his new owner's life after breaking his leg at race trial, much like the late Tar Bernard. Unlike Tar Bernard, Blue the Grey had a second chance and became a social media star highlighting the cruelty of this industry. Blue died earlier this year of cancer, but his human would not let him be forgotten. Blue's mum, Kimberly, uses his social media profile and she has raised more than \$125 000 for greyhound adoption services, animal welfare charities and to groups who are lobbying to shut this terrible industry down.

That massive fundraising effort is an example of the momentum growing to end greyhound racing as the industry continues to lose its social licence.

Mr Speaker, I know there are some terrific owners and trainers out there who love their dogs and treat them very well. Then there are trainers like Anthony Bullock. Greyhound racing has callousness and greed and a lack of empathy at its core. A growing number of Tasmanians want no part in paying for it, at least 13 500 who signed that e-petition. This industry that breeds dogs to die or to be cast aside when they do not run fast enough, or cost too much to feed, is running out time.

Ms Ogilvie, her Liberal colleagues, and Ms Ogilvie's former Labor colleagues, are on the wrong side of history. We will not let Liberal or Labor parties off the hook when it comes to the welfare of animals. Never, ever.

To the thousands of Tasmanians who put their name to the record-breaking petition, that has been dismissed by Government and this minister, I promise you the Greens will not give up. We will always be a voice in the parliament for these sensitive, gentle dogs, who fall victim to, and are bred for, this dreadful industry.

Burnie Court Complex - Request for Update

[6.31 p.m.]

Ms DOW (Braddon - Deputy Leader of the Opposition) - Mr Speaker, I rise on the adjournment tonight, to speak again about the Burnie Court Complex. This Government has not provided an update to the Burnie community on progress made in the expression of interest process. It is only through the media this week that it has been brought to the attention of the community and to business leaders that it could be nine to 12 months now before there is a decision made on where the court site will be in the Burnie CBD.

They still have not ruled the Mooreville Road site. That is disgraceful. There are three good sites, two which are known, one which is not, in the Burnie CBD. It should just be ruled out that the Mooreville Road site is still even being considered as part of this process.

I have been contacted by members of the community who are concerned that they were not invited to a meeting on 3 August in Burnie. These are residents who have met previously with representatives from the Government. They deserve to hear firsthand from this Government about what the next steps are in this process. Will it be nine to 12 months? That is absurd. That is an incredible amount of time.

The expression of interest process was short and sharp, so why should this process be any longer? It does not make sense. It is time the Government invited members of the community, residents who they have met with previously, to receive an update on progress.

It is time this Government ruled out the Mooreville Road site for the relocation of the Burnie Court complex.

Cost of Living Crisis - Challenges

[6.33 p.m.]

Ms FINLAY (Bass) - Mr Speaker, this evening, I rise on adjournment to speak about the challenges faced by Tasmanians in the current cost of living crisis. There are so many pressures on so many elements of our community. This week in parliament, having heard responses to questions, Tuesday, Wednesday and today, I do not feel that the Government understands the breadth and the depth of the impacts being felt by Tasmanians.

There are individuals and families, not just in the sections of our community where people have for some time needed community organisations to support them, there are now Tasmanians right across the spectrum who are struggling with the pressure. All we hear this Government talk about is the same old approaches that they have been making to the same challenges in the community. Right now, there are families across all sectors working two, three or four jobs, arents trying to look after their children and people living on their own who are struggling to meet their individual costs.

It is clear to Tasmanian Labor that this Government does not understand and is out of touch with the reality of what is happening to Tasmanians.

On a recent visit to the Ravenswood Starting Point Neighbourhood House we heard of conversations of families - not just one, but multiple families - who are choosing not to have their power connected at the meter. They have it turned off at the mains because they cannot afford their heating and their lighting. Through winter, they have been going to bed early. That is how extreme these pressures are right now.

We are hearing from small businesses - which are the fundamental economic building blocks in our communities, not only in our cities but across the regions - that are also struggling. Using exactly the same power they have used year on year, doing the same services, their bills are pushing them to the point where it is difficult to keep operating.

We are hearing from large businesses, from industrials, about the challenges with the changes of their contracted prices in electricity and power. This is not only a challenge for regular Tasmanians. It feels like the Government is not keeping up. They are not getting the basic understanding of the pressures that are being felt right across the community.

Tasmanian Labor believe that Tasmanians should be paying Tasmanian prices for Tasmanian power.

Tasmanian Labor believe that Tasmania's small businesses should be paying Tasmanian prices for Tasmanian power.

Tasmanian Labor know that Tasmanian industrials should be paying Tasmanian prices and Tasmanian power.

We have pushed this Government to have an understanding of these concerns. We have given them the opportunity to respond to and take the right position to support Tasmanians, but they are blind. They cannot hear or do not understand, cannot understand, do not want to understand the reality of the challenges being faced right across Tasmania.

It is not only this cost of living crisis challenge with power. There are challenges with access to housing, with access to jobs. There are all sorts of challenges in our community.

On the weekend I was in Bridport, a beautiful coastal town that has a great offering of bakeries, cafes and actually some new offerings in the food market at night time. Retail and hospitality offerings in Bridport have been challenged recently and it has been tough. I was at the Bridport Café, which I have been connecting with for some time now. The owner said, 'You know what, my barista' - and how essential is a barista to a local cafe - 'my barista has had to leave because at the end of her lease, the lease was not renewed, and she had to move back to Launceston because there are no houses available for my worker here in Bridport.'

To lose a key part of your business because they cannot access housing in a regional community in Tasmania is devastating for that business - and also for the community, the travellers and visitors who come to that place for that experience.

I have spoken to farmers, to dairies, to people irrigating, about the challenges of power and accommodation. The costs of running a dairy or an irrigator - if you can actually get phone access to run those in regional areas. I was recently in Meander talking about the basics of operating your business, and in Meander they do not even have reliable energy or power to run their irrigators or their dairies.

There are a lot of challenges right across Tasmania, and also in the regions. They are challenging not only Tasmanian individuals and families, but small businesses and our industrials and majors across Tasmania.

On the jobs front, I share another challenge. There are many people in work, but also many people choosing to work multiple jobs at the moment so they can keep up with their costs. Going into a trade is a great job, but I recently visited a local iconic business in Launceston, Glasgow Engineering, and had the opportunity to catch up about their work and the types of support that they are providing to a fascinating array of entities across Tasmania - the support they are providing here and across the country.

On LinkedIn, John recently posted concerns he has with accessing people into his jobs. I quote:

The current skills shortage is going to kill us. It is nearly impossible to employ a fitter/machinist. We can't even encourage school leavers into the trade. We host work experience from three different schools locally. There has been so much emphasis on pushing high school students towards university, and I am not saying I disagree because we urgently need doctors as well, but in my day at high school we used to do things like metal work and woodwork and the teacher would encourage those who showed skill in those areas into appropriate trades.

The problem as I see it, is once those students complete year 11 and 12 and then go onto the first and second years of university, before they realise it is not for them, it is too late and they become lost in the system.

Our governments are failing us. Too much money is being wasted on things like football stadiums and not being vested into areas of need, like skills and

training. Like health, like manufacturing, training institutes such as TAFE and education. If we don't act soon, we will no longer be the clever country.

Time expired.

North & East Business Hub

[6.40 p.m.]

Mr ELLIS (Braddon - Minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Management) - Mr Speaker, I want to highlight one man's journey tonight and the broader story he is a part of. Sean Wendes is a 27-year-old bloke from northern Tasmania. In June this year he got a job, like a lot of Tasmanians, but what makes him really special is that he got a job after not having employment for the last 10 years. That is an incredible opportunity for that young man to start himself on a pathway that leads to a brighter future.

I was quite moved by his words, talking with the ABC recently. He said:

Mum could not stop crying. They could not believe it was real. They would say, have you got it in writing, nothing has been confirmed, do you have a contract? I was like, no this is actually going to happen.

It is one of my very happy memories. That really speaks to the dignity of work. Now Sean has a job with Temtrol Technologies in George Town. He started off as a casual and was quickly taken on full time. How Sean got that job was through the North & East Business Hub, based in northern Tasmania, one of the job hubs we have around the state. They are connecting jobseekers - like Sean, people who have not worked before, people who are coming back into the workforce or those looking for a new challenge - with businesses that are seeking staff who want to have a crack, just like Sean.

It is a relatively new initiative, one we have really been big supporters of. It is backed by some of Tasmania's most prominent individuals who really believe in a philosophy that when it comes to finding work for people, when it comes to matching those people with businesses looking for their skills or aptitude or even just their attitude, the closer you can get to those local communities, the better.

It is through those relationships we have here in Tasmania - because we are small communities that are lucky to be highly connected - that we can leverage a place-based economic development that will bring people like Sean up to the point that he deserves to be, which is working hard, getting stuck in and setting himself up for the future.

The jobs hubs were started in the south-east at Sorell. Kerry Vincent and the team there, who I met in the first week of this job, have really set about a model so many are now following here in Tasmania, including the NEB hub, including the north-west, the east coast and down in the Huon soon. That connection between those local people, local jobs and local businesses working together is phenomenal.

There are even local jobseekers who walked into the Sorell hub and now work there, helping people in their local communities to find work. The regional jobs hub network has

placed over 1700 people into local jobs, and four new hubs are expected to all be operational in the coming months.

That is the broad story that Sean Wendes is a part of, but we should never forget those little steps, and how important it is when you are coming out of a situation you did not necessarily want to be in, and when you are looking with higher aspirations to the future.

Sean said to the ABC:

I have found what people have been telling me - that I am good enough and I have worth and I can actually give to a company. I have got skills and value as an individual. It has been very uplifting knowing that I can actually contribute to the company and make a difference for the better.

That is a wonderful attitude for anyone, and I can absolutely see why Temtrol Technologies has taken him on. Sean has even said it is a bit of fun as well, which is really good to see. Sean's situation is unique in so many ways, but it is also potentially a more common story. The ABC put it quite well:

It shows two things: how life changing it is to finally find a job, and what a difference a proper labour exchange such as these jobs hubs can make for a local community.

I am very excited to be the minister for jobs hubs and spreading that hope, those opportunities and that aspiration around our state. Well done, Sean. Keep up the hard work, mate. Thank you to businesses and jobs hubs who are helping to build brighter futures in their local community.

Southern Outlet - Effects on Residents of Dynnyrne Road

[6.45 p.m.]

Ms HADDAD - Mr Speaker, I want to reflect on the Dorothy Dixier that the minister Mr Ferguson had asked by the new member for Franklin, Mr Young, earlier today, where he spoke about the plans that he has to put a short strip of road on the Southern Outlet - an extra lane on the Southern Outlet - between Olinda Grove and Macquarie Street. He claims that will ease traffic congestion in the Huon Valley and Kingborough. That is not what I am going to focus on tonight. I will focus on the things that Mr Ferguson said and the response that he has had now from those residents.

In question time today, he said that he was pleased to advise that after significant and patient efforts, the design work, the property impacts and the land acquisition have indeed been minimised. He said he could confirm today that only three full property acquisitions have been required - all of which have been purchased by the Government on a voluntary basis, through respectful, negotiated agreements with the vendors. There have been no compulsory acquisitions. Another four properties will be partially acquired, which will be partial land only, and that process is well underway in the normal way. No doubt he believes that it will be negotiated, as he said, 'respectfully', through negotiated agreements.

That is not the experience of the residents of Dynnyrne Road, who have been put through incredible hardship and anguish by this minister and this Government, for over 12 months now, in fact, dating back over 18 months. That is not how they feel they have been treated. The minister says that there has been 'fear whipped up by members opposite'. He means us, the Opposition. Fear, whipped up, by us. That is not the case. These residents have been put through hell by this minister. Meg, who has become a spokesperson for the group, spoke to ABC Radio this afternoon and here is what Meg had to say. Many houses, about 17 or possibly more houses received what looked like potential compulsory acquisition notices in their letterboxes, with no notice. In fact, Meg's was not found in the letter box; it was found under the barbecue, inserted there by someone representing the Minister.

Here is what Meg told ABC Radio today:

I think Michael Ferguson is either potentially illiterate in his understanding of what voluntary means or he just being arrogant in his assumptions in what he can get away with. There was no one who could say: we do not want to go. All the people that lost their homes, did not want to go. What choice did they have? They either engaged in the process or they were destined to have a notice to treat, that is forced to leave. Voluntary is a choice and they had no choice.

That is how Meg feels and that is how her neighbours feel. Another resident called in after he heard Meg's comments and he said their house was officially sold over to the Government after an ongoing back and forth with State Growth and the Government about it. He said:

I think I just really want to reinforce what Meg has said. Regarding Michael Ferguson's statement that it was voluntarily passed over, it is an absolute lie. It is just a total fabrication of what actually happened.

John said he was told by a liaison officer that he could fight the Government as much as he wanted, but in the end, they were going to take it anyway. He said:

It has been a nightmare, mate. My parents built that home on the occasion of their marriage and that was back in the late 1950s. My kids have been devastated about it too. They were raised in that home.

He said his Mum had declining health through the last 18 months and she died last September. Through that, he was trying to talk to the Government and keep as much of it from his mother so the stress would not put her under further hardship.

These residents have been put under serious hurt and serious harm, not caused by the Opposition but caused by the Government and by this minister: not whipped up by us, but directly caused by him and the people representing him. They have been treated unfairly, they have been treated with disdain, and they have not been treated respectfully as the minister claims.

Mr Speaker, we will not apologise for standing up for our constituents. The Minister said today that members opposite - us - had no stomach, no spine, to stand up for the people who need better transport solutions. Well, I tell you what, we have got spine and we have got

stomach to stand up for people who are unfairly treated by this Government. We have got spine and we have got stomach to stand up for our constituents and our communities.

Swift Parrot Recovery Plan

[6.50 p.m.]

Dr WOODRUFF (Franklin) - Mr Speaker, I will talk tonight about the utter perfidy of this Minister for the Environment and Climate Change, and this state Government when it comes to the failed efforts to protect the critically endangered swift parrot.

We have a Freedom of Information document from the Commonwealth Department. It shows that both Tasmanian and Commonwealth environment and forestry bureaucrats have been pushing to remove language from the draft Swift Parrot Recovery Plan that would put the finger directly on native forest logging as the key threat to the habitat, and therefore the survival, of the swift parrot.

What the documents show, is that the state environment department has threatened not to sign up to the recovery plan unless language which aims the blame squarely on the forestry industry in Tasmania - native forest clear-felling and logging of flowering and nesting habitat in old hollows - is censored out.

DPIPWE said in the draft recovery plan that there is overall concern with the consistent narrative focus on real or perceived inadequacies in Tasmania's forest management. They accused the plan of having an imbalance in the narrative around threats that the forest industry posed to the swift parrot. They wanted significant doctoring of the forestry and land clearing threats, including removing a sentence that said 'native forest logging and intensive native forest silviculture practices poses the greatest threat to the survival of the swift parrot population'.

They also wanted the sentence 'the Tasmanian forest practices system has not protected all of the breeding habitat for the species, increasing the threats to the species' -they wanted that gone. They wanted to censor out of the document the line that said 'removing reference to forestry operations over the past 30 years have reduced the amount of available swift parrot nesting and foraging habitat'. They also wanted to remove the sentence that talked about 'the harvesting of breeding and foraging habitat in native forests remains the most significant threat to the species' persistence in the wild'.

We find that the federal department, the Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resource Economics and Sciences (ABARES) and the Commonwealth forestry branch were also having a go. They described the habitat loss as 'a minor threat to the swift parrot'. They emphasise that forest harvesting was not permanent removal of habitat, clearly denying the reality that swift parrots need old growth trees with ancient hollows so they can nest in them.

ABARES and Commonwealth forestry also said that the recovery plan needs to be worded 'so as to avoid the impression that protection of critical habitat is the most important action' - when we know it is. They wanted to remove the sentence that said 'the regional forestry agreement has failed to adequately protect swift parrots in their breeding range because large areas of potential or known habitat have been logged, despite potential impacts on the

species'. Their comment was that 'the statement is incorrect and of significant sensitivity to both the Australian Government and Tasmanian Government in its current forms'.

It makes it very clear that we have had federal and state bureaucrats from environment and forestry and, we do not know which other departments, all having a go. After the public consultation process is finished, they are all having a go at the scientific assessment of risk to the swift parrot: the work of scientists like Dr Matt Webb, Dr Mark Holdsworth and also Dr Jen Sanger, Dr Dejan Stojanovic and all the other people who have been documenting the life cycle and the existence, the predation of sugar gliders, the threats of habitat from forestry on the Swift parrot.

These are the people who know exactly what the threats are. Yes, they include sugar gliders but fundamentally, the increase in sugar glider predation has come from the massive loss of habitat through forestry clear-felling and logging. That has given the sugar glider far more scope to move but also, most importantly, it has removed the trees, the habitat in the first place, for the breeding and the nesting that is required.

The watering down is effectively signing the swift parrot's death warrant and it is a disgrace. We asked the minister what the role of his department has been. Clearly it was state Environment bureaucrats who were responsible for the information. We want to know exactly what his role and his predecessor's role has been in this process. It is a scandal to interfere like this with a scientific assessment of threats to a critically endangered species.

Dr Matt Webb is a conservation biologist. He was a member of the swift parrot recovery team for nearly two decades. He said that the proposed changes and the rationale given for them was 'just wrong'. They called in question what recovery teams were for at all.

He said, 'If they're accepted they'd take the efforts to protect the species back 20 years'. You would have to wonder whether that is the purpose of why they are there. It must be. It is to further the continuation of logging industries across Australia for as long as possible.

'None of these changes have come back to the recovery team, as far as I'm aware,' Mr Webb said. 'A lot of the comments are not based on what is best for the birds. They appear to be about political sensitivities over the future logging industry'.

Mark Holdsworth was also among the researchers who spent several years developing the swift parrot recovery document. He said the recovery team were totally unaware that government agencies had been trying to change the emphasis in the draft plan. He has called on the commonwealth along with the Greens and conservationists across Tasmania to reject the draft version of the plan that we have seen. This is going to go to Ms Plibersek for signoff. It has been non-science, pro industry and secretive. We will fight to make sure that there is a recovery plan that protects the species.

Time expired.

Kentish Bendigo Bank - Closure

[6.57 p.m.]

Ms BUTLER (Lyons) - Mr Speaker, I rise on the adjournment to talk about the imminent closure of the Kentish Bendigo Bank. It is another community bank that will be closing, another community bank which is extremely important to a small regional community.

The people of Railton and Sheffield were told of the imminent closing of the bank by the calling of an extraordinary meeting to discuss a potential closure. That speaks to the wider issue. There really was not much notice provided. Many people in the community got quite a shock.

The level of banking services that we should receive as members of a community as opposed to the banking services that we actually receive are two different things. At the base of the problem is community expectations. Many of us have grown up in a world where relationships with local banks were nurtured. Banking involved face-to-face services, when a call could be made to a bank and a person would answer instead of a machine answering, when you were not subject to lengthy delays when trying to speak to a person face to face, when you had a relationship with your bank manager or the local bank teller. That was when customer service was still valued. Many people in our communities, myself included, still place a lot of value on that customer service and that relationship with a banking institution.

With many of our smaller regional communities, new banking customer service models are clearly inappropriate and do not pass the pub test when it comes to community expectations. Bank closures also mean lack of employment opportunities for young people wanting to stay in rural communities.

With the cost of living soaring, many people in our community are finding it difficult to make ends meet. Fuel is expensive. In the case of the Kentish Bendigo Bank imminent closure, it means a lengthy car trip for the residents of Sheffield and Railton to access face-to-face banking services. That is if they have a car and if they are able to drive themselves.

Many people in our communities are unable to access information through the internet. Obstacles include wi-fi accessibility. At least 30 per cent of the population of the Meander Valley do not have access to the internet, but there is also affordability and ability to navigate that technology.

Many people in our community struggle with literacy, and tackling internet banking through computers or even on a smartphone is sometimes impossible for people. Trust is also a major component. A number of people I speak to in our community do not trust doing their banking on the internet or do not trust doing their banking on a phone. It is a huge transition, a massive change of routine and a huge step for many people in our community.

Banking communities and the banking service model have completely missed out that transition period. Members of the Kentish community who invested in their local branch did so because they believed they were supporting their local branch. They believed that by pooling their money as part of this model then the profits from their investments, from their hard-earned money, would then go into assisting their community and could be spent on community infrastructure.

Community members may be getting 43 cents to 46 cents in the dollar back from their initial investment. There were people who put \$70 000 of their own hard-earned money into that bank. There are people who put in \$120 000. There were also people who put in \$500 or \$5000. That is still a huge loss when you have done it on the proviso that you are investing in your community.

I do not think it is good enough. I certainly do not think it is the way we should treat people in our communities. I think banking really needs to have a hard look at itself in Tasmania.

Carers and Access to NDIA

[7.02 p.m.]

Ms O'BYRNE (Bass) - Mr Speaker, I do not intend to take too much of the House's time, but one of my constituents has asked that I bring a matter to the attention of the Premier and the minister responsible for carers, and also that I forward it to the federal minister. I am going to read a letter she has written to me. I am not going to mention her name, but the name will be attached to the letters when I forward them to the appropriate MPs.

My name is xx and I am a carer. I want to let you know how carers are falling through the safety nets. I care for my husband, who has a diagnosis of early onset dementia, my two sons, age 11 and 10, who have a diagnosis of autism, and my five-year-old daughter who has cerebral palsy, epilepsy, and an intellectual disability.

I am very blessed that the people I care for receive help from the NDIS and we appreciate it very much. We are supported by a wonderful NDIA complex case worker and a support coordinator and a team of 11 support workers who support my family to be able to complete daily activities and the system in accessing the community and the majority of equipment they require.

Without the NDIA and our very competent workers we would not be able to venture very far from home. The issues began when I am the only adult that can adult in my household. My husband receives a disability pension and myself a carer pension. I understand this is not a wage, it is a benefit. Scott Morrison's office made that very clear that our pensions are not entitlements and are handed to us from the bottom of their hearts. I have a letter.

My husband was working and I was working until my children needed me to care for them. My husband had to sell off his little general store because he was not capable of working it anymore and currently we are still paying off our business debts. We need to purchase a wheelchair-accessible car for my daughter, so about six months ago I started to find out what I needed to do. Our old car was costing us more and more to repair and maintain, and it was not setup to hold my daughter's chair.

NDIS can modify a one- to five-year-old car, but no older. A car that is suitable would cost me more than \$35 000 and I could not possibly get

finance for this amount without working. I like to think outside the box to solve my problems, so I tried to get employment and went about applying for work. I applied for many jobs and was turned down many times. The reason given was that I was a carer. Suddenly our old car broke down and couldn't get fixed. We had no car, so I was advised to get taxi vouchers to help me get my children to school as the children can't travel safely on public transport.

We weren't able to access these as all three children are on the NDIS and NDIS could not help us as it's a parent's responsibility to get their children to school. To pay for a taxi myself cost \$90 per day, double what I receive in my pension.

As much as I did not want to, I had no choice but to purchase an older car that cannot be modified, on an extremely high interest rate, as that is the only one I could afford to purchase. Believe it or not, repayments are actually less per fortnight than the two days of taxi fares. My daughter's wheelchair, which is heavy, is being lifted in and out of our taxi manually.

I continue to look for work. At this point I need to say that as a carer, I am not allowed to work and travel more than 25 hours a week away from my caring role. But how can I earn enough to pay for a car?

After many interviews and rejections, I tried to start my own business.

Mr Speaker, I am going to have to skip through a little bit because of time.

I need to care for, and parent, my children, so I need income to do this. However, I am restricted by Centrelink in how many hours I can travel.

How can I pay for tutoring that costs approximately \$40 an hour, when I only receive in my benefit approximately \$50 per day to feed and clothe and pay for the many different medications that cost us upwards of \$35 per medication per month. As there are extremely limited allied health professionals and medical specialists, we frequently travel interstate to get the help we need, Victoria for a paediatric neurologist, and the Cerebral Palsy Education Centre in Glen Waverley, who have been an amazing help.

There is no such program in Tasmania. In fact, there is no dyslexic help centre here either, only limited specialists and allied health, with waiting lists as long as two years.

I am tired of being a hamster. I am the only adult in my family who can adult. My husband is unable to help support us. I am the only one who can care and I am physically able to work. I ask both federal and state government to recognise carers. Please officially talk to each other and repair the holes we fall through.

We do the same work as support workers. Most of the time, we do more, at horrible hours. We deserve the same rate of pay as a full-time support worker.

I would really like to talk more about these issues, and invite you to email me, or in fact, I would like to invite you to visit me, and my family to walk in our shoes, next time you visit Launceston. Thank you for listening.

Mr Speaker, while we have gone a long way with the NDIS and the support that we offer people, we have a very long way to go to ensure their families are able to access everything they need.

Energy Policy

[7.07 p.m.]

Mr WINTER (Franklin) - Mr Speaker, I rise to make a contribution on energy policy and potentially, if time permits, economic policy more generally.

I want to go through the last 10 weeks of energy policy under this Government. It all started around 10 weeks ago - it seems a bit longer - when the Government admitted that it was walking away from its established energy policy for the past four years.

That was a significant moment, and it looks like they made that decision in September 2021, but not told anyone about it. They put it on the Treasury website for no-one to ever find, potentially. They answered a question in parliament to admit they were no longer going ahead with their signature energy policy to delink us from the National Electricity Market.

That was a disappointment to many, because at that time Australia was facing - and starting to become more aware of - the energy crisis that was about to engulf Australia.

We had reserve notices issued for every NEM state and territory, including Tasmania. We had rising prices - in fact, record prices - right across the National Electricity Market.

At the same time the Premier announced he was going to stay in the National Electricity Market, we were seeing unprecedented price rises. What poor timing, Mr Speaker, and the real victims of this have been Tasmanians.

On 16 June, the parliament sat for the last time before its winter break. We knew at that time that the regulator was imminently about to make a determination on electricity prices. As it turned out it was 17 June - the day after parliament finished for that session. That day, the Premier put out a press release, and he said:

The Tasmanian Government understands that it is going to be a difficult winter for many, and that is why the Winter Energy Assistance Package includes -

He listed four things:

- \$180 Winter Bill Buster discount applied to bills, electricity concession for account holders.
- A boosted and expanded \$50 million Energy Saver Loan Scheme.
- An Aurora+ app that people no longer had to pay for.
- \$1.7 million Aurora customer support fund.

That winter bill buster, we found out today, was not actually applied until 1 August. That means, potentially, that some people will not actually receive that discount until the end of October. That is not a winter bill buster. That is almost into summer. The Premier said:

It is going to be a difficult winter for many, and that is why the Winter Energy Assistance Package includes those things.

Except it did not include those things for Tasmanians doing it tough, as we speak.

A boost in the expanded \$50 million energy loan scheme: well, again, it turns out that they were not ready for that, they did not get it right, and, that is still not available. One week before the end of winter, the \$50 million energy loan scheme is not available to anyone. The Government proudly said that it had, I think it was 600 people register today. That demand only shows how many people are desperate to get access to programs like this during a really tough time for energy users in Tasmania. Tasmanian households are doing it tough on the cost of living, but it is not available to them. Providing a link for people to register is not providing a program; it is not delivering for Tasmanians.

It is incredibly disappointing to Tasmanians who do not expect to be paying for mainland energy chaos when they have a government that for four years promised that we were going to de-link from that national chaos. The last time we had inflated national prices and there was potential volatility it did effectively de-link using a price cap mechanism.

Now the Government says that they cannot do that, even though they have advice from Treasury and Finance that says that option is still available to them, not just available to households but available to businesses and major industrials through potential rebate schemes that the Government does have available to it but is refusing to act. They would not accept Labor's argument for a price cap and now Tasmanians are paying more.

I also want to briefly touch on something quite substantial that happened with fiscal policy from this Tasmanian government today.

Like many others, I have been watching the way this Government manages the budget for many years. I have been watching right from the start when this Government came in, the way that former treasurer, Peter Gutwein, used to fake it on the budget, the way he misrepresented numbers to the TCCI budget breakfast; the way that he stood here and was prepared to say that his budget was sustainable. The words that I heard from the Premier today were the first sign that the Government was finally prepared to admit that what they are doing is not sustainable, that they are not managing the budget well - and they have not been managing this budget well for a long period of time.

Even the Budget this year, when they announced that they were handing down a budget, with almost half a billion dollars' worth of deficit, the largest deficit in Tasmania's history, which was a record - beat the record from the year before, which beat the record deficit from the year before. Finally today, the Premier in his answer started to talk about the fact that he has a serious problem. Treasury has been telling this Government for years through its Fiscal Sustainability Report that what you are doing is not sustainable, that you are not managing the budget well, but they have not listened - but I heard something this morning. The Premier, Mr Rockliff said:

It's all about ensuring Tasmania remains competitive and that we have a sustainable revenue base.

Now, the way the rhetoric changed today indicates to me that potentially this Government is finally ready to understand that they are not managing the budget well. Having priorities like building a stadium when you are predicting \$5 billion of debt by the end of this budget cycle and \$30 billion of debt by 2035, according to the Treasury forecast, it is not sustainable to pour \$750 million into a stadium. The way they are managing this budget is not working for Tasmanians, the way that they have had no regard for the cost of living crisis in Tasmania either through their budget or their rhetoric, and then they have not delivered, even on the small things that they did finally deliver. Do not forget, this Government actually cut cost of living support for Tasmanians. That is the record over the past three months.

The House adjourned at 7.14 p.m.