



PARLIAMENT OF TASMANIA

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

REPORT OF DEBATES

Wednesday 16 September 2020

REVISED EDITION

Wednesday 16 September 2020

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

QUESTIONS

Launceston General Hospital - Bed-Block and Understaffing

Ms WHITE to MINISTER for HEALTH, Ms COURTNEY

[10.02 a.m.]

Yesterday you feigned ignorance of the concerns raised by registrars in the Emergency Department about conditions at the Launceston General Hospital. You shockingly ignored revelations that patients have died as the result of overcrowding and bed block. You did not mention patients once in your media release yesterday in response to this explosive letter from staff at the LGH. While you choose to play politics, I will remind you that we are talking about people's lives. Now that you have read the letter, what is your response to the issues that have been raised? How many avoidable patient deaths have been reported at the LGH in the past 12 months?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the member for her question. I will provide an update on that letter now that I have had the opportunity to read it.

It is unfortunate that the Leader of the Opposition suggests that this side of the House is playing politics. The Opposition brought a letter given to a leadership person at the LGH into this House, rather than to me. To say we are the side playing politics and then to waste question time with a letter that was not provided to me speaks volumes about the Opposition Leader.

Opposition members interjecting.

Madam SPEAKER - Order, please.

Ms COURTNEY - The LGH is an outstanding hospital and I put on the record my thanks to the extraordinary staff who work there. I know they provide high quality care because I am constantly given feedback by people in my community of the wonderful experiences they have had at that hospital and the care they have received from the hardworking staff.

I can confirm that the chief executive of the LGH, the recipient of the letter, will be meeting with the registrars to listen to their concerns and consider what more can be done to assist them. As outlined yesterday I have also asked the secretary of the department to consider matters raised in the letter. I also spoke with a number of clinicians yesterday so that I can understand their concerns and map a pathway forward.

As a government, we want to continue efforts to build the best system possible. We want to see staff, stakeholders and patients engaged to make the changes that we need.

That is why we have gone out to the community during our clinical planning for the redevelopment of the LGH to ask them what they want. We have received that feedback and it will form the basis of the LGH master planning as we go forward.

I have been Health Minister now for a little over a year. During that time, I have always acknowledged the fact that there is still more that we need to do. I have always acknowledged that we have pressures at RED and that we need to continue to implement measures across all our sites to assist access. These are long-term, chronic issues that plague health systems around the world. However, each of our hospitals is unique and each has unique opportunities to fix the challenges they face. I note that the letter acknowledges some long-standing challenges including cultural impacts on bed block and the need to ensure that we are effectively using our regional and private hospitals, as well as opportunities to invest in more innovative care.

We are focused on recruiting the staff we need and planning for the future while at the same time managing COVID-19. There are no more stark figures representing our commitment than the amount we have invested to put more people into the LGH. Since 2014 there has been an 85 FTE increase in doctors recruited. Forty percent of the increase in medical cover - that is, 40 FTE - has happened in the last year alone. There are over 250 FTE more nurses at the hospital with an overall boost of well over 400 more FTE than in March 2014.

Let me be very clear that this Government is investing in health. We know that there is -

Ms WHITE - Point of order, Madam Speaker. It goes to Standing Order 45. I ask you to draw the minister's attention to the question, which was to update the House on the number of avoidable deaths that have occurred at the LGH in last 12 months. The minister still has not mentioned patients once in her response.

Madam SPEAKER - Thank you. As you know that is not a point of order but I draw the minister's attention to that part of the question.

Ms COURTNEY - Thank you Madam Speaker. I am getting to the part of the member's question about my response to the letter yesterday, given that I had not had the opportunity to read it as it was not directed to me. I am responding to the member's question directly.

The staff we have employed are initiatives on top of other areas that we have also invested in. We have a new patient transit lounge to help our discharge, and a state-wide operations centre, as well as our community-based initiatives such as community rapid response and mental health hospital in the home.

We know that the challenges of bed block are complex and multi-faceted. A joined-up solution is required to address these challenges. Many of the initiatives have started. Much of this work has been rolled out from the Royal Hobart Hospital and these initiatives are being rolled out at other places across the state. However, we need to ensure that the initiatives being rolled out at each of our sites, such as the LGH, are specific for the needs of that community and the patients we are servicing. The initiatives also need to be specific to the challenges in that particular jurisdiction.

I note that local management has recently made the patient flow team at the LGH permanent following a successful trial. This means that the LGH has a substantive, full time nursing director of patient flow who leads a team of patient flow managers and after-hours

nurse managers. This is happening 24 hours per day, seven days per week. I thank the amazing team that provides that support. I have had the privilege of spending many hours with them at various times of the day and night and I know they do their job with enormous dedication.

I further advise that changes to medical scientists' rosters and increased staffing levels in the past 12 months has enabled improved pathology turnaround times, particularly for the ED and inpatient care areas, to assist with facilitating safe discharge. On the back of this resourcing, the LGH has introduced weekend blood services for blood specimen collection to support junior medical staff and assist in determining patient discharge. We will look at what more we can do in that area.

More broadly, the Government has recruited the first new paramedics in Launceston in years, including for our rural and regional sites that support the LGH such as Beaconsfield, George Town and Deloraine.

I acknowledge the dedicated staff who have done an enormous job during COVID-19, and assure the staff, patients and community that this Government remains committed to that hospital, to investing in the people, and investing in better outcomes for northern Tasmania.

Launceston General Hospital - Implementation of Access Solutions Recommendations

Ms WHITE to MINISTER for HEALTH, Ms COURTNEY

[10.10 a.m.]

Your response to a damning letter from doctors at the LGH was to refer the matter to the secretary of your department. You have effectively washed your hands of this issue, despite promising nearly a year ago to implement the outcomes of the Access Solutions meeting at the LGH. You have blamed COVID-19 for your lack of action, despite the fact that the Access Solutions meeting occurred in June last year, nearly nine months before COVID-19 began impacting our health system.

The Examiner editorial today has called you out for playing politics rather than delivering the change you have promised, and I quote -

Perhaps it is time for the Gutwein Government to focus on leading, stick with the facts and implement real change to improve the systems, and therefore health outcomes, at the LGH.

Can you detail which recommendations from the Access Solutions meeting have actually been implemented at the Launceston General Hospital?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the member for the question. As the member would be aware, the Access Solutions meeting that occurred during the middle of last year was focused at the Royal Hobart Hospital, with further work to look at initiatives that could be rolled out throughout the state-wide services, because we know the pressure in patient flow is not only a

challenge at the Royal Hobart. We see it at the LGH, and also see it particularly at the North West Regional Hospital.

What we have done specifically at the LGH are patient flow workshops, which I was pleased to be able to attend. Local leadership worked through what the challenges were on site as well as the opportunities with these workshops, driven by the LGH's senior management group. Some of the key focuses included community-based models to support frail, elderly patients with multiple chronic conditions presenting to the LGH emergency department because they are unable to access those services in the community that are needed to keep them out of hospital. Other things included enhancing district hospitals, and enhancing their models as well to optimise the use of beds in these facilities to support patients to transfer from the LGH when it is safe to do so, and to increase the ability for patients to be directly admitted to district hospitals in their local communities.

These are the types of initiatives that came out of the local leadership there. When we talk about COVID-19, this is a global pandemic that has required reconfiguration of services across our whole state. Initiatives that are outlined in these recommendations or these initiatives that were brought up by local leadership, including district sites, by the very nature of COVID-19, had to pause. We had to look at the way we moved patients around the state. We needed to make sure we were keeping our district and regional sites safe, and that we had appropriate escalation levels throughout COVID-19.

Members interjecting.

Madam SPEAKER - Order, through the Chair, please.

Mr O'Byrne - Why have they written a letter then?

Madam SPEAKER - Order, Mr O'Byrne.

Ms COURTNEY - While I am absolutely committed to making sure that these initiatives get implemented -

Ms O'Byrne - You keep saying that. You have been saying that since last year.

Madam SPEAKER - Order, Ms O'Byrne.

Ms COURTNEY - I am also conscious that we are dealing with a global pandemic, Ms O'Byrne. Globally, we have seen hundreds of thousands of people die from this pandemic. What we are trying to do -

Mr O'Byrne - And doctors know that as well. Why did they write the letter?

Madam SPEAKER - Order, Mr O'Byrne. That is not helpful.

Mr Gutwein - Did you guys help them write the letter? Were you part of that? You seemed to have it before we did.

Mr O'Byrne - Hopefully that is on *Hansard*. That is a disgraceful slur.

Madam SPEAKER - Order, please. Order, Mr O'Byrne. Let us proceed.

Ms O'BYRNE - Point of order, Madam Speaker. I ask the Premier to withdraw that interjection. It is actually a reflection on the staff of the LGH who have taken the unprecedented action of writing this letter, a letter that they have distributed. It is inappropriate for the Premier to reflect on those staff. He can have as many attacks as he likes on us, but he should not undermine those staff, and he should withdraw that comment or apologise.

Madam SPEAKER - I have just taken advice and unfortunately that is not a point of order. The minister has about 1 minute and 43 seconds remaining.

Ms COURTNEY - Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Members interjecting.

Madam SPEAKER - Excuse me, would we like to shut down question time for a little bit? Please proceed, minister.

Ms COURTNEY - Thank you, Madam Speaker. I can assure the member, the local community and the staff across that entire hospital that we remain committed to the implementation of these initiatives. We remain committed to the redevelopment of the Launceston General Hospital and to the community initiatives we have implemented to make sure that care is provided in communities, which is better for patients. That is our priority and that is what we will deliver.

Major Projects Legislation - Comments made by Minister for Planning

Dr WOODRUFF to MINISTER for PLANNING, Mr JAENSCH

[10.16 a.m.]

Your written threats to abandon the major projects legislation if the upper House dares pass amendments to it are an assault on the democratic function of this parliament. You said amendments proposed to the bill that would create an appeal rights process and would ban developers who make political donations from using this law are 'fatal to the bill'. Leaving aside the fact that neither of these amendments would affect the purpose and function of the bill, you threatened upper House members with not supporting an amended bill on its return to the House.

Madam SPEAKER - Excuse me, I am taking advice. Because the bill is still live you must be very careful with your wording and not refer to the bill.

Dr WOODRUFF - Thank you, Madam Speaker, I am aware of that requirement. Your threats to vote against your own legislation border on interfering with parliament, a crime under section 70 of the Criminal Code. Your Government is answerable to the free exercise of this parliament's authority. It is not up to you to direct members in how they vote. Your comments show utter contempt for the parliament. Do you agree you are attempting to interfere in the duty of the upper House?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I will take your guidance on what is in and out of play in trying to answer that question. In terms of prejudicing parliamentary debate, I note that the Greens announced that they would be voting against the major projects bill when we released the last version of it for public consultation. Before they had seen the bill, they had already predetermined what they were going to do and announced that to their audiences and said, 'There is no way this is getting through. We haven't seen it yet but we're not going to vote for it anyway'.

Labor announced to the world that they were going to support it because they believed in growth, certainty, planning and good sound processes in our assessment processes. They brought a range of amendments, we debated them here and a number were agreed to, which is a good thing. I believe I am not allowed to say that every member of Labor voted in favour of the amended bill at the end of our debate so I will not mention it, but the important thing is that we now have a bill that is going before the Legislative Council today and it is very important legislation for Tasmania.

As everyone here knows, from time to time there comes a project which is large and complex and requires assessment against multiple different regulations under several different acts and, sometimes, across several different local government areas. We need a process which enables that assessment to be coordinated so that information is presented once, all the relevant questions are asked, all the relevant assessments are done by the people who are empowered under their act to do so, and a final decision is made by the independent Planning Commission.

That is what the major projects process does - nothing else. There is nothing particularly new about it. It is a better way of arranging existing assessment processes to deal with complex projects.

One of the things built into that legislation, which was brought over from the legislation it replaces that was introduced by Labor, is that you put Tasmania's pre-eminent planning authority in there as the decision-maker. We have heard in the debate, and in the continuing debate, the foreshadowing of possible amendments which would introduce an appeal clause to come after that.

Dr Woodruff - Shock! Appeal - holding people to account.

Madam SPEAKER - Order.

Mr JAENSCH - One of the things that is very important about the principle of an appeal is that you appeal a decision to a higher authority. On planning matters in Tasmania there is no higher authority than the Tasmanian Planning Commission. That is why we embed them in this process as the decision-maker so we have the highest authority independent of government making the decision at the end of the process.

Introducing an appeal clause potentially undermines the independent authority of the Tasmanian Planning Commission. That is not only something -

Ms O'Connor - What about the independence of the upper House?

Madam SPEAKER - Order.

Mr JAENSCH - which can render this bill unfit for purpose but also potentially brings into question the independent Tasmanian Planning Commission's final decision across the planning system, creating uncertainty for everyone seeking a planning scheme amendment.

Ms O'Connor - That is rubbish.

Dr Woodruff - No. You are dissembling, you are distracting, you are doing everything you can -

Madam SPEAKER - Order. Dr Woodruff and Ms O'Connor, this is my final warning on your interrupting on this matter.

Ms O'CONNOR - Point of order, Madam Speaker. I am just checking so that we are not thrown out - is that a final warning of three because we have not had any warnings yet? If you are asking us to be quiet -

Madam SPEAKER - No, it is just a final warning. I have been very generous. You have been interrupting all morning. Now that is it.

Ms O'Connor - So was Labor.

Madam SPEAKER - Oh, tittle-tattle. Come on. Please proceed, minister.

Dr WOODRUFF - Point of clarification, Madam Speaker. I would appreciate if you could provide some clarification on what you just said about what a final warning means in this circumstance.

Madam SPEAKER - A final warning means final. If you interrupt again and carry on and scream - you are the only two making a noise during this conversation - you will be leaving the Chamber. End of story.

Ms O'CONNOR - Point of order, Madam Speaker. I want to make it really clear that neither Dr Woodruff nor I screamed.

Madam SPEAKER - That is a matter of interpretation. From this end of the Chamber you were screaming. That is the end of it, please. No more frivolous interjections.

Mr JAENSCH - Thank you, Madam Speaker. The potential exists that if anyone was to propose and if there was carried an amendment to this bill that brought into question the authority of the Tasmanian Planning Commission, it would not only affect the useability of this bill but it would be a precedent for any other decision of the Planning Commission that has been made now or could be made in the future. I believe that would introduce considerable uncertainty to our planning system and every decision made by it at a time when Tasmania needs more certainty if we are going to attract investment and assess important projects.

Dr WOODRUFF - Point of order, Madam Speaker, under Standing Order 45, relevance. Could the minister direct his comments to the question of how political donations would be a fatal flaw to this bill and why he is trying to interfere with members of the upper House -

Madam SPEAKER - You will be pleased to know the minister's time is up and he is welcome to return to his seat.

Bushfire Safety

Mr STREET to PREMIER, Mr GUTWEIN

[10.23 a.m.]

Can you update the House on how the Government is planning to keep Tasmanians safe from bushfire?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank Mr Street, the member for Franklin, for that question and his interest in this important matter. We have taken action to protect Tasmanian lives and livelihoods through the COVID-19 pandemic emergency. Our priority has been on keeping Tasmanians safe. However, we must also keep Tasmanians safe from the threat of bushfires or other natural disasters and we must do everything we can to prepare before the upcoming bushfire season.

It is clear that we are not immune from the same bushfire threats that devastated New South Wales and other parts of the country late last year. There is no doubt that whilst Tasmania fought a number of smaller fires, we were fortunate to avoid the same level of destruction that mainland states faced. Across Australia, last summer's fires burnt more than 18 million hectares of land, destroyed nearly 6000 buildings, including nearly 3000 homes, and over 34 people lost their lives, along with countless native animals, as well as stock. To put that in context, in Tasmania we have a footprint of around 7 million hectares of ground. In New South Wales, the wildfires raged over nearly 6 million hectares - almost the same footprint that we have here.

Economists estimate that the bushfires cost somewhere around \$100 billion in property damage and economic losses, making it Australia's costliest natural disaster to date.

We are witnessing more intense bushfires, and we face a volatile and changing climate, and although we have a nation-leading and well-resourced fuel production program, the traditional window available for fuel reduction is narrow, and the intensity of our bushfires is increasing.

It is not possible to eliminate bushfires; however, measures can and should be put in place to reduce the impact of these fires. We must do everything we can to protect life, property, infrastructure and our natural assets.

I am pleased to report that this year we have been able to deliver a range of actions to ensure Tasmania is better prepared, and that there are stronger protections in place. All recommendations arising from the AFAC review into the 2018-20 bushfire season have been implemented.

Tasmanians should be reassured that in the lead-up to the coming season, our firefighting agencies have undertaken a range of activities to further mitigate the risk to our communities.

This includes increased fuel reduction activity, better community engagement planning, education for landholders, investment in new equipment, and improved remote area firefighting capabilities.

Over the most recent fuel reduction season, we have conducted 146 fuel reduction burns, covering more than 27 000 hectares in strategic locations across the state, to protect Tasmanian communities, their infrastructure, and our natural assets in high bushfire risk areas. We have also created three new specialist Aboriginal ranger positions within Parks. This year, additional community protection plans are being developed for Tasmania's highest risk communities, providing critical information to both the community and the fire service during bushfire emergencies. There are now more than 120 community plans across Tasmania.

Through our Bushfire-Ready Schools program, every school and library in the state has been assessed, and emergency plans developed. This planning means Tasmanian schools and their communities are better prepared for bushfire. Tasmanian landholders are also able to manage bushfire risk on their properties with the launch of our expanded Red Hot Tips program, which will increase their capability to manage longer-term risk.

The Tasmania Fire Service is investing in new equipment and our people. The state has taken delivery of its seventh of the 30 new medium-tanker fire trucks for volunteer fire brigades, to be rolled out as part of a \$6 million medium-tanker replacement program. This year, an additional four helicopters and two fixed-wing aircraft will be deployed into Tasmania to support our existing aerial firefighting and intelligence capabilities.

Dr Woodruff - So you are going to bring firefighters in from interstate?

Madam SPEAKER - Dr Woodruff, where are your manners?

Dr Woodruff - I was just asking a question.

Madam SPEAKER - Do not ask across the Chamber. Please proceed.

Mr GUTWEIN - Extensive work has also been undertaken to develop TFS remote area firefighting capability, with our volunteer brigades ready for deployment this fire season. I am advised the TFS anticipates that the start of this fire season may be delayed due to the significant rainfall we have had. During spring, pasture growth does seem likely to be significant, and these areas will be monitored as we move forward.

Earlier this year, I said the Government would introduce legislation to make it easier to reduce fuel and mechanically clear vegetation for a fuel break, while balancing environmental and community concerns. I am pleased to announce that the consultation package for the Government's legislation will be publicly released today. The bushfire mitigation measures bill will introduce a new legislative framework for bushfire mitigation in Tasmania. Under existing laws, in a bushfire emergency, the State Controller can take immediate steps to put in place firebreaks and reduce fuel, but this is only when the threat has materialised. This is only when the fire is coming over the hill. We know from mainland Australia last summer, and from the experience of what is occurring in California at the moment, that this can be too late.

Due to the smaller windows available to reduce fuel loads, the current planning controls and regulations can limit permanent landholders, and our emergency services, from taking the

preventive action that is required. This bill will ensure there is clear accountability for landowners and occupiers of land, both public and private, with regard to bushfire mitigation. Importantly, it will make it easier for landholders to reduce fuel loads by allowing approvals to be granted in a shorter time frame when a bushfire hazard management plan is in place.

We are well prepared for this year's bushfire season: better prepared than we have ever been. Even after a pandemic that has interrupted so many of our plans, this legislation - when ready after a period of community consultation - will be in place for next year's fire season. It is a significant shift in thinking. We need to get the balance right, and we want the community to come along on this journey with us. We look forward to the feedback from the community during the consultation.

While we are working hard to keep Tasmanians safe through the COVID-19 pandemic, this does not mean we are not working equally as hard to ensure that we can keep Tasmanians safe from the threat of other risks, especially bushfires.

Aged Care Homes - Access to Telephones by Residents

Ms OGILVIE to PREMIER, Mr GUTWEIN

[10.31 a.m.]

Tasmania's older folks have been cocooned and protected by our community during this crisis, but the separation of loved ones from each other is a heavy burden. Our marvellous elders in aged care homes want their own telephones in their rooms, and why not? It is not that difficult. This is a question of closing the digital divide. It is serious and it is important. I want to know, like everyone in this place, that everyone in our community has access to the communication tools they need to live a full and robust life across all aspects. This is about autonomy, safety and, as we know, communication is the antidote to loneliness. Will you provide the leadership needed to ensure all our older folk have a phone in their room?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank Ms Ogilvie for that question and for her interest in this area. All of us share the member's concern for our older Tasmanians.

I have to say, working with the sector closely over the last six months has given me a great understanding of the very good people who are working within that sector. Lucy O'Flaherty has been brilliant to work with through this. Her insights into the sector's needs, both in terms of residents, but also in ensuring we have the protections in place to manage through COVID-19, have been helpful and insightful. We will continue to work with her and the rest of the aged care sector in Tasmania to ensure we have the safest possible framework as we move forward through COVID-19.

In terms of telephones in their rooms, I note that this has been raised before, and I think the minister has already reached out to Advocacy Tasmania about having a discussion on this.

I would like to get some further feedback. I am not certain of the number of older Tasmanians who have access to a mobile in their room or some form of communication device. In understanding those gaps, I am happy to take some advice, and once we fully understand

what that problem looks like, then we will determine whether or not we might take some further action.

Launceston General Hospital - Budget Cuts

Ms WHITE to PREMIER, Mr GUTWEIN

[10.34 a.m.]

What is your response to the damning letter from registrars at the Launceston General Hospital, and do you accept your share of responsibility for the issues at the LGH, which have been exacerbated by the deep cuts you have inflicted over six years as Treasurer?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the member for that question. I am very happy to have an opportunity to speak on this.

I will start where the member finished. In terms of 'deep cuts', we have put nearly \$150 million a year into the health budget back in December - no doubt overlooked by the shadow treasurer. Too lazy to even look at the mid-year financial report. But \$150 million a year moving forward.

Since we came to office in 2014 this Government has put in place nearly 1500 health professionals into Health - nurses, doctors, other staff - over 400 staff at the LGH. I have read that letter and on the last page there was a range of suggestions that the registrars make. I am certain the minister is engaging with them as she has indicated today, and the secretary of Health and others are having a look at the matters that have been raised.

I make the point that we are grown-ups here. Regarding what occurred yesterday, I believe it was right and proper to ask the Opposition what role they played in this. They ran with a gotcha moment when we have engaged with senior management and senior leadership at that hospital, and we are happy to remain engaged and work with them. It surprised me yesterday that a letter of significant import was used as a gotcha moment in this place, knowing full well that the minister had not even received it yet.

I say to health professionals in the state, we want to work with you but we are not interested in silly gotcha moments like the Opposition ran with yesterday. The matters in this letter will be dealt with and we will work through the issues that have been raised now that we are aware of them.

Ms O'Byrne interjecting.

Madam SPEAKER - Order.

Mr GUTWEIN - If I were Ms O'Byrne, I would be embarrassed, to be frank, to use something as serious as this as a gotcha moment in the parliament. For goodness sake, let us be grown-ups in this place. We want to work with our health professionals and provide the best possible health service we can.

Members interjecting.

Madam SPEAKER - Order, Ms O'Byrne.

Mr GUTWEIN - That service is provided for Tasmanians and we want to ensure that we can provide the best and most appropriate level of care and we want to work with our health professionals.

Implicit in the Leader of the Opposition's question was wanting to bring politics into this - 'You have cut this, you have done that'. It is on the public record that we have employed nearly 1500 more health professionals around the state and put more than 400 health professionals into the LGH since we came to government. In the mid-year report we put in place additional funding of almost \$600 million across a four-year period.

It was interesting and informative during the questioning of the minister this morning that on that side of the House they feign ignorance to the fact that we have had a worldwide pandemic we have had to deal with and that the LGH has not been immune from.

I want to place firmly on the record that I was speaking with a senior health professional from the LGH on Sunday night about a range of matters. They have gone over and above and have worked really hard. The LGH supported us when we had the outbreak in the north-west. They have done everything they possibly can to work with us. I say again to the Opposition, grow-up a little bit. Gotcha moments -

Ms White - The doctors wrote the letter.

Mr GUTWEIN - What were you doing with it before we got it?

Members interjecting.

Madam SPEAKER - Order, order. Please, it is absolutely vital that you conduct yourself in a parliamentary manner, show good restraint and intellectual debating, rather than screeching and screaming at each other.

Mr GUTWEIN - Madam Speaker, it was perfectly reasonable question to ask -

Mr O'Byrne - The question is why did they give it to us?

Madam SPEAKER - Order, Mr O'Byrne.

Mr GUTWEIN - We want to do our very best for our community, for our health professionals, for our health service and for our hospitals. What occurred yesterday with the Opposition was simply them attempting a gotcha moment knowing full well that we would not have a copy of that particular letter. I say again to the Opposition to grow up a little bit. We are working as hard as we can. We want to work with our health professionals, we have been working with our health professionals and we will continue to do that. As the minister has outlined this morning, we have reached out. Senior management and senior leadership was involved, and we will work through the issues. On this side of the House we want to see outcomes and better health care for Tasmanians, not silly gotcha moments.

Political Donations Laws - Public Release of Report of Review

Ms O'CONNOR to PREMIER, Mr GUTWEIN

[10.41 a.m.]

Yesterday you said you had not turned your mind to the need for donations reform and you made no commitment to ensure the public release of a report that has been sitting on the Attorney-General's desk for nine months. How can that be so, given we asked you about it in parliament in early March, it has been the subject of media reports in recent weeks, and was raised publicly by independent MHR Andrew Wilkie in July?

Before you claim your mind has only been on the COVID-19 response, I remind you of the four non-COVID bills that were on the blue yesterday and the major projects legislation which went through in the last sitting. We now know your Planning minister is threatening Legislative Councillors if they amend the major projects bill to include appeal rights and a ban on donations from developers.

Your Government is clearly thinking about political donations but through the lens of electoral self-preservation. Why are you putting political self-interest and the interests of developers over the public interest in getting money from vested interests out of our democratic system? Do you not understand that failure to tackle this crucial issue will be a permanent stain on this term of government, regardless of your other achievements?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the Leader of the Greens, Ms O'Connor, for her question and her interest in this matter. Where I will start is simply this: you talk about major projects legislation as if there is something bad about it. The minister has made our position perfectly clear in this House - and I know Labor is walking away from theirs - but that legislation is about jobs, about ordinary Tasmanians having the opportunity to gain work. It is about enabling us to step out of a pandemic and provide a stronger economy, more jobs and more opportunity for Tasmanians.

You can sit there and shake your head but you know as well as I do that this pandemic has impacted our economy. It has impacted on ordinary Tasmanians, it has affected households, and it has affected communities.

The major projects legislation, as the minister has made perfectly clear, is about providing a pathway that is not linear as it was in the past whereby all processes are followed one by one until after a three- to four-year period a major project gets knocked over. It is about providing an early gateway where we can say that is appropriate or is not appropriate and then the process can follow. It is about providing certainty and jobs.

When I was asked the question in March we were at the start of the pandemic and I have to admit, as I said then, I had not turned my mind to it in the short period of time that I had been Premier. I can honestly say that I have not formed a view on this matter, but I am happy to provide a commitment that once I have formed a view and turned my mind to it we will release that report.

There has been a range of other matters that have been of far more importance to me. The Leader of the Opposition throws across the Chamber when I say I have been working on a range of important matters, she says to me, saving people's lives is something that all of us have an interest in I would have thought. Ensuring that our community is safe is something I would have thought we all had an interest in.

The Leader walks back to the gotcha moment from yesterday and I say to her, try to be a grown up.

In answer to the question, I have not turned my mind to it, but I will. At the moment I am focused on trying to step us carefully out of what has been the most dangerous and damaging position this state has ever been in. We are in a good place and I am hopeful that we can get to a better place. I will turn my mind to that report, and it will be released once I have dealt with the other priorities that are in front of me at the moment.

Quite frankly, on the basis that we do not have an election until 2022, I would have thought focusing on keeping people safe and trying to get them back into work is what we should be doing.

TT-Line Ship Replacement Task Force

**Dr BROAD to MINISTER for INFRASTRUCTURE and TRANSPORT,
Mr FERGUSON**

[10.46 a.m.]

When you announced the scuttling of TT-Line ship replacement plans on 21 July you said that the task force would report on alternative options within three months. We are now only a month away from that initial three-month deadline, which is 21 October. Given the importance of this investment to the Tasmanian economy and job creation in the tourism and fresh freight sectors, can you provide an update on how many times the task force has met, who have they met with and will their report be publicly available?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the member for Braddon for his question. The Government has taken this decision very deliberately despite the unhelpful criticism and unfounded allegations that have been made by the Labor Party. We are pro-jobs. We want to grow the opportunity and test the market not just globally but here in Australia and in Tasmania.

Dr Broad, you and your colleagues in the Labor Party, have been caught out fighting hard against the interests of our state. The Premier and I announced the task force would meet, it has been established, we have outlined the membership of it, and we have outlined the reporting timeframe of between three and six months. I have also indicated that we will share the findings with the community when the time is right.

I also made the point at the time that I will not be providing an ongoing commentary into the task force for you, Dr Broad, to destroy or to criticise and and look for ways to give further disruption to the opportunities that they are tasked to explore. I will go as far as to say this much about the activity of the task force - it is established, it has met and it is taking advice. I

will not, Dr Broad, for your delight and for the Leader of the Opposition's job-destroying appetite, give you the opportunity to grill that task force. They have a job to do.

I point out that the Australian Manufacturing Workers' Union is backing the Liberal Party on this issue. It is a reminder of when the forestry workers backed John Howard because Labor went against the working man and woman. Liberals are supporting jobs and looking for opportunities for our ships.

This is a massive purchase for our state and we need to explore every possible way we can see fit-for-purpose vessels suitable for Bass Strait to be built in Australia, and potentially built in Tasmania.

What Dr Broad and Rebecca White are desperately trying to do is disrupt a quite proper prudent process. Yes, it will take some time for the task force to do its work - without the support of the Labor Party. I do not understand your interest in the dates when you do not support it at all. I say, through you, Madam Speaker, to the job-destroying Leader of the Labor Party, there is only one policy for the Labor Party: it is Finland, nothing else. No other interest is welcome. We have said on the record and I am happy to say again today that the global options remain on the table - hopefully with increased Australian content including Australian built vessels and even Tasmanian built vessels.

Dr Broad - You were talking Europe before. You do not even know that Czechoslovakia has not been a country for 30 years.

Madam SPEAKER - Order, Dr Broad.

Mr FERGUSON - We are for Tasmania. We are for Tasmanians. Dr Broad, Rebecca White the Leader of the Opposition, I do not understand your policy but you are entitled to it. You can explain it to the AMWU, Mr Short and others. You can explain to Tasmanians why the only option you want on the table is a European purchase when you criticised RMC and you said in the drop mic moment that they have never built a ferry that big before.

Assistance for Athletes with Disability

Mr ELLIS to MINISTER for SPORT and RECREATION, Ms HOWLETT

[10.51 a.m.]

Can you update the House on the Government's support for disability athletes in meeting the costs associated with competing in national and international sporting competitions? How does this support complement the existing assistance that the Government is providing to encourage participation in sports during the pandemic?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the member for his question. The Government believes all Tasmanians should be given the opportunity to make the most of their life and to participate fully in all sports.

Last year as part of the Stage Budget the Government announced the establishment of a new sporting competition access fund, which will provide additional assistance to athletes with disabilities to access competitions and events held in Tasmania, interstate and overseas. This additional funding is in response to the different needs and higher cost including transport and support needed by athletes with disabilities. Funding support packages will be made available up to a maximum value of \$3000 enabling an athlete, coach and/or carer to attend the same event.

I am delighted to announce that this fund has now opened following a delay due to COVID-19. Through this additional support more athletes with disabilities will be able to gain access to competitions including at Paralympic Games. Tasmania has a rich history of representation at Paralympic Games with the likes of Melissa Carlton, Todd Hodgetts, Matthew Bugg and Jacob Templeton making us all so very proud on the international stage.

For the 2021 Paralympic Games the Tasmanian Government will provide \$40 000 to the Australian Paralympic Committee to support the paralympic team for Tokyo. Just a week ago, paralympic silver medallist Deon Kenzie achieved selection into the Australian paralympic team to compete at the Tokyo Paralympic Games in 2021. I am sure all members of this House will join me in wishing all of our athletes great success.

Tasmania will host a number of championships next year, following their cancellation in the light of COVID-19. Events will include National Wheelchair Aussie Rules Championships, scheduled for March 2021; National Bocce Championships, scheduled for November 2021; and the Special Olympics Australian Junior National Games, to be held in Launceston in late October 2021. These events will bring huge economic benefits to Tasmania.

We are also committed to supporting the state sport and recreation sector through the challenges faced as a result of COVID-19. This includes our Ticket to Play program which enabled more than 6100 children and young Tasmanians to participate in a sport in the first year of this program and a further 4500 so far this year already. Each voucher represents a young Tasmanian having a go at a sport they would otherwise not be able to participate in because of their financial circumstances.

We have already doubled the support available under the program from \$100 to \$200 for young Tasmanians and I also recently announced that we have increased the age eligibility from 17 years to 18 years of age. This extension was informed by research showing participation rates in sports across Australia sharply declined for older adolescents due to a range of factors, including cost. Ticket to Play enables us to spread the benefits of our growing economy to all Tasmanians and is an initiative we can be very proud of.

Digital Health Strategy

Ms O'BYRNE to MINISTER for SCIENCE and TECHNOLOGY, Mr FERGUSON

[10.55 a.m.]

In evidence to the Public Accounts Committee, the peak body for the IT industry in Tasmanian Government, TasICT, gave a scathing assessment of your failure to invest in information and technology systems, particularly in Health. To date, your only defence of your failure to invest is your Our Digital Futures document which contains no time lines for delivery

and no budget. TasICT's submission made it clear that your failure to invest in the digital health strategy has greatly hampered Tasmania's current and future pandemic response, saying -

This underinvestment was laid starkly bare during the response to COVID-19, with antiquated paper-based processes slowing the response to the emergency and choking delivery of essential services.

To date, the Government has ignored nearly all the advice from the ICT sector. You have been ICT minister for six years and for much of that time you were also Minister for Health. How do you justify your underinvestment in ICT and complete failure to develop a digital health strategy? If you are running a health system with an information system that is held together by paperclips and Post-It Notes, are you not deliberately putting our vulnerable patients at risk?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I welcome the question. I have been looking forward to the opportunity to inform the House about our record on ICT support, standing up our systems and dealing with the legacy issues that Michelle O'Byrne as health minister left behind. I have been looking forward to this.

The Tasmanian Liberal Government recognises that science and information technology industries are crucial to the state's jobs and economy and our future success and we have been investing in our ICT systems, particularly within government and across agencies. I look to the Minister for Justice and Attorney-General - massive investment in ICT systems, and the Minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Management - significant investments in Project Unify across Tasmania Police to bring up to date legacy systems that were underinvested in and were actually compromising our law enforcement's capability.

I was proudly health minister for five-and-a-half years and was very pleased to hand over to the new excellent Health minister, Sarah Courtney. We dealt with some significant issues. I have often felt very constrained to talk about them, Madam Speaker, because if I had spoken about those vulnerabilities at the time it would have been throwing open the welcome mat to cyber attackers. I was disgusted as health minister when I discovered -

Members interjecting.

Madam SPEAKER - Order.

Mr FERGUSON - The question directly asked me about ICT investment in Health. I was disgusted - and I told the story quite recently for the first time because we have dealt with the issue - that a poor Health ICT official was found running down Bathurst Street with as many extension cords as he was able to find by running around the Health department head office, unplugging all the computers he could find - Ms Ogilvie must know about this, she is nodding -

Ms Ogilvie - I know about this.

Mr FERGUSON - Unplugging all of the systems he could, ransacking the building for every extension cord he could find and running down to your police building basement,

Ms O'Byrne, when you left behind Tasmania's most vulnerable data storage system in the state. The health system had no data that morning -

Opposition members interjecting.

Madam SPEAKER - Order.

Mr FERGUSON - He went into the police basement and reconnected the servers with these borrowed extension cords because your air-conditioning unit had triggered the fire alarm, switched off all the power and there was no redundancy. There were no phone calls and no access to patient data. We have restored that. We took that system out; that chewing gum and sticky-tape system that you left behind. You put patients at risk, Ms O'Byrne, and you left vulnerable people at significant risk.

I am really pleased that today I am able to tell that story because we have dealt with it and have now gone to fit-for-purpose services for our data storage and digital services. It is only now that I can talk about it because we have dealt with those risks. How have we done that? By investing in those systems.

Few will forget that it was the person who asked me the question who slashed the Health budget.

Opposition members interjecting.

Mr FERGUSON - There are the groans, but that is the record and they are the facts. You slashed the Health budget and you left the health system with no capability to deal with these incredible risks - cyber risks, data security risks, physical security risks. I am sad that we had to deal with that but it was my urgent priority and this Government's number one priority.

Madam Speaker, the Government has an excellent working relationship with our sector. We have achieved fantastic results. I want to just say good things about TasICT and the Australian Computer Society's excellent relationship with current members and previous ones. They have been one of the most constructive organisations to support us with the Our Digital Future strategy which Ms O'Byrne unfortunately just dismisses. It is the result of two summits and is the basis of future digital transformation in this sector. It is strongly supported by the sector; after all, they helped us write it -

Ms O'Byrne interjecting.

Madam SPEAKER - Order, Ms O'Byrne, warning number one.

Mr FERGUSON - If you would just care to listen, you did not invest, we are. It sets out the path for the next steps forward.

Ms O'Byrne interjecting.

Mr FERGUSON - Madam Speaker -

Madam SPEAKER - Minister, I am trying to listen to you but there are some very rude people in our parliament.

Mr FERGUSON - Madam Speaker, we have spent tens of millions of dollars dealing with these risks, investing in our systems so that our health system, our police system, our police, fire and emergency management teams, our justice - in fact, right across government, we deal with these risks and we deal with the legacy underinvestment.

It is disappointing when I hear a question being asked by a party with no policies, none at all -

Opposition members interjecting.

Mr FERGUSON - There are the groans - they have more groans than policies.

We have a job to do, we are doing that job and we can do it even better, because as our digital future strategy outlines, which again was just dismissed by members opposite, it is about government transformation projects, it is about industry and it is about supporting the private sector and helping them to achieve their goals and grow the economy, get more diversity into that sector and deal with the workforce development issues we have identified together, but thirdly and as importantly, it is about the community which was forgotten in previous strategies.

Think about the people who are not comfortable with technology, the people who are on the margins of digital literacy. We can support them so they can survive and do well in an increasingly digital world. I will stand up for the Government's record but not rest on those laurels. We still have much to do. The government systems we still have stood up extremely well during COVID-19.

I will finish on this point as I am sure time must be running out. The Minister for Health and her team did a magnificent job, including with their digital solutions to deal with the pandemic. The Premier and his team in DPAC did a phenomenal job of getting services that started out with a manual track and trace method but very quickly moved to a digital solution, and you should be complimenting them. Furthermore, I am a strong supporter of the COVIDSafe app. It is running on my phone right now. I do not know if it is running on yours, but I want to hear less of Michelle O'Byrne criticising that app and not describing it, as she has done publicly, as a dud app. She should support the app and encourage its uptake because it is actually part of a solution to keep our community safe and it is in fact a part of the digital work involved in protecting our community.

Energy Infrastructure Developments

Mr STREET to MINISTER for ENERGY, Mr BARNETT

[11.05 a.m.]

Can you share with the House the exciting job-creating potential, now and into future, of our energy developments - developments that have the unwavering backing of the Australian Government?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the member for his question. It is an exciting time for us in Tasmania, particularly on the back of yesterday's announcement. The Tasmanian Liberal

Government has a long-term plan. Part of that plan is our energy infrastructure developments, and our renewable energy plans are a key part of delivering a stronger economy and creating new jobs - and that is what we are about.

We welcomed yesterday's announcement by the Prime Minister to deliver and identify Project Marinus as one of the three transmission infrastructure projects for all of Australia, where they are going to invest a further \$250 million to bring those projects to fruition, and in fact to fast-track those projects.

I note the *Mercury* editorial today declared that the Tasmanian Government has pulled off a remarkable result in convincing the federal government to make a second Bass Strait cable a national priority. Good news. The other side do not want to hear good news. That is good news - a vote of confidence not only from the editor of the *Mercury*, but from the business community and others.

As I said yesterday, we are progressing very positively with the memorandum of understanding to deliver on this project in terms of the design and approval phase through to mid-2023, when we get to the financial investment decision. I spoke again this morning to the minister, Angus Taylor, about that project, and that is progressing.

Mr O'Byrne - You didn't talk to him before the announcement?

Mr BARNETT - Of course, we hear interjection and carping and whingeing from my shadow minister. Where is your policy? Where is your plan? It is simply not there.

I do not have to go very far to remind the shadow minister of his statement in an op-ed piece in the *Mercury* on 14 October last year. He said, 'As Labor's new finance spokesman, I will do the hard work needed to put before Tasmania a vision and a plan.' Where is it? We are still waiting for the vision and the plan.

Mr O'Byrne - Could you get to the detail of the question that you could not answer yesterday?

Mr BARNETT - Carping and whingeing. The negativity, knock, knock, knock. It will not work.

Mr O'Byrne - Why could you not answer this question yesterday?

Madam SPEAKER - Order. Mr O'Byrne, you will have to have a warning. I know he is inciting you, but you are capable of ignoring him.

Mr BARNETT - Madam Speaker, Marinus Link is the largest capital investment project of our generation in Tasmania, and the continual carping and whingeing simply speaks spades for the other side.

The question is about who will pay and so on. Let us be very clear. Extensive financial analysis confirmed that Marinus Link is a bankable project. It is commercially viable. It will provide a guaranteed revenue flow over the term of the project, over the life of the asset.

I put it simply to those on the other side who whinge and carp, moan and criticise: get behind this project. It will deliver a positive financial return for whoever owns it. Investors will be lining up thick at the door to get their hands on this project and to invest in this project -

Dr Woodruff - It will be big corporates, international corporates. It will not be the public.

Madam SPEAKER - Order, Dr Woodruff.

Mr BARNETT - because of that commercial reliability and feasibility. It is a bankable project.

It is all on the back of our nation's leading renewable energy plans. Low-cost, reliable, clean electricity. That is why they want Tasmania's electricity, and it is going to deliver. It will deliver downward pressure on prices, improved energy security, increased economic investment and jobs. That is what we are on about, delivering more jobs.

Already we have Cattle Hill Wind Farm; we have Granville Harbour Wind Farm - 350 people working on those jobs during the construction, and another 16 permanent ongoing. Marinus Link, with the supporting transmission, with the supporting unlocking of renewable energy projects across the state, will deliver billions in investment; in fact an estimated \$7 billion, thousands of jobs to Tasmania. During the planning and approval process you have dozens of people employed supporting the project. It goes and goes. It is very encouraging. You have \$16 million thanks to the federal government, and thanks to the Deputy Premier and the skills training.

I make the point: we are getting the jobs of the future. We are training them up. We are skilling them up. That is our plan for the future. It is all part of our plan - Renewable Energy Action Plan, our Renewable Hydrogen Action Plan, our target for 100 per cent, target for 200 per cent. Tasmania will be the epicentre for renewable energy excellence across the globe. It is happening here on our watch, under our plan, unlike the opposition. They have no plan, no vision whatsoever.

Seasonal Work and JobSeeker Payments

Dr BROAD to PREMIER, Mr GUTWEIN

[11.11 a.m.]

Your Government has been conducting an advertising blitz to encourage Tasmanians who have lost work during COVID-19 to take up fruit and vegetable picking this season. Farmers are telling us that this is not enough, and there is a need for a resolution and it is urgent. Growers have invested millions in their crops, and now face complete devastation if they cannot get their produce picked out of the ground and off the trees.

The TFGA and the National Farmers' Federation have called for changes that will allow fruit pickers to keep their JobSeeker benefits to make sure there is no disincentive for people to take on these seasonal jobs. This industry is the cornerstone of the Tasmanian economy. You have to do more than pay for glossy ads.

What are you doing to make sure that Tasmania's fruit gets picked and vegetables harvested this season, and what representations have you made to the National Cabinet to make changes to JobSeeker that would give thousands of Tasmanians confidence to take on seasonal work and support our hardworking farmers?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the member for that question and welcome his change of face and about-turn. If it comes to building a ship, he would like Finland to do it, but he is encouraging us to have Tasmanians pick fruit. It is a worthwhile thing for them to be doing, and we have worked hard to ensure that the opportunities are presented for them. You cannot walk both sides of the street on these sorts of things. You are either for Tasmanian jobs, or you are not. I am a little confused by the position you take.

We have been working closely with the industry, and the minister responsible has been highly engaged. We understand that we need to get the fruit off the vines. We will ensure that it occurs, and that is the commitment I have provided to the industry.

The first stage of that has been to have a program to attract as many Tasmanians as we possibly can to the opportunities that exist. My understanding is that in terms of the program that has been made out, thousands of Tasmanians are filling those jobs and thousands of Tasmanians are looking at those jobs. I have also heard from some in the industry that they have been overwhelmed by the response to date.

The first thing we wanted to do as part of our plan was to ensure that we provided the opportunity to Tasmanians. This side of the House agrees that that is the right and proper thing to do. I am not sure about that side of the House, because the member who asked the question -

Dr BROAD - Point of order, Madam Speaker. The question was about what representations have you made to National Cabinet to make changes to JobSeeker if thousands of Tasmanians take on seasonal work?

Madam SPEAKER - That is not a point of order, but Premier, I do draw your attention to that point.

Mr GUTWEIN - The point I was making was it is my understanding that Tasmanians are showing interest in these jobs. One of the things that has changed in this country - and I do not think the other side understands this - is that unfortunately we have had a worldwide pandemic. There is significant interest in the jobs from Tasmanians. We want to ensure that first and foremost we give as much of that opportunity to Tasmanians. That is the first step we have taken.

Public Health, the industry and DPIPWE are working closely together to ensure that we have an appropriate pathway, but at the same time we do two things. One is to get the fruit off the trees and the vines but at the same time keep our community safe. That process is underway and we are taking steps to ensure that we have pickers here when we need them, whether they be Tasmanians or need to come from interstate as part of existing teams.

The first thing we are going to do is to ensure that Tasmanians get first crack at this, unlike what you want to do with the *Spirits* and the single largest investment in tourism infrastructure that this state will ever make. You want those jobs to go to Finland.

Madam Speaker, in terms of seasonal workers, we have laid out a plan and are working with the industry. We will ensure that they have the labour they need, but first and foremost we want to give Tasmanians the opportunity.

Attendance at Liberal Party Fundraising Events

Ms HADDAD to PREMIER, Mr GUTWEIN

[11.16 a.m.]

Almost three years ago your predecessor Will Hodgman committed to overhauling Tasmania's near non-existent donation disclosure laws. You appear to have been backing away from that commitment every day since you took the top job in January. Yesterday you gave the strongest indication yet that you have no intention of introducing reforms, saying you have not even turned your mind to it, despite receiving the report on your Government's own review well before COVID-19 hit. Tasmanians are demanding transparency and want to know what you are trying to hide. You say you have not turned your mind to this issue because you have been busy with the COVID-19 pandemic response. If that is the case, can you confirm whether you have found time to attend any Liberal Party fundraising events since March?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank Ms Haddad for that question and her interest in this matter. Do you know what keeps me awake at night? It is worrying about how we keep Tasmania safe. You start by saying I have been the Premier since January. Well, hello, we have had to deal with the pandemic. What is really interesting and what appears to be the position of the Labor Party and the Labor Opposition in this place - I do not think the Greens are at that point yet - is that they think it is finished. They think it is over. Madam Speaker, the world -

Ms White - But there is no priority for you - that's the truth.

Mr GUTWEIN - Madam Speaker, the member, by interjection, raises the issue of priority. I will tell you what my priorities are right now - saving people's lives and ensuring that we can get Tasmanians back into work. As I said quite clearly over the last two days when these questions have been asked, I have not turned my mind to political donations. The election is not until 2022.

Mr O'BYRNE - Madam Speaker, point of order on relevance. The question was very clear: has the Premier attended any Liberal Party fundraising events in the last six months?

Madam SPEAKER - That is not a point of order, Mr O'Byrne.

Mr GUTWEIN - Madam Speaker, my priorities are keeping Tasmanians safe and ensuring we can get them back into work. As I have pointed out, the election is not planned until 2022 so there is plenty of time for this matter to be dealt with. I will turn my mind to it

when I have dealt with those other priorities of keeping Tasmanians safe and getting Tasmanians back into work. They are the things that exercise my mind.

If the Labor Party wants to play silly political games, I would again make the point to them very clearly that this pandemic is not over. We are in a situation where we need to be very cautious, responsible and sensible about how we step ourselves out of this. We are in a good place but we need to remain in front of this and ensure that we can gradually open our economy back up fully.

They are the things that exercise my mind. The election is not planned until 2022. There is plenty of time for us to deal with this matter. I have not turned my mind to it yet. It is simply not one of my immediate priorities.

Access to Justice - Improvements

Mr ELLIS to MINISTER for JUSTICE, Ms ARCHER

[11.21 p.m.]

Can you advise the House on further actions the Tasmanian Government is taking to improve access to justice for Tasmanians?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the member for Braddon for his question and his strong interest in this matter. Since he has come into this House he has been very engaged in Justice matters, so I thank him.

As Attorney-General and Minister for Justice I am committed to introducing reform to assist the efficiency of Tasmania's court system, as demonstrated by a number of bills introduced already in this place. The passage last year of the long-awaited and significant reforms to the Magistrates Court - which took over 20 years, I might add - has now commenced and I am pleased to report that that large project of work is progressing well with the assistance of my department's steering committee.

At the time of the Magistrates Court legislative reform passage through this House I acknowledged that delays in the court system, but particularly now due to COVID-19, continue to lead a growing backlog of cases in the Supreme Court. I am therefore committed as a matter of priority to introducing legislation aimed at administrative and procedural change that would reduce this backlog.

The Justice Miscellaneous (Court Backlog and Related Matters) Bill 2020 that I will be tabling today has been developed in close and extensive consultation with key legal stakeholders, including the Magistrates and Supreme courts and the Office of Director of Public Prosecutions. This has been developed over a substantial period of time pre-COVID-19 and now considered in light of COVID-19. The bill includes a range of reforms already endorsed by this parliament through the Magistrates Court (Criminal and General Division) Act 2019 that have been identified as changes that could be introduced earlier than the commencement of that act.

The proposals have been developed with the assistance of the steering committee and legislative working group of the Magistrates Court Criminal and General Division reform project which includes representation from the courts, the Department of Justice, Department of Police Fire and Emergency Management, the Director of Public Prosecutions, Law Society, Tasmanian Bar and Legal Aid Tasmania.

In addition to the extensive assistance provided by legal stakeholders through working and advisory groups, a consultation version of the bill was also released for public consultation via the Department of Justice website.

A key initiative of the bill is in relation to preliminary proceedings. The bill includes a range of amendments to the Justices Act 1959, the Criminal Code Act 1924 and related acts to implement preliminary proceedings reforms. Under this bill magistrates will deal with applications for preliminary proceedings orders prior to committal of matters to the Supreme Court. These reforms will sensibly improve administrative efficiency in the courts by reducing the delay involved in matters moving back and forward between the Magistrates Court and the Supreme Court.

The bill also contains provisions to ensure it is consistent with the new witness intermediary program as provided for in the Evidence (Children and Special Witnesses) Amendment Bill 2020 that was passed - pleasingly - in this House yesterday.

The bill has been developed to minimise unnecessary inefficiencies in the movement of matters between the Magistrates Court and the Supreme Court. There are however valid reasons for some pre-trial matters to remain heard in the Supreme Court.

The bill also includes amendments to bail provisions to improve efficiencies in the bail process and avoid unnecessary hearings for bail in the Supreme Court. These reforms will not affect an individual's right to bail but rather will ensure bail applications are heard in the appropriate place and do not cause unnecessary delays in the Supreme Court. This is essentially bringing forward the provisions in the 2019 Magistrates Court amendments now to maximise the benefit to the workflow of the courts.

Finally, the bill introduces a number of new minor summary offences that mirror more serious crimes.. This enables the prosecution to exercise discretion and ensure the matter is dealt with in a way that is appropriate for the nature and scale of the specific offending. The inclusion of mirror offences will provide prosecutors with the discretion to assess whether the behaviour of the accused warrants a charge in resulting in a Supreme Court trial, or a charge resulting in a Magistrates Courts trial.

At present this discretion is not open to the prosecution in these cases, and therefore charges resulting in Supreme Court trials for offending will likely result in sentencing options that could have been handed down in the Magistrates Court. These amendments will enable the Magistrates Court to deal with cases where the behaviour resulting in the charges was at the minor end of the scale.

The office of the DPP will exercise its discretion in accordance with prosecutorial guidelines to ensure matters are dealt with consistently and fairly. These changes will also ensure the Supreme Courts time is not unnecessarily used to deal with matters that could be more quickly and efficiently dealt with in the Magistrates Court. As I mentioned earlier many

of the reforms in this bill are bringing forward provisions for the 2019 Magistrate Courts amendments early so as to maximise the benefit to the work flow of the courts.

I sincerely thank and acknowledge the hard work of the various internal legal stake holders over an enormous period of time including the Chief Justice, the Chief Magistrate, the Deputy Chief Magistrate and the Administrator of the Magistrates Court, the Registrar of the Supreme Court, the Director of Public Prosecutions, and representatives from the Department of Police Fire and Emergency Management and the Department of Justice who have developed a suite of reforms that will have a significant effect on the efficiency of Tasmanian Courts especially post COVID-19.

Time expired.

PETITION

Tasman Highway - Stieglitz Turnoff and St Helens Bridge

Ms Butler presented a petition signed by approximately 109 citizens of Tasmania regarding the safety of traffic on the stretch of the Tasman Highway from Stieglitz Turnoff and St Helens Bridge. The petition conforms with the relevant standing orders and rules of the House.

Petition received.

BIOSECURITY (CONSEQUENTIAL AND TRANSITIONAL PROVISIONS) BILL 2020 (No. 20)

Bill agreed to by the Legislative Council without amendment.

JUSTICE MISCELLANEOUS (COURT BACKLOG AND RELATED MATTERS) BILL 2020 (No. 35)

First Reading

Bill presented by **Ms Archer** and read for the first time.

MATTER OF PUBLIC IMPORTANCE

Supporting Our Farmers

[11.30 a.m.]

Dr BROAD (Braddon) - Mr Deputy Speaker, I move -

That the House take note of the following matter: supporting our farmers.

There is a massive issue coming up for our farmers that is going to start within weeks. That is getting their fruit picked, their vegetables harvested and later on in the season getting like things like apples harvested. This is an issue that has been known about for a while.

Ever since COVID-19 we have known there were going to be issues in getting the workforce that we have relied on for many years now: backpackers, visa holders and Pacific Islanders. They have done the majority of this sort of work and we have known for a long time now that they are not going to be coming into this state or that it will be very difficult for them to come into this state, especially with the quarantine requirements.

We are concerned because this is a problem that is going to start very soon; not something that is in November or December but within a matter of weeks. Berry farmers will be the first cab off the rank; the berries are ready to be picked. Following that, we have issues with apples such as pruning, thinning and later on picking. Around Christmas time we have cherry season and then we have grapes and so on. We also have vegetable crops that need to be harvested, things like broccolini, cabbage and lettuce.

A series of workers is required across the state. There is a broccolini operation that will need 40 pickers for about five months and they want to start picking now. This is a massive problem for these industries because if they cannot find the workers early in the season and do not have confidence that they are going to get the pickers they need for the rest of the season, the fruit is not going to get picked, and the vegetables are not going to be harvested. Then they are not going to be planning extra crops or looking after the crops they have because they know there will not be pickers there to pick them.

For example, with something like broccolini, there might be a 10- to 12-week turnaround from the time they are planted to the time they are harvested. If this farmer cannot get his broccolini harvested in the next couple of weeks, he is not going to be planting those crops for January and February because the pickers will not be there. This is an urgent issue.

This is also for packing and there are massive issues, especially in the berry sector because we know that sector has been growing at a massive rate. We have had people enter the industry who have massively expanded. They are a cash flow business. They need the cash flow and they need 70 per cent to 80 per cent of their fruit picked before they start making money. If their cash flow gets hit they are going to run out of money and some of these growers are going to go out of business. That is how serious this is. It is not just about the fruit staying on the vine or the vegetables not getting harvested. This will drive businesses broke and there is a need for an urgent solution.

In question time today we asked about the National Cabinet and whether the Premier had discussed in that National Cabinet the option of making changes to JobSeeker. We have to try to reduce the barriers to people taking up harvesting jobs in Tasmania. There is a danger that if somebody tries out vegetable harvesting or picking berries and it does not work out for them, they will have issues getting back onto JobSeeker. There will be waiting periods and other issues such as whether their healthcare card will stay current. These act as a barrier for people taking up the opportunity. If the national government could be lobbied to get them to make changes to JobSeeker that would do something such as getting rid of the waiting period after the harvest is finished. That would be one barrier removed to make people more likely to take up the opportunities.

There is also a barrier with transport. The Government should be working as hard as it can to arrange bus transport from major centres to where the fruit needs to be picked. We know in the past when there was a massive hop season at Bushy Park, for example, when it was very labour-intensive. Trains were sent from Hobart to take people up for the hop picking season.

We could have a modern equivalent of that. We could have picker buses pulling up in our major towns like Devonport, Burnie, Ulverstone, Launceston and Hobart to take these pickers directly out to where the crops are waiting to be harvested. This is what the Government should be working on.

This is a problem that is not way off in the distance; it is literally weeks away. Growers have been talking to me and they are concerned. They are concerned that ads seem to be the Government's major strategy at the moment. We have seen these ads in the paper and they look great. We have somebody photographed picking fruit saying, 'Take advantage of the opportunities', but that is not enough. We need to do more. The Government needs to do more and needs to lobby their federal colleagues to get them to make these changes. It is not only us saying it; the TFGA and the National Farmers Federation are also saying it. The Premier should take this up. Reduce the barriers to JobSeeker.

We know there are really good careers in agriculture, many that have started by people fruit-picking. They have moved from being pickers to driving tractors, to other operations up the chain and become managers of farms. Indeed, you could be managers of big businesses and get into companies like Costas that have invested very heavily in Tasmania.

It is not surprising that the Government appears to be putting all their eggs in just an advertising basket because we know that the Government has been letting farmers down. We know they have let the abattoir shut in Quoiba, and did nothing to make up the losses from that abattoir. We know they attempted to tax investment by putting a farm tax on investors. Thankfully, they back-flipped on that. There are also other issues that farmers are dealing with, like the shutdown of the sale yard at Quoiba. The community has become so anxious about the sale yard that they have taken matters into their own hands. They have formed a community steering group and are going to build their own sale yard because the Government is completely absent from the field.

A petition is circulating in the community, calling on the Government to support that community-run sale yard. I urge anybody who has petitions to hand them to the committee members or take them to my office because I will be tabling that petition as soon as I can.

Time expired.

[11.37 a.m.]

Mr BARNETT (Lyons - Minister for Primary Industries and Water) - Mr Deputy Speaker, it is a pleasure to speak on something that is important to Tasmanians. This Government can be very proud of Tasmanian farmers and jobs in the agricultural sector and how we are supporting them. This Government has a track record of demonstrating that Tasmania and Tasmanians come first.

It is very clear from the Opposition side, particularly in this question time today and in recent weeks, that they have been acting as ambassadors for Europe, ambassadors for Finland.

Dr Broad - This is a serious issue.

Mr BARNETT - It is very important. The shadow minister for infrastructure has a track record now of preferring Finland to do the work, providing Finnish jobs.

Dr Broad interjecting.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER - Order, Dr Broad, you were heard in silence.

Mr BARNETT - We have a very clear policy - Tasmania first. The Premier, Mr Ferguson and I have made that clear today. We have a Tasmania First energy policy.

Ms O'Connor - No, we do not. It is mostly foreign owned.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER - Order, Ms O'Connor.

Mr BARNETT - We have a Tasmanians first policy in every respect -

Ms O'Connor - That is dishonest.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER - Order, Ms O'Connor.

Mr BARNETT - Let us be very clear - what I am saying is that we put Tasmanians first. We have a \$1.9 million support package over a two-year period that is supporting agriculture and supporting the essential need, as mentioned by the Premier earlier today, to get the fruit picked, the vegetables harvested, the grapes crushed, and to market in time.

That is why we are working shoulder to shoulder with the industry and have formed a round table to work through these issues and we are delivering.

I am very exercised in this place. It is so pleasing to be able to work positively and collaboratively with the industry, farmers and the agricultural stakeholders. We have big plans. There is no greater supporter of agriculture in regional Tasmania than the Tasmanian Liberal Government. We have been working side by side with the sector and will continue to do so. We have plans to grow to \$10 billion by 2050, and that is on the back of our rich soil, favourable climate, water infrastructure, enterprising farmers, and the premium brand. I am so proud of them.

We are backing it in, and we have announced that. We are on the front foot, ahead of the game, and the \$1.9 million Agricultural Workforce Resilience Package is in place. 'Tasmanians first' - you saw the advertising last week. We were out there with the 'Tasmanians first' agricultural jobs campaign.

I will give an update on that. Since the official campaign launch, there have been 12 500 hits on the DPIWE Harvest Jobs webpage. The industry is promoting harvest jobs. The industry is doing this, with us, working together in preparation for the upcoming harvest period. They already have more than 3500 jobs available on the harvest trail. That is good news. Great effort, good job. For more information, I encourage Tasmanians to visit the Harvest Jobs website, or call the Harvest Trail Information Service direct on 1800 062 332.

That is the message you should be getting out, Dr Broad, and others on the other side, to get Tasmanians into those jobs. It is an absolute top priority to get as many Tasmanians as possible to fill those jobs.

Our support package is very comprehensive. We have the strategic industry partnerships, and we are working together with them, co-investing with those industry peak bodies. We have

the FarmPoint Hotline and the AgriGrowth liaison officers on 1300 292 292. If you need advice, that is the hotline. You have the two-year support for Safe Farming Tasmania through WorkSafe Tasmania, keeping Tasmanians safe, as the Premier makes clear time and again. That is a priority, so we established the roundtable.

Thank you to my department, working with the Department of Premier and Cabinet and the Department of Health to get the job done with all the key stakeholders, to prepare to get the fruit picked, the vegetables harvested and off to market. Thank you to Jeremy Rockliff for the Agriskills Entry Program announced last week. That will help as well.

I have given a summary of the success so far, and I expect there will be further success. I have expressed interest in participating in the seasonal worker's program to the federal government. I keep in touch with my federal colleague and, indeed, other state and territory ministers.

We are preparing contingency plans to ensure we have the people on the ground to pick the fruit, harvest the vegetables and get it to market. My department is working with DPAC and the State Control Centre to facilitate the safe movement of people from non-affected areas of mainland Australia, to understand the best model for allowing entry into our state. We back the sector 100 per cent.

My shadow referred to some other parts of our agricultural portfolio. That is simply negativity and snide remarks from the sideline because there is no better supporter.

With respect to the sale yards on the north-west coast, there has been a meeting in more recent times with the Deputy Premier and my office staff. We are happy to listen to anything that comes forward with regard to a feasibility study or some sort of sustainable future that they want to put forward.

We have a plan, and we are still waiting for your plan.

Time expired.

[11.44 a.m.]

Ms O'CONNOR (Clark - Leader of the Greens) - Mr Deputy Speaker, the minister, who is a serial misleader in this place, has now sat down and I have to say, it was quite interesting to see that little spat between Mr Barnett and Dr Broad, who usually get along so well on issues such as denigrating scientists.

I hope that Tasmanians, particularly young people, take up the opportunities that are being presented to go out and help make sure that the produce comes off the land; that we have enough fruit pickers this season to get our food on the table, but also trade to market. I believe there will be strong take-up, particularly from young Tasmanians, for this year's fruit picking season.

There are a number of challenges faced by Tasmania's agricultural sector that neither Dr Broad or Mr Barnett went anywhere near, and when Mr Barnett makes another false claim about a Tasmania-First Energy Policy, I cannot help but challenge him on that.

Farmers have been crying out for the capacity to install on-farm renewable generation for a very long time, and certainly throughout Mr Barnett's tenure as Primary Industries

minister. At every step of the way he has blocked the capacity of Tasmanian farmers to install renewables on their farms and trade across to other farms. That would be a genuine Tasmania-First Energy Policy, where Tasmanian farmers can make that contribution to our energy mix and bring down their costs, as well as make sure that our emissions profile continues to be as clean as it can possibly be.

It is completely dishonest to say that this Government has a Tasmania-First Energy Policy, when a very substantial amount of our energy generation assets are foreign owned.

This is a Government that is actually denying Tasmanian farmers the opportunity to own energy assets and earn an income from those assets, as well as keep their costs down.

The other area of abject failure of this minister to support Tasmanian farmers is in the area of feral deer management. The minister has falsely claimed that we have a sustainable feral deer population in Tasmania. The University of Tasmania has estimated that by the year 2050, there will be around 1 million feral deer in our landscape, but this Government continues to prioritise hunters over farmers.

The Invasive Species Council wrote a letter to government yesterday raising their concerns about the recent survey that was undertaken - which, remember, only surveyed the north-east corner of the state. Even that survey found that the feral deer population has doubled to 54 000 at least, since 2016.

The Tasmanian Farmers and Graziers Association in 2016 estimated the cost to farmers of feral deer at \$25 million per annum. If you are serious about supporting farmers, you have to get on top of feral deer. You cannot have an agricultural industry that will be worth a billion dollars by 2050 if you allow feral deer to range unchecked through the landscape, tearing down fences, destroying crops, and as we know, going into our protected areas.

In 2018 Greening Australia estimated that 30 per cent of its \$6 million budget for the Midlands restoration program was spent preventing deer impacts.

A recent survey of Tasmanian farmers showed strong support for reclassifying deer as a feral pest in Tasmania. More than 90 per cent of farmers who voted agreed deer should be treated as a pest species and not protected.

Feral deer in Tasmania are protected under the Nature Conservation Act. We are the only Australian state or territory that does not treat feral deer as the pest species that they are because, for too long, the Government has been beholden to the hunting lobby - but not one word on that from either Dr Broad or the minister. We are heading towards an environmental calamity for Tasmanian farmers and for our wilderness if government does not get on top of the feral deer problem.

I have spoken to farmers who are tearing their hair out at the cost to them, every week, of either having to engage hunters to keep deer populations down on their land, or fix up their fences, or replant their crops. The Government needs to get on top of feral deer. Farmers will tell Mr Barnett that, if he listens to them. They will also tell him that they would be very willing participants in an on-farm renewable scheme if only he would get with the program and stop blocking this important initiative. I note that the Commonwealth Government has extended grants to farmers for energy efficiency, which is an excellent initiative, but we also need to empower farmers to have their own energy supply on their land so we should be providing

grants for on-farm renewables and allowing for energy-sharing and trading between individual properties.

As the Greens pointed out in our submission to the Premier's Economic and Social Recovery Advisory Council, the Treasurer should issue an instruction requiring government procurement contracts and subsidies to favour local businesses that proactively employ sustainable farming and climate-friendly practices. Again, not from one of the scientists in this place, Dr Broad or the minister himself, has there been any acknowledgement that the biggest challenge facing Tasmanian farmers over the medium to long term is the accelerating climate impacts - the drying out of water supplies, the impact on irrigation schemes, the threat of bushfires, interruption to supply chains and the potential impact on the exports of our produce.

Finally, I want to talk about the brand and point out that this Government is consistently undermining the brand that Tasmanian farmers rely on by degrading our wilderness and natural areas.

Time expired.

[11.51 a.m.]

Ms WHITE (Lyons - Leader of the Opposition) - Mr Deputy Speaker, this is a critical MPI because we know that we need 8000 jobs filled to harvest the fruit and vegetables that are critical to underpin the success of the Tasmanian agriculture sector. The total value of agriculture in Tasmania is \$1.6 billion and in February there were approximately 17 900 people employed, which makes up about 7 per cent of all employment in Tasmania, but employment and jobs in that sector have fallen by 16.7 per cent since mid-March.

We know that we need to support our farmers right now more than ever to find those 8000 workers they need so they can get their product to market. This is critical not just for them and their livelihoods and our economy but also for food security. In evidence provided to a parliamentary inquiry that has been occurring in our federal parliament they heard that fruit prices could go up by as much as 60 per cent if we are unable to get this product to market.

The industry has been doing an extraordinary job of trying to advertise opportunities for Tasmanians to take up local work. I congratulate and commend them on their endeavors. They have been doing this for many months, since March in fact when they first understood that border closures would have a very bad impact on their ability to use the labour force they usually rely on.

This was something that Labor picked up in our COVID-19 jobs plan. In fact it is number two in terms of the recommendations that we made to Government to support Tasmanian jobs. We have a plan to provide opportunities for Tasmanians to take up this work. The Government does not have a plan because you admitted yourself, Mr Barnett, that you have relied on the industry and the Harvest Trail website which you said has had 12 500 hits. You said industry has done this and I thank them for doing that because if they were not doing it what would they be left with in two weeks' time, because you have been nowhere.

They need the Government to lobby the federal government to make the changes to JobSeeker to enable Tasmanians who are currently unemployed to take up these jobs without barriers or disincentives. This is supported by the Tasmanian Farmers and Graziers Association and the National Farmers Federation. They made submissions to a parliamentary inquiry in Canberra. They have lobbied the state government and yet today the Premier could

not back them in and say he was going to take this matter to National Cabinet and the Prime Minister and he was going to back Tasmanian jobs.

We know what you are up to, Mr Barnett. Not only are you leaving the industry out on a limb but it was reported in the media that you are looking at what you can do to bring workers across from the mainland and the Pacific Islands. That might be necessary but you got up here on your high horse and talked about Tasmania jobs first and said you would do everything possible to provide those workers that we need across the Tasmanian workforce, those 8000 jobs. What are you actually doing about it? In a report on 8 September on ABC Rural it said that in a midday meeting on Monday the state Government told Fruit Growers Tasmania chief executive Peter Cornish they would work with them to get workers both from the mainland and overseas.

My question to the minister is, how many of these workers are going to come in, where are they going to come from and how can you say to those Tasmanians who have been denied the opportunity to come home to mourn with their loved ones for a funeral that they had to observe via Zoom that they are not allowed to come back yet you can bring a worker into this state to pick fruit? The inequity here is galling. The inconsistency between what you were saying and what the Premier is saying does not stack up. You say one thing and the Premier says another and at the same time our fruit and vegetable industry is caught in the middle.

They have been raising this since March saying they knew this was going to be a problem and wanted the Government to support them. They have a clear solution on the table. Talk to your federal colleagues about the changes that are required for JobSeeker so we do not have these barriers and disincentives to stop Tasmanians having every opportunity to take up these jobs and support our farmers. The Premier today gave a glib response and gave no commitment to doing anything like that whatsoever.

This Government is setting up our farmers up to fail. They are one of the key cornerstones of our economy, a great industry and a very proud sector. I am very proud to have grown up on a farm and I know from the conversations I am having with farmers right around the state that they are very worried. This is so urgent. We need 8000 workers and some of them within a matter of weeks.

The minister today could not indicate from the 12 500 hits that had been made on an industry website how many of those had been converted into actual jobs. That is what we need to understand. How many Tasmanians have been converted from interest into actual employment opportunities? What are they doing with that \$1.9 million they have allocated over two years? Are they using that to support the transportation of workers from our cities to the country areas and are they doing that quickly enough? This will have an impact not just on those farmers but on our economy and food security.

There is a solution that has been put forward and has been endorsed by a committee that is headed up by a Liberal member of the Government who has recommended that the Government adopt the recommendation by the National Farmers Federation and the Tasmanian Farmer and Graziers Association to make changes to JobSeeker so there is no disincentive for Tasmanians who are currently unemployed for picking up this work to support our farmers.

Our hardworking farmers deserve our support right now and this Government seems to be completely asleep at the wheel. This is incredibly serious. We have a massive problem

looming in just a number of weeks and if the Government thinks the solution is to bring workers in from the mainland or the Pacific Islands when borders are shut to every single other person in this country who might want to come home to the funeral of a loved one or to be with someone who is sick, then they have to explain that. They have to explain why the risk of that worker coming here is less than someone coming home to see a loved one and they have to explain what they are doing to support our farmers who are right now very worried.

Time expired.

[11.59 a.m.]

Mrs PETRUSMA (Franklin) Mr Deputy Speaker, I welcome the opportunity today to speak on how this Government is supporting our farmers. The hypocrisy from the Opposition is incredible, especially when you consider the fact that, as the Leader of the Opposition stated, agriculture is a key pillar of our economy with an annual farm gate value \$1.64 billion, which is why this government is investing over \$150 million through our comprehensive Agri-Food Plan 2019-23 to support our farmers.

We put \$150 million on the table. Labor put on \$45 million, \$105 million less than what this Government, Premier Gutwein and the hardworking Minister for Primary Industries and Water are doing. They have criticised this Government and they have been criticising the minister, Mr Barnett. Last Friday I was in the Huon Valley talking to family-owned orchard businesses who are fourth generation. The minister, Mr Barnett, has been picking up the phone and speaking to these farmers, hearing from them directly about the issues that are of concern to them, and working with his department to put in place solutions for all of these farmers. Mr Barnett is out there, talking, because he does want to know how he, his department, his staff and this Government can help this vital industry.

Regarding whether Tasmanians are interested in these jobs, I put up a Facebook post around 4 September: 53 500 people have looked at that post and it has been shared 328 times, because Tasmanians are interested in how they can work in this vital sector. They know there is no better time for them to roll up their sleeves and get out and work in this industry to help our vital primary industries in new agricultural jobs.

The minister, Mr Barnett, and the Government are trying to put out the message - don't look at this as just seasonal work or something that suits university students for example - look at it as a long-term career option, because this Government wants to grow the sector to \$10 billion by 2050 and people can look at a long-term career in one of the most exciting and innovative industries in Tasmania. Tassie farmers need pickers, drivers, sorters, packers and pruners. This Government's top priority is to get as many Tasmanians as possible into these positions. It is a great opportunity for Tasmanians, for students, for people who want a job, to earn hundreds of dollars extra a week while gaining valuable skills and experience in a growing industry.

One of the orchardists I spoke to last week was a fourth-generation business, and their business is continuing to increase. They are creating new full-time jobs as well as part-time jobs over the whole year, as well as needing casual workers. They appreciate how strongly Mr Barnett and the department are supporting this industry because we know there are many jobs available state-wide.

Despite the Labor Party carping from the opposition sidelines, we want to get the message out today that agriculture is an exciting and growing industry. Many diverse jobs and career opportunities are available for Tasmanians now and over the coming months. That is why the Government is supporting this industry through a \$1.9 million Agriculture Workforce Resilient Package, including the local agriculture jobs campaign, which I note has been warmly welcomed by the TFGA. In their media release the TFGA said they welcomed the announcement by the Minister for Primary Industries and Water about the new \$1.9 million Agriculture Workforce Resilient Package to be distributed over two years to assist with mobilising Tasmanians for agricultural production. TFGA CEO, Mr Peter Skillern, said,

This is an outstanding initiative by the State Government and we thank Minister Barnett for his support and commitment to this worthwhile program. In the current COVID climate, ensuring ongoing production for all facets for agriculture production in Tasmania is critically important. This package will assist industry to deal with such things as seasonal peak demand for picking and processing of summer fruit.

This package is a further initiative to ensure that Tasmania's agricultural production continues to increase and further enhances the Tasmanian economy.

I note that other measures the minister has been undertaking include working closely with growers and industry groups to promote the seasonal work opportunities, working with the employers, and they have also linked it to the National Harvest Trail. There is a two-year boost to the Strategic Industry Partnerships Program to co-invest with industry peak bodies and organisations to support industry, resilience, promotion, targeted skills and training in regional transport. There is also the extension of the FarmPoint Hotline and Agrigrowth liaison officers to provide a critical single contact point for primary producers to access information and services.

There are many other initiatives too. There is the two-year boost to Safe Farming Tasmania through WorkSafe Tasmania to ensure agricultural employers are workforce-ready to safely employ more Tasmanians in COVID-19-ready workplaces. We have also established a Tasmania agribusinesses workforce roundtable to drive and oversee that proposed actions, reporting to the minister and also informing the Premier's Economic and Social Recovery Advisory Council.

The Premier, all of Cabinet, minister Barnett, the department as well as the Premier's Economic and Social Recovery Advisory Council are also working with our federal government colleagues, so there is so much effort going on to ensure that Tasmania has the workforce we need for the upcoming season. I acknowledge the great work of all the family-owned orchardists in the Huon Valley for the great work they are doing.

Time expired.

Matter noted.

TEACHERS REGISTRATION AMENDMENT BILL 2019 (No. 50)

Second Reading

Resumed from 15 September 2020 (page 92)

[12.06 p.m.]

Mr ROCKLIFF (Braddon - Minister for Education and Training) - Mr Deputy Speaker, this bill also amends the Teachers Registration Act to allow the Teachers Registration Board to participate in a range of important data-sharing initiatives for educational, research and other purposes as set out in regulations. To date, there have been no appropriate mechanisms in the act to allow such sharing.

As Minister for Education and Training I am committed to taking action to deliver a quality education workforce for Tasmania. Education is an essential foundation for Tasmania's future prosperity and for sustainable community and social outcomes. Teachers are one of the biggest influencers of student success and therefore quality teaching practices are critical to improving student learning and education outcomes in Tasmania.

We know we need to work collaboratively to attract people with the right capabilities to Tasmania's education system, to prepare students to become teachers and provide our current teachers with opportunities to enhance their careers and develop skills to respond to the challenges of a rapidly changing society.

One initiative which will help us achieve these outcomes is the Australian Teacher Workforce Data Strategy, led by the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership. This important research will compile and link data on initial teacher education and the teacher workforce, providing for the first time national data on and insight into the characteristics of the Australian teacher workforce lifecycle from pre-service to retirement.

It will provide a national, de-identified data set of the teaching workforce for use by state, territory and Commonwealth governments. The data will allow the Government to understand current and potential gaps in the teacher supply chain and inform workforce planning now and into the future. Once Tasmanian data is uploaded to the Teacher Workforce Data Strategy, the Department of Education and the Teachers Registration Board will be able to analyse it and access tailored reporting for the state.

Having a greater understanding of the teaching workforce will deliver a wide range of benefits. It will allow the Tasmanian Government to better support teachers and the profession, drive improved educational outcomes for our learners, manage capacity and capability in the workforce and better focus our investments.

There is a range of other initiatives for which data-sharing may be required in the future. These include:

- implementation of the recommendations from the National Review of Teacher Registration;
- development of the National Teacher Workforce Strategy, agreed through the National School Reform Agreement; and

- continued implementation of the response to the recommendations of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse.

Data may also be shared for research or educational purposes or for any other purposes that are prescribed in regulations, and the bill requires the relevant authorities with whom data may be shared to be prescribed in regulation.

The bill includes appropriate safeguards to ensure data protection and security. Before sharing data, the Teachers Registration Board must be satisfied that the authority it is sharing with has procedures in place to protect the data from misuse, theft, loss, unauthorised access, modification or disclosure.

This bill supports the extensive measures already put in place by this Government to protect children and vulnerable persons by ensuring that a teacher who no longer holds registration to work with vulnerable people can be promptly removed from the register of teachers. Further, it will allow the Teachers Registration Board to participate in a range of significant and beneficial data-sharing initiatives with long-term benefits for our learners and teachers, our education system and ultimately for the people of Tasmania.

I commend the bill to the House.

[12.10 p.m.]

Ms O'BYRNE (Bass) - Mr Deputy Speaker, thank you for the opportunity to speak on the Teachers Registration Amendment Bill. It has been sitting around for some time. At the outset, I indicate that we will be supporting the bill but we have some questions around its operation, particularly some of the security measures. If we can go through those in the content of my speech, we can hopefully avoid Committee which I am sure will make everybody a lot happier.

The purpose of the bill stands fine in its initial space and that is around the requirements of teachers to be appropriately registered under the act and around the requirement to have a current Working with Vulnerable Children check.

The minister will remember he and I have had conversations for some years now about the fact that there are still two assessment processes teaching staff need to go through. We talked for some time about the ability to better streamline or merge that, or to give primacy to one of those, so an update on how that might be progressing would be good. What we have in front of us is a response to the issue of registration and appropriate checks, yet still quite a process for people to go through.

If one of the processes has a greater validity, then using that would make sense, or at least if teachers only had to do the applications at the same time so there was consistency within the process, that would be reasonable. I am looking for an update on the commitment the minister gave some years ago to try to resolve what is a complex issue around that.

The Government has said it has come to their attention that the registration to work with vulnerable people can be suspended or cancelled by the registrar if they choose to voluntarily surrender it, and the Teachers Registration Board does not currently have the power to immediately suspend or revoke that teacher's registration. As I understand it, the Teachers Registration Board can at any stage revoke an approval if the person is seen to be a risk to

children, so we might explore that further to get it on the record so there is an understanding of what the difference might be and what circumstances might fall into that space.

As the second reading speech says, it is a time-consuming and resource-intensive disciplinary process to remove a teacher and it is important therefore that when we are going to make decisions about a teacher's registration being removed that we understand the full implications of doing that.

I want to address the issues around natural justice. The minister addressed in his second reading speech that there were significant concerns raised by unions and the issue around data-sharing initiatives and what that means. I will then spend a little time on workforce data and I do not think the minister will be surprised by that.

We have a couple of questions that have come up recently that we would seek some clarification on. You may be able to answer them now or they may be able to be dealt with before the bill gets to the other House.

My first issue is around merging and streamlining. We do not want teachers to inadvertently fail to meet one of the requirements because they get one and fail to meet the other. I do not know if there have been examples of that where someone has their police check or Working with Vulnerable People check. I agree that might still be the case. I do not know if that is one of the reasons we need more clarity here.

The AEU initially raised the issue of procedural fairness. From what I understand in the discussions we have had with them, they are much more comfortable with the process around procedural fairness they raised in their initial submissions, but it would be useful for us to understand around that how the process of procedural fairness might work.

Going through the end point where an allegation has been made and the teacher's registration has been temporarily cancelled and then that turns out later on to have not been the case, how do we then deal with allegations that have to be treated seriously that turn out to be not true? How is the validity of those allegations assessed? What kind of recompense might be offered to someone whose reputational damage would be reasonably extreme? Understandably, there would be no secrets in schools if the teacher suddenly lost registration. The personal reputational damage might be extreme. In your response, can you explain how the procedural process will ensure there is rigour around progressing the claim prior to a registration being removed. What happens if the registration needs to be reinstated later on? That would make a difference.

Could you also explain why we would need to do this, given there is already a capacity for a registration to be removed if there is a risk to children. Do you have any data on the number of times you think that there may have been risk factors, or whether an inquiry or any internal investigation has occurred to determine if this is an issue? I raise this, not to say we are not supporting the intent of the bill - because I think we do - but we do want to understand the level of risk that has led to this step being taken and why it is necessary in addition to the powers that the Teacher's Registration Board already has.

The main issue that has been raised relates to data sharing. For some time, we have raised our concern about protection of data and the way data is shared. In theory, it is not a bad idea to be able to share information and ensure that people are operating on the same basis.

However, we know there is a risk to the way that information might be shared, as well as a risk in the type of information that might be shared and also the risk of inappropriate access to that information.

The Public Accounts Committee hearings last week gives us significant cause for concern because it was clear that we do not have a deployable cybersecurity strategy in Tasmania and so information that is being collected and shared by agencies is vulnerable. Minister, we talked about this during the days of KOODA and the ability of organisations to track every keystroke. We had a program that children were engaging in, where they put in their skills and their interests to determine what their future career opportunities might be. That type of program when used in other jurisdictions such as the United States was being mined quite successfully, predominantly for marketing purposes. A student might say that they had an interest in engineering and, all of a sudden, they would receive promotional material from universities with engineering courses and their fund-raising entities in the United States.

I do not think we have resolved that history of our concern around data sharing and data collection. Under the principal act there is concern about the collection of personal information and sharing data automatically on request, rather than data being shared when you have an identified justification for seeking that information. Concern about data being shared under any other purposes that are prescribed in regulations is actually quite ambiguous and as I understand is not yet prescribed.

I will read into it how that would work. Each register is to contain the following information in respect to each registered teacher of whole or of limited authority:

- (a) their full name;
- (b) any former names;
- (c) their residential address;
- (d) date of birth;
- (e) qualifications;
- (f) teaching experience, the time of application for registration on the digital authority;
- (g) registration number or limited authority number;
- (h) in the case of a registered teacher whether fully registered provisionally registered or specialist vocational education training registered;
- (i) date on which registration or limited authority takes affect;
- (j) expiry date of resignation on limited authority;
- (k) any conditions to which the registration or limited authority is subject;

- (l) in the case of a holder of a limited authority in particular if there is any suspension of registration or limited authority; and
- (m) particulars of any suspension of registration or limited authority.

All of that sounds reasonably relevant to the information that is required in, 'any other particulars the board considers appropriate'. That leaves open a reasonably large scale of information. If we could understand what sort of data might fit into that set that would help us understand if there needs to be something more prescriptive to determine what that is. It also states that the TRB has to be satisfied that the authority with whom he is sharing data has procedures in place to ensure the information is protected from misuse, death, loss, unauthorised access, modification or disclosure.

I am not sure what tool the department will be able to use or would be able to access, to ensure that would be the case with any organisation you were sharing data with.

We have recently seen significant data theft issues. I am not sure if anyone in this room had their personal details provided, as we have read in the media over the last couple of days, but keeping data secure is probably one of the biggest threats that we have. We have already had an Auditor-General's report into cybersecurity risks across all of our agencies, that shows existing significant risks. Twelve months later, an update to that report said most of those issues had not been resolved and evidence to the Public Accounts Committee and to the Premier's Economic and Social Recovery Advisory Council said that we still have not actually resolved issues around protecting data and cybersecurity.

It might seem that there may be nothing particularly useful that is gained in this information but I refer to the recent cybersecurity attack on TOLL, a large business in Tasmania. Everyone understood what the cybersecurity attack did to them but probably did not understand that the data that was also under contention or taken impacted on a range of other Tasmanian businesses and individuals who may have used TOLL at any time. The ability to track data through is really quite frightening and I am not sure what the department plans to use to ensure that they are satisfied that they are sharing data with someone who has those procedures in place because we do not have a legislative framework. We do have legislation about personal information, I am not sure of the name of the act -

Ms O'Connor - The Personal Information Protection Act, PIPA.

Ms O'BYRNE - Thank you. PIPA does not necessarily cover the sort of information that might be shared here and it does not necessarily provide protection in the prevention of the theft of data. That is something that we need to have a little bit more information about because it does open up some significant concerns across government in terms of data collection, data protection and cybersecurity. If we are now going to legislate in a space, at the same time, we have to be able to provide those assurances, frameworks and resources, as investments to ensure that the information is safe.

Mr Deputy Speaker, since the 1990s, we have become aware of the risk of our personal information, but never before has the lack of privacy once we share information been so openly displayed. As I said, the evidence to PAC was startling in terms of the IT industry's concerns about our inability to deploy any kind of cybersecurity strategy. If that is the case, then we

cannot deal with these types of work in isolation. We actually have to do it in a framework that provides protection.

I do not want to spend too much time on that, but if I can go back to that issue of the Teachers Registration Board on suspended registration for anyone at risk. If you can perhaps provide the information on how many cases there might have been, how many times this occurred, what the level of that risk might have been, and, as I said, any other inquiries you may have undertaken into this to understand a little bit more about the motivation for it.

Workforce development is another area that this bill makes reference to and it is almost like an own goal, talking about workforce development at the moment.

One issue that will help us to achieve this outcome, says the second reading speech, is the Australian Teaching Workforce data strategy led by the Australian Institute for Teaching in School Leadership. The Strategy compiled and linked data on initial teacher education teacher workforce, and for the first-time national data on the insight into the characteristics of the Tasmanian teacher workforce lifecycle, from pre-service to retirement.

What is really interesting about that is that in the leadup to the last election this Government committed to a complete audit of the teacher workforce in terms of skills to give us a picture, as a state, on our workforce skills base so we know what skills we have. It was a review into specialist teachers and should have picked up teachers who were teaching out of area. There has apparently been some work done on that and I understand Estimates Committee had an update saying the work was ongoing, but there were some 4345 teachers to survey and, as of yet, we do not have an outcome of that. The work was originally going to be done quite quickly. I can go through to see the *Hansard* debate, whether the minister did speak about it -

We are currently doing the workforce audit so we can understand the teacher's fields and teaching areas of our staff. We want to become a lot more effective. We have an enormous number of teachers to deal with.

This is actually the third Estimates that have dealt with this.

Minister, are we any closer to getting this work actually done? Do we have any piece of work the minister talks about - the workforce skills that are across our education sector, and the teachers coming out of those areas? We initially thought it was going to be completed quite quickly. The last information we got was that it was going to be completed by 2020 - that it would definitely be resolved before we went back into Estimates in 2020.

I know Estimates have been delayed, but I imagine you would have been assuming that the Budget was still going to be on time, so I am assuming that by now you have a workforce strategy document that can define all of the workforce skills across the department - the minister is not making contact, and there are smiles from over here - to give us a picture of what your workforce looks like, and where we have skilled teachers, where we have skilled teacher shortages, and where we have people teaching out of area - particularly as you were going through the process of recruiting new teachers.

If you are recruiting new teachers, I imagine you would be recruiting new teachers against identified workforce shortage plans. You would know what skills you did not have, and you would be aiming to meet those. It seems to me we are some way behind on that work. If you

are going to be participating in the Australian teacher workforce data, that assumes you have some capacity to analyse the Tasmanian teacher workforce data, but that does not seem to have happened at all.

It would be great if you could give us an update on that work. I know there were some round table discussions at some stage. The department -

Mr Rockliff - The round table is still going well.

Ms O'BYRNE - The round table is still going on?

Mr Rockliff - The workforce development roundtable.

Ms O'BYRNE - How long has that been going on? Do you want to deal with that in - if it is easier to do it now that is fine, because you are expecting that work at the end of the year, and that is still ongoing, so you did not get that work done by the end of the year, according to the Estimates? Sorry, I have got you chewing.

Mr Rockliff - The workforce development round table is an ongoing discussion.

Ms O'BYRNE - Okay. You did commit, in the lead-up to the election, that there would be an audit of specialist teaching skills, and that would be available.

Mr Rockliff - We will provide you -

Ms O'BYRNE - So we can provide that. That is great. That will make a difference, because we talk about participating in the national one, and one would really want to understand how that was working for the local one.

I have only one other issue we wanted to get on the table. Minister, are you saying that work has already been done, because in February when we attempted to RTI it, we were told it was not possible to get. Has it happened since February?

Mr Rockliff - Are you talking about the workforce development round table?

Ms O'BYRNE - Yes.

Mr Rockliff - It has been ongoing for some time, since the signing of the -

Ms O'BYRNE - We asked for the number of teachers employed by the DoE who hold a degree in maths, science, information technology and English, which were the workforce areas you talked about when you made an election commitment on specialist skills. Has that work been done? In February we RTI'd that information, and the department was unable to do it because of the difficulties in getting that information, but you are saying you have that now, or just an update on workplace round table strategies?

Mr Rockliff - No, it is still ongoing, but an update - I will come back and summarise.

Ms O'BYRNE - Okay. That would be fine. I understand there were some round tables with UTAS, and also some research including some Underwood Centre literacy data that deal

with the skill gaps schools may have, but there seems to be a reasonably systemic issue, because of the way that teachers are employed, as I understand it - because they are employed by the department and not by the school. That has been the difficulty in getting the information. But you will address it in your response?

Mr Rockliff - Yes.

Ms O'BYRNE - That is fine, minister. The last issue is an odd one. It has come to us via the National Council of Women and I am wondering whether this is something you can turn your head to. The education adviser from the NCW -

Ms O'Connor - You can turn your mind to it.

Ms O'BYRNE - Do you have this one as well?

Ms O'Connor - Yes, I do.

Ms O'BYRNE - You can turn your mind to this one. All principals need to have full Tasmanian teacher registration before they can take up a role as principal in any Tasmanian school. I have that bit right. I am getting the nod over there.

The question is whether that is a bit restrictive, because we do not have reciprocal teacher registration arrangements with other states and territories or New Zealand. Therefore there is no avenue to engage a principal who has come from any other country because they would not have worked in a school for that period.

The question I put on behalf of the Council of Women is whether, if we are restricting the appointments for principals, we actually restrict the education outlook? Their concern is that because you cannot qualify - because you have not met all the requirements if you have worked interstate or internationally - we are actually limiting the number of people we might be able to get into those roles. I do not know whether there is any progress or discussion about that kind of reciprocal recognition of those skills that would allow us to resolve that issue. It is not one that had been brought to my attention before, but it has been brought to the attention of Mr Willie, so it would be good if we knew whether that was something we could resolve.

If all those questions I asked around procedural fairness, privacy and data sharing, and workforce strategy can be answered, then we are more than happy to support the bill without Committee, but that will be there to tell.

[12.32 p.m.]

Ms O'CONNOR (Clark - Leader of the Greens) - Mr Deputy Speaker, the Greens will be supporting the Tasmanian Teachers Registration Amendment Bill 2019. It is not particularly complex or weighty legislation, but it does deal with some current constraints on the Teachers Registration Board in dealing with a teacher who either does not have a Working with Vulnerable People registration, or has had their registration suspended. It also provides for some data sharing arrangements to be put in place, so long as the Teachers Registration Board is happy there are enough safeguards around the sharing of that data.

I also want to hear some reassurance from the minister about the protection of that data, given the extent of the data that will be captured. It will include full name or former name,

residential address, date of birth, qualifications, teaching experience at time of application, registration number, registration type, the date the registration took effect and the expiry date, any conditions on the registration, particulars of any suspension, and any other particulars the board considers appropriate. I note that the information may be made available for educational or research purposes, or any other purposes that are prescribed in regulations.

Minister, are regulations being drafted around that data sharing?

Mr Rockliff - There is an opportunity for the parliament to scrutinise the regulations around both those matters.

Ms O'CONNOR - Good.

Ms O'Byrne - There are risks with regulations if they are signed off, for instance the day after we finish in November and we do not come back until March, or we have a huge pandemic time.

Mr Rockliff - In terms of subordinate legislation you mean?

Ms O'Byrne - They still cannot be knocked off until they are only disallowable, are they not?

Mr Rockliff - Disallowable?

Ms O'CONNOR - Perhaps, minister, you can give us some more depth of detail on those data sharing arrangements. Potentially there will be circumstances where that data is shared by the Teachers Registration Board with law enforcement authorities, although I know that the Working with Vulnerable People Act 2013 also contains those provisions that allow for other sharing of data with law enforcement agencies - in fact, not only in Tasmania but interstate.

As the minister who fought quite hard for and enacted the Work with Vulnerable People Act 2013, I am pleased to see it continuing to be strengthened and given effect in order to keep children and vulnerable people safe.

Just as a historic footnote for the record - I have not shared this before, but it was a point of great frustration as minister in the Labor-Greens government that for the 2010-11 Budget, 2011-12 Budget, and the 2012-13 Budget, my requests to have working with vulnerable people checks funded and enacted were rejected. It was in the final budget before we were sacked by then premier, Ms Giddings, that we secured the funding and the commitment to have this framework in place. That was after three frustrating and at times humiliating years where I would attend ministerial council meetings and be put in a position where I was having to make excuses for the Tasmanian government failing to enact this framework to protect children particularly. We expanded the framework in the legislation and took it off the ACT model which also incorporated vulnerable people. It was a very frustrating time trying to get this reform through.

There are procedural fairness questions, minister. I recognise that it is a fine balance that needs to be struck between making sure there is procedural fairness for any teacher who has their registration cancelled because they do not have working with vulnerable people

registration in place or because it has been suspended, but also to make sure we are not putting children at risk.

I note that the fact sheet information makes the statement that procedural fairness is afforded a teacher by the registrar under the registration for Working with Vulnerable People Act as part of the process of determining whether to suspend or cancel registration for working with vulnerable people.

Minister, perhaps you could just step out that process where the Teachers Registration Board can remove a teacher's registration while in the other act that we are talking about today, the Registration to Work with Vulnerable People Act, provides the giving of notice, the allowing of 10 days for a teacher to make a representation on their own behalf in relation to potential cancellation of their registration to work with vulnerable people. Just step us through how that procedural fairness would work in practice when you have the two acts alongside each other.

I also wanted to raise another couple of issues that are very specific to the registration to work with vulnerable people and it would be helpful to parliament if the minister could provide an update on these two matters.

There is a report in today's *Mercury* newspaper detailing allegations by a retired educator that a teacher who sexually abused his year 9 student and got her pregnant in the late 1980s remains employed by the Department of Education. In his early 30s at the time, the teacher then resigned from a Hobart high school. According to the allegations, 18 months later this teacher was employed at a Hobart Catholic school. A few years later, according to this person, that teacher was back with the Department of Education and employed at a west coast school. The allegation is that this teacher is now working at a school in the north.

The question has been asked, is this teacher working in a Tasmanian Department of Education school? Have they been given registration to work with vulnerable people? Did that process examine past conduct and allegations made about that teacher's behaviour at least towards one underage female student in the 1990s? It is a very serious allegation that has been made. I was somewhat surprised not to hear anything from the minister in question time about it today; raised proactively any attempt to reassure parents about the potential that someone who at least in the late 1980s sexually abused a child.

I also wanted to talk about the Department of Education inquiry into protecting children in the public education system in Tasmania that has come about as a result of survivors and family members of past sexual abuse making the clear point that they had received no justice because the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses into Child Sexual Abuse did not deal with public education departments around Australia. It did not go to historical abuse in public education settings in Tasmania.

I have spoken with people who have significant experience and legal expertise in advocating for survivors and victims of past sexual abuse, who believe that what occurred in the Tasmanian Department of Education from about the mid-1990s until potentially the mid-2000s is simply unparalleled within Australia. This legal representative makes the point that it is an opportunity for the State of Tasmania to acknowledge the wrongs of the past and make right with people who had their lives ruined in Department of Education settings.

There has been no acknowledgement in the terms of reference for this independent inquiry that the royal commission did not address or investigate allegations of past sexual abuse in Department of Education settings in Tasmania. Tasmanian schools were not examined by the royal commission, save for two teachers at the Hutchins School who were sacked in 1970.

Regrettably, although we worked quite constructively in moving towards the establishment of this independent inquiry, the Greens were not given an opportunity to look at the terms of reference before they were set. Now there are real concerns that the terms of reference will potentially disenfranchise survivors of past sexual abuse and their families.

This should not just be looking at past systems. The issue at hand is not what systems were in place; the issue is that past systems were treated as though they did not exist. The terms of reference talk about addressing current systems in order to keep children safe now and in the future but unless you are willing to find out what happened, how can you evaluate the effectiveness of the current system? How can you know that the practice is not still happening when these terms of reference will not examine past practices? There is no clear evidence that this inquiry will speak to, or provide a forum for, survivors of past sexual abuse in Department of Education settings.

By limiting the terms of reference and the findings to systems that are in place, it leads to the suspicion that this is specifically about avoiding findings around why, for example, the director-general of the department at the time, with the full knowledge of the minister at the time, would move a paedophile from school to school? The terms of reference seem to be so narrow as they would preclude the making of recommendations or findings as to specific cases or circumstances. This does raise the question, how does the department propose avoiding the mistakes of the past by not looking at the mistakes of the past and speaking to people who have direct testimony of those mistakes, which in fact were egregious abuses of children, which will undoubtedly have led to lifelong trauma impacts?

As I said in here yesterday, I know this Education minister cares. I know he is deeply committed to his portfolio. This is an opportunity to give voice to survivors and their families who were not heard by the royal commission. The minister is in control of this process. Ultimately he has commissioned it. It is our very sincere hope on the part of people, Tasmanians, who were and have been affected by past sexual abuse, that the minister will make clear to the independent reviewer that the terms of reference are to be treated as having enough flexibility to give survivors and their families voice. We cannot be sure that the systems that are in place now are enough to protect children if we are not prepared to understand how the systems that were in place in the past failed to protect children. If the minister could turn his mind to those concerns that would be useful. It is very germane to the issue that we are discussing today through this amendment bill.

Finally, I want to go to the letter written by Sally McGushin, the education adviser for the National Council of Women in Tasmania. I note that this letter has also been sent to the minister and to the shadow education spokesperson. Mrs McGushin is making an inquiry about the registration of school principals as laid down in the Education Act, noting that all principals must have full Tasmanian teacher registration before they can take up the roll of principal in any school. Mrs McGushin makes the point that while she upholds the concept of having properly qualified principals in Tasmanian schools, she questions whether the provision is too restrictive in that it does not allow for any form of provisional registration. It seems to Mrs McGushin, on behalf of the National Council of Women in Tasmania, that while Tasmania

seems to hold reciprocal teacher registration arrangements with other Australian states and territories and New Zealand there is no apparent avenue to engage a principal who has come for any other country.

Mrs McGushin is not suggesting, she says, that we open the flood gates to principals from overseas, but I think she thinks it is important that we are open to accepting them. Mrs McGushin finally says -

Perhaps my interpretation of the Act is incorrect; I would appreciate it, if you could clarify the situation. If I am correct, please advise whether the situation will be changed, and if it is not to be changed (and this Act is now in its fourth year of operation), can you please explain why not?

Sincerely
Sally McGushin
NCWT
Education Advisor

Contingent on the minister's answers to the questions in his reading response, the Greens' cannot see any need to go into committee. We recognise this is an important refinement of the arrangements that are in place for teachers registration and that the primary motive is to make sure that our children are safe in our school settings. That is something we can have all of parliament agree to.

[12.48 p.m.]

Mr ROCKLIFF (Braddon - Minister for Education and Training) - Mr Deputy Speaker, I thank members for their support of the bill and for their questions, which I can go through now.

I want to turn my attention appropriately first to the most important question asked through those contributions and that is the article in today's newspaper. The bill we are debating today helps to ensure that only teachers who have passed the necessary background checks are teaching in Tasmanian schools. I acknowledge that teachers are in a position of trust. It is essential that this trust is not abused. With regard to the serious allegations reported in the newspaper and referred to by Ms O'Connor regarding a current employee in the Department of Education I wish to make the following comments.

I strongly believe it is important for us to do all we can to protect our children and young people from child sexual abuse. I have been made aware of some very serious allegations raised recently around a current employee of the Department of Education which are historical in nature. This matter was referred to in today's *Mercury* newspaper. I am informed that it is not a matter about which the Department of Education had any previous knowledge. However, on being made aware of these allegations the person about whom the allegations have been made was removed yesterday from their place of work. The secretary of the Department of Education has also advised me that this person will be formally suspended from duty today and an official investigation will commence into their actions. The Department of Education has referred this matter to the police, and the Department of Justice has also been informed. Allegations of this nature are taken extremely seriously and systems are in place to ensure they are thoroughly investigated.

I urge anyone who has any information about child sexual abuse to report it to Tasmania Police.

In recent years the Tasmanian Government has undertaken significant reforms to protect children in response to cases of abuse that were highlighted both prior to and during the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses for Child Sexual Abuse. These include requiring all Department of Education staff to have a current Working with Vulnerable People registration, which involves a national police history check for any charges or convictions that could show risk of harm to a child.

Teachers are also required to be registered with the Teachers Registration Board which entails additional information being provided to determine if a teacher is of good character and fit to teach. We have also introduced amendments to child safety legislation which means that all Department of Education employees have mandatory reporting obligations, with staff under investigation being suspended from duty pending the outcome.

The independent inquiry I announced a few weeks ago into the Department of Education's responses to child sexual abuse will closely examine past systems and whether the legislation, policies, practices and procedures used currently by the department are operating in a way that addresses the risk of child sexual abuse within Tasmanian Government schools. Our students are entitled to learn in a safe and supportive environment. If further changes are needed we will make them.

I refer to Ms O'Connor's concerns that some people do not feel that the royal commission went far enough to hear the individual voices. She asked will there be an opportunity for people to come forward as part of the review? The Department of Justice is committed to providing assistance through the Child Abuse Royal Commission Response Unit. The unit was established in July 2019 to coordinate Tasmania's response to and implementation of the royal commission's recommendations. The unit assists people with information regarding the National Redress Scheme and has a range of experts on staff who are highly trained and experienced in dealing with these sensitive and complex matters.

A direct personal response is a key element of the National Redress Scheme and is facilitated through the Child Abuse Royal Commission Response Unit. It is an opportunity for successful applicants to engage with the institution responsible for the abuse. A DPR can include a personal letter of apology, a face-to-face meeting with a senior government official, help to access personal records, an assurance of what the institution is doing to prevent abuse and anything else that is meaningful for you and agreed with the institution. A DPR face-to-face meeting is a private facilitated meeting for people to meet with a senior government official, to share your personal story of abuse in a safe environment, have the institution accept responsibility for the abuse, acknowledge its impact and provide a genuine apology, ask a question and seek personal information from the institution, allow the senior government official to listen and learn from your experience and request information on what the government is doing to prevent abuse occurring and how they respond when abuse is reported.

It is important to note that we are all working to ensure survivors are heard and that everything possible is being done to protect our young children and students.

Ms O'Connor - For clarification by interjection, minister, when you say institution in that context are you also capturing Department of Education, public schools?

Mr ROCKLIFF - Yes, that is my understanding. That is the purpose of the inquiry. Past systems and procedures and policies: we will all investigate this matter. I am conscious of the fact that where possible, there is an opportunity of closure for victims of child sexual abuse perpetrated within our school system, going back many decades, and right to this current point in time.

Ms O'Byrne - There is no area that is excluded from the scope of that inquiry, is there? I understood it is an all-encompassing inquiry.

Mr ROCKLIFF - Yes. There will soon be the independent person appointed by the Attorney-General and that investigation will take place. It will be thorough and will have the opportunity of providing closure. Under the circumstances, I cannot guarantee closure for everyone, but the opportunity for closure.

Ms O'Connor - By interjection so we do not have to go into Committee, should a survivor or a family member approach the independent person with a story or past sexual abuse, what will happen to that individual or their family member? What is the process?

Mr ROCKLIFF - With regard to their experience being heard?

Ms O'Connor - What is the process for someone who comes forward to the independent reviewer with a story that needs to be heard? Should they come to that independent reviewer, what will happen to that person?

Mr ROCKLIFF - As I have outlined, with respect to the unit, the Child Abuse Royal Commission Unit (CARCU), they will be referred there and their stories can be heard and listened to within that unit. That is my understanding and as I have been advised.

There were a number of other questions. To finish up on the independent investigation, I hope and expect that we could have the independent review inquiry to be completed as soon as possible, but as you would appreciate, it also has to be given the time to take its course. I do not want to limit it by time frame but given the importance of the inquiry to many individuals, it is important that it is given the resources and the time to complete its work.

Ms O'Byrne - This is not a 'gotcha' moment at all. Will you get regular updates on that? When we did the process around the Stolen Generation, the independent person appointed to that gave us, as a government, regular updates so that in case there was something systemic we needed to resolve, we would have the opportunity to do so for the same kind of thing; it needed an amount of time to be gone through genuinely. We received regular updates in case we needed to take some kind of action. Will that be part of it or are you only getting a report at the end?

Mr ROCKLIFF - I understand your broader point. I also make the point that I am minister for Education and my department is being investigated, so that question is more to the Attorney-General. The Attorney-General will be responsible for appointing an independent reviewer and that process. It is important that the process is separate from me, as someone who is responsible for the Department of Education, as you would appreciate.

Ms O'Connor - That is very sensible.

Mr ROCKLIFF - There are a number of questions and I am conscious that I will be nowhere near half-way through but I will cover the areas I will be covering following lunch concerning safeguards to ensure data protection before data sets are shared. I will have a comprehensive answer there.

We are highly alert to the need to ensure that any data we share is only shared in the interests of the Tasmanian community and child safety.

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

MOTION

Conservation Covenants and Zoning - Motion Negatived

[2.31 p.m.]

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

That the House -

- (1) Acknowledges conservation covenants established under the Nature Conservation Act 2002 make a critical contribution to protection of natural values, ecosystem services and biodiversity.
- (2) Notes there are 890 conservation covenants on private land, covering approximately 110 000 hectares.
- (3) Further notes with concern that, as a result of changes to the planning system, the Gutwein Government is seeking to have all covenants on private land zoned Rural Use.
- (4) Further notes this zoning allows for resource extraction, including logging and mining.
- (5) Further notes the new Landscape Conservation zoning category prohibits resource extraction such as logging and mining.
- (6) Further notes the Department of State Growth is writing to councils tasked with rezoning conservation covenants under the State Planning Provisions (SPP) urging rejection of Landscape Conservation zoning, on the basis it would have a 'sterilising effect on rural land ... and potential to limit future resource use and development'.
- (7) Recognises each established conservation covenant was agreed between private landowners and the Crown, represented by the Minister for Environment and Parks, Hon. Roger Jaensch MP on the basis of protection in perpetuity.

- (8) Further notes there has been no engagement by the Environment Minister with covenant land holders in relation to this proposed weakening of protections, and agrees this is disrespectful at best.
- (9) Agrees the most appropriate zoning for all land under conservation covenant is Landscape Conservation.
- (10) Calls on the Minister for Planning, Hon. Roger Jaensch MP, who is also the Minister for Environment and Parks, to issue a Planning Directive to ensure covenanted land is protected from resource extraction through Landscape Conservation zoning across all municipalities.

We are moving to ensure that conservation covenants in Tasmania receive the protection in perpetuity which we believe most Tasmanians would understand them to already have, but as we have discovered in recent times, there are question marks over those protections that now sit over conservation covenants in Tasmania.

Conservation covenants are established under the Nature Conservation Act 2002. They are a legally binding agreement between landowners and the Crown, which is represented by the minister for the environment. They make a critical contribution to the protection of natural values, ecosystem services and to biodiversity.

In Tasmania there are 890 covenants on private land that cover an area of about 111 000 hectares. Late last week we visited Peter Tuft, a landowner at Kettering, who has one of the most beautiful properties I have ever seen in Tasmania. Up on the hill looking over Storm Bay, Bruny Island, you can see all the way down to the Tasman Peninsula. At the foot of Peter Tuft's property is this beautiful patch of intact forest, and there is a conservation covenant on the Tuft's property. Of course, a question now hangs over the protected status of his covenanted property, as well as the other 889 conservation covenants in Tasmania.

This has come about as a result of changes to the Tasmanian planning system, which has seen, under interim planning schedules, conservation covenants zoned as Rural Resource. Now of course, each municipality is going through a formalised rezoning process, and those conservation covenants are by default being declared rural.

The issue here is that zoning would allow for extractive industries on covenanted land, including forestry and mining. We need to make sure that the guidance provided by the Tasmanian Planning Commission in its guidelines on state planning provisions is adhered to as part of this rezoning process. The Planning Commission has made it clear that the most appropriate zoning for covenanted land is Landscape Conservation zoning. This would ensure that there are no extractive industries - that is, logging and mining - on land which should be protected in perpetuity.

One of the problems we have here, though, is the Department of State Growth. The Department of State Growth wrote to the Tasmanian Planning Commission and its chair, Mr John Ramsay, on 20 December 2019, expressing a very strong view about what zoning should be applied to conservation covenants in Tasmania. It is the department's view that covenanted land, which we can think of in many ways as having national park protections on private land, is that those covenanted areas should be available in future for potential extractive industries, including forestry and mining.

The Department of State Growth, presumably on the part of Government, was lobbying the Tasmanian Planning Commission to ensure that covenanted land was zoned Rural Use, which means that it would be available potentially in future for extractive industries. The letter that the Department of State Growth wrote to the Planning Commission really is something. It is internally contradictory, but it is also dangerous in that it suggests that all those protections, which are over covenanted land, can be thrown out the window for some extractive industry that wishes to take place on an area of covenanted land. One of the most disturbing paragraphs is this one -

State Growth is concerned that the application of the Landscape Conservation Zone in this manner could have a sterilising effect on rural land well beyond the land parcels to be rezoned, which has the potential to limit future resource use and development.

That is why you establish a conservation covenant over a particularly special area of land, in order to limit what can happen on that land in future to protect the values which underpin the covenant. We go to internally contradictory statements in this letter. One says here -

The more sensitive uses there are across the rural landscape, the more difficult it is for extractive industries, which are considered appropriate in this environment, to gain approval. If the Landscape Conservation Zone was to apply as proposed by the Section 35F Report, there is greater potential for a sterilising effect.

Then it goes on -

While it is understood there may be merit in protecting some land parcels from resource extraction activities, conservation covenants have traditionally been used for this purpose. Covenants provide appropriate protections without the need for different zoning, but may, inadvertently, exclude other activities into the future. The application of the Landscape Conservation Zone over land that is already the subject of a conservation covenant does not provide any additional protections.

This is a government agency contradicting itself in its advice to the Tasmanian Planning Commission. If the landscape conservation zoning did not provide additional protections from extractive industries, why is the department so opposed to it?

It is very clear that the 890 conservation covenanted parcels of land in Tasmania should have the strongest possible protections.

Dr Woodruff - Hear, hear.

Ms O'CONNOR - Thank you, Dr Woodruff.

Conservation Land Holders Tasmania is working to represent covenant holders in Tasmania. It has been contacting covenant land owners to inform them about the rezoning of their property to rural or agriculture, and encouraging them to request rezoning to landscape conservation during their local draft planning provisions exhibition period.

There is a big problem when you have a government department trying to undermine protections for covenanted land but the other issue here is that the Crown, in this case the minister for environment and parks, has made no attempt to contact covenant holders in Tasmania. A covenant is a legally binding agreement between a land owner and the minister for environment and parks, but the minister for environment and parks is wholly conflicted on this matter because he is also the minister for planning. He has not endeavoured to engage with covenant holders on the issue of zoning as we move through these planning system changes.

When preparing their draft local provision schedules, planning authorities are mostly rezoning these areas as rural and agricultural, and covenant holders have been finding out about it through notices in the newspaper and that is it - other than the work now of Conservation Landholders Tasmania. We are very concerned that this is an attempt to weaken the protections around covenanted land by stealth.

The Planning Commission has been very clear that the most appropriate zone for properties with conservation covenants is landscape conservation. We should be making sure that in a time of significant biodiversity decline those remarkable and very diverse areas of Tasmania that are protected by covenants are truly protected in perpetuity. We raised this issue at one point in the debate with the minister for Environment, and Planning, earlier this year and he got that far-off look in his eyes as if he did not know what we were talking about.

The minister for Environment, and Planning, knew exactly what we were talking about at that time. He knows now that it is a serious concern to have a government agency undermining the advice put forward in Guideline No. 1 by the Tasmanian Planning Commission, in order to make available potentially 111 000 hectares of Tasmania for extractive industries, for logging and mining.

The notion that these extractive industries should always have pre-eminence over any other land use and particularly over the protection of areas of land is offensive, ridiculous and is potentially very destructive. Hopefully the minister will respond during this debate and he can explain the motive for weakening the protections of covenanted land; what he sees his legal responsibilities are as a co-signatory to these covenants; and how he can explain to covenant holders why he has completely left them in the lurch because the conflict the minister has here is manifest and it is corrupting a process of re-zoning covenanted lands.

The minister who represents the Crown as the legally bound co-signatory to a covenant, that is, the minister for the Environment, is also Minister for Planning who is overseeing an attempt to weaken the protections on covenanted land. Another very concerning aspect of all of this is that the process of negotiating covenants and agreeing covenants has all but stopped.

The Private Land Conservation Program was established in 2006 under DPIPWE. Information from their website is that it provides a single point of management for all the department's conservation programs that focus on private land. The program works with landowners to sustainably manage and conserve natural values, that is, native flora and fauna, natural wetlands, geo-conservation areas on private land. The department goes on to say - and I do wonder if the minister reads any of these things -

Capable land stewardship conserves the natural environment, providing benefits for future Tasmanians and visitors while enabling landowners to maintain market access and capitalise on new opportunities.

...

[The department's land conservation program seeks] to achieve high level recognition of the biodiversity value of natural systems and the need to appropriately protect them, and to support individuals who voluntarily manage these systems for conservation outcomes.

But the bad news is that the protected areas on private land program has been the principal, long-term covenanting program but currently is not accepting new applications. Instead, the PLCP staff are compiling a list of inquiries for future assessment -

Our focus is supporting current covenant owners and Land for Wildlife members.

That is an interesting statement. I wonder how many staff are left in the Private Land Conservation Program, because the covenant holders we have engaged with or heard from have not been told about this attempt to change the zoning and weaken the protections on covenanted land.

An agency that was working with landowners to establish conservation covenants is now no longer taking applications from private landowners as far as we know, and according to their own website. This is an accumulation of underfunding and under-resourcing of this area of government, to the detriment of the protection of natural values.

The Non-Forest Vegetation Project has now closed. The Forest Conservation Fund has now closed. The Private Forest Reserves Program has now closed. The Protected Areas on Private Land Program is not currently accepting new applications for covenants.

Dr Woodruff and I have been in here long enough to get used to this Government's constant undervaluing of natural systems, and prioritisation of developments and resource extraction in those parts of Tasmania that are unique and special and contribute towards our biodiversity.

This is a new low, because it has been done in such an underhand way. The minister owes covenant holders in Tasmania not only an explanation, but an apology. It is unacceptable to be the representative of the Crown, which is the signatory to covenants - I am not saying Mr Jaensch's signature is on those covenant agreements, because he has been the minister for a relatively short period of time. However, he is the representative of the Crown regarding these legally binding agreements, and these 890 landholders in Tasmania have not heard a word from him. Not only that, he, as part of Government, has overseen a rezoning process that will weaken protections, but is also no longer accepting covenant applications.

Many Tasmanians would be mortified to know that those areas they understood to be protected in perpetuity are not potentially protected - and if the Government, through its Department of State Growth, gets its way will be open to logging and mining. They would be really concerned to hear that this Government has stopped entering into covenant agreements with private landowners.

That is confronting, and it points to a real lack of appreciation for what the protection of natural values is all about. A real contempt for the natural environment, and a deep-seated philosophical belief that every part of Tasmania, possibly bar the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area and Parks - but remember initially when the Hodgman government first came to office, they wanted to allow logging and mining in the World Heritage Area - but there is this belief in Government that every part of Tasmania should be available to make coin from, that every part of Tasmania should be open to potential future resource extraction.

Places like Peter Tuft's little patch of forest at Kettering are unique in the world. This is a beautiful little forest with some big old eucalypts on it. It will be a haven for native species. The day we were there - during the day - there were wallabies grazing near the forest. Yellow-tailed black cockatoos flew overhead. This is a special place, and all over Tasmania there are these special places that should effectively be like national parks on private land.

We are just the custodians of this beautiful island. That is all we are. We do not really own any part of it. Our job as parliamentarians - or ministers, as the case may be - surely is to leave the place in better shape than when we arrived - but not this Government, and that is heart-breaking.

I will digress briefly to talk about the logging coupe that we went up to last Thursday in the Denison Valley behind Geeveston. The Minister for Resources tells us that Forestry Tasmania does not log giant trees. There was a massive *Eucalyptus obliqua*, a swamp gum, and its girth was at one point about 4.5 metres and at another point of its sawn-off trunk around 5 metres. The tree was enormous, in fact so big that three attempts were made to fell it - you could tell from the cuts on the wood - and chop it into pieces, but it was too big so it was left on the ground to burn. In that single example we understand everything we need to know about this Government's attitude to the natural environment. A massive, old habitat tree was felled and left to burn. What a tragic waste, but it is emblematic of the same philosophy that allows a government to strip away through a rezoning process those protections in perpetuity which must sit over covenanted land.

It is damning of this Government and this minister, who is talking out of two sides of his face on this issue, to strip away protections on covenanted land with one fell stroke through the planning system changes. We will not let it stand. We will work with Conservation Landholders Tasmania to try to make sure that those protections are strengthened, not weakened.

I have a letter here from Tasmanian creators Peter Timms and Robert Dessaix, who wrote to the minister, Mr Jaensch, in May this year concerned about the weakening of the protections on covenanted land. They wrote to him in his capacity as Minister for Environment and Parks, but perhaps they should have written to him in his capacity as Minister for Planning, concerned about what the changes to the planning system would mean for their little patch of covenanted land. They write -

As the owners of land on the East Coast which is covered by a conservation covenant, we are very disturbed to have received correspondence from Mr Mick Purves, Planning Officer with the Glamorgan Spring Bay Council, which appears to throw into doubt the validity of conservation covenants in this state.

We are hoping you will be able to clarify this matter, both for us and for all other covenant holders.

Briefly: a letter dated 27 April from Conservation Landholders Tasmania informed us that changes to the Tasmanian Planning Scheme have resulted in conservation properties being rezoned as Rural or Agricultural. Our land, near Orford, has been rezoned by the council as Agricultural, without our knowledge or consent. As we understand it, this leaves our land vulnerable to future agriculture, grazing and forestry.

Mr Purves told us that: 'Conservation covenant landowners were not contacted by Council and invited to participate in the public exhibition period. Planning schemes operate with 2 basic functions. Land use is governed by zones, in your case Rural Resource zone. This was a result of a range of matters that are set out in the State Planning Provisions and Guideline No. 1. Biodiversity issues such as you mention, are principally managed through the Waterway and Coastal Protection and Priority Vegetation overlays under the Natural Assets Code. The Rural zone was supported for your property due to the structure of these provisions, as they must be used under the State Planning Provisions and consistent with advice under Guideline No. 1...

As I mentioned earlier, it is not consistent with advice under guideline no. 1 issued by the Tasmanian Planning Commission. The Tasmanian Planning Commission made it clear that the most appropriate zoning for areas of land that are all or partially covered by conservation covenant and not suitable for agricultural use should be zoned landscape conservation.

I understand that Labor may be proposing an amendment to our motion but I am not sure, there has been no communication from Labor to us. If there is no amendment being proposed I gather Labor will be voting against this. That is quite dispiriting for the conservation covenant holders in Tasmania but, to be honest, completely unsurprising.

My understanding was that there was a concern expressed by Ms Dow that potentially our motion was a bit too broad brush and there was a concern that it may exclude agriculture uses on some covenanted land. We would have been very happy to talk to you, Ms Dow, about making some adjustment to our motion so the effect was to ensure that most covenanted land areas were zoned landscape conservation zone and there was a provision made for covenant or part covenant over land where there are agricultural uses. Given Labor's inability to work constructively with the Greens or anyone else in this House, it does not appear that there will be any adjustments to get the right outcome for covenant holders in Tasmania.

It is just breathtaking. I ask myself on a daily basis on a sitting day why are they even here? It is so true. Stakeholders engage with Labor in good faith hoping there will be some outcome for them, but because of the resistance to working constructively with the Greens it would appear that Labor, in this place again, will let down stakeholders, although I am sure that Ms Dow said all the right things to the stakeholders.

I will just go back to the original motion briefly. We think the House should vote to support landscape conservation zoning over areas of land that were set aside for conservation purposes. We think that is the decent thing to do. Given that the Minister for Planning, who

will stand up soon, is working with the Department of State Growth to make sure that protections of covenanted land are being weakened, I do not know that is going to happen.

It is worth saying in closing that each established conservation covenant is a legally binding agreement between a private landholder and the Crown. It is a fact that those legally binding agreements place much stronger obligations on the private landowner than they do on government. Now we understand that government is undermining those legally binding agreements through a rezoning process.

Conservation covenant is an important part of the National Reserve Estate. It is how we achieve protections on private land and assist private landholders to look after their little patch of Tasmania. This whole parliament should be working constructively to help private landowners look after the covenanted areas of land. That is the only decent way to respond to this issue. We call on the Minister for Planning, who is also the Environment minister to issue a planning directive to ensure covenanted land is protected from resource extraction through Landscape Conservation zoning across all municipalities.

There is still half an hour to go before we call a vote on this notice of motion. I hope members on both sides of the House take this opportunity to reflect on their responsibility to the people of Tasmania, and their ethical responsibility to leave this place in a better state than it was when we arrived.

That is a responsibility Dr Woodruff and I take extremely seriously, as is evidenced by the matters we bring forward to this House, and indeed the way we vote, because we have the courage of our convictions and our values - which, regrettably, is a lot more than I can say for some of my colleagues.

[3.01 p.m.]

Mr JAENSCH (Braddon - Minister for Planning) - Mr Deputy Speaker, I thank Ms O'Connor, the Leader of the Greens, for bringing this matter forward. I do not thank her for the gratuitous character assessment and the somewhat slanderous portrayal of Government departments and ministers and entire governments. We are used to this sort of gratuitous, sanctimonious rant from Ms O'Connor. She typically, however, does her homework better, and the matters that she has raised are based on -

Ms O'Connor - Documentation.

Mr JAENSCH - Well, I am going to start by reading some text from a letter and I will take it from there, because I think this sums up where we are at. The constituents, Timms and Dessaix - Ms O'Connor read from their letter to me about their concerns. I would like to take the opportunity to read my letter in response into *Hansard* because it sums up the matter -

Dear Mr Timms & Mr Dessaix

I refer to your recent correspondence regarding the validity of the conservation covenant on your land at Orford.

I note that you are in receipt of advice from Conservation Landholders Tasmania, dated 27 April 2020, advising that the zoning proposed by the Glamorgan Spring Bay Council under the Tasmanian Planning Scheme for your land near Orford is such that it will result in the land being vulnerable to future agriculture, grazing and forestry.

However, I am advised that conservation covenants are established under the Nature Conservation Act 2002, and run independently of the planning system and planning schemes.

I am further advised that covenants are legal agreements between the binding parties and are registered on the land title. This means that the covenant, and the protections thereof, will remain in effect regardless of the zoning of the land under either the current interim planning scheme or the Tasmanian Planning Scheme.

I hope this clarifies matters for you and allays your concerns.

This can be a far shorter debate than it would have otherwise been if we can clearly again establish that covenants trump zones. They are legal binding agreements adhered to a title. They overlay the land use planning zoning on a piece of land, and define uses and developments that may be allowed to be undertaken. The introduction of the Tasmanian Planning Scheme and its zonings do not change this at all. There is no relationship between a covenant on a property for an area to limit its use and the underlying zoning of that land under the planning scheme. They are completely separate things -

Ms O'Connor - Of course they are separate, but how do you explain the letter from State Growth?

Mr JAENSCH - Mr Deputy Speaker, I understand that Ms O'Connor was quoting from a letter by James Verrier from the Department of State Growth, dated 20 December 2019, which is a submission in response to a section 35F report on the Draft Central Coast Local Provisions Schedule. This is a document which is a first cut at applying the new Tasmanian Planning Scheme zoning arrangements - the statewide State Planning Provisions, the SPP - to that local area's interim planning scheme, and determining an equivalent translation of zone types.

The development of a zoning map like that is a strategic planning exercise that identifies areas of the municipality to be held and used for particular uses, including the grouping of like uses together, and to ensure that there is an adequate supply of land of different kinds. The particular letter that has been referred to is the department's response to an early iteration of that LPS, wherein there have been a number of land parcels identified, and a proposed zoning.

The zoning does not happen on a title by title basis. It occurs at a landscape scale. My reading of this is that there have been properties where a landholder has sought to have a particular zoning applied to their land, which they believe is consistent with their wishes for the use of the land, and the covenant they had on it. However, the point being made by the Department of State Growth would be that the effects which Ms O'Connor referred to as having a 'sterilising' effect, concerned at the application of a Landscape Conservation zone in this manner to a single property or a single title, surrounded by others where there is different land use, would have a -

sterilising effect on rural land, well beyond the land parcels to be rezoned, which has the potential to limit future resource use and development.

In this case, that letter is not referring to the parcel of land itself, but the surrounding area. For example -

Ms O'Connor - Do you know what sophistry is? It is a short way of saying weasel words.

Mr JAENSCH - I think it is starting to dawn on you that you do not understand this stuff and you have it very wrong.

Ms O'Connor - Oh, is that right?

Mr JAENSCH - Yes, I think that is what happens.

Ms O'Connor - Why do you not mansplain a bit? I understand it well.

Mr JAENSCH - I listened to you 'greensplaining' in absolute silence and I have given you the courtesy of that.

The issue the DSG letter is about, is if that landholder wants to protect those values and they are protected under a covenant, that protection remains - and if that is for part of a property in an area of other land use, then continuing with a conservation covenant is the appropriate way to do it, because it can be selective at sub-property level to protect those values.

The issue around 'sterilisation' is that if you introduce a new type of zoning, which may introduce, say, the building of a residence or other values on it, then all the neighbouring land users suddenly are fettered by that new zoning.

Ms O'Connor - There are a lot of smart, informed people watching this debate. I hope you hear from them soon.

Mr JAENSCH - Amongst them are people that you have accused of wanting to, by stealth, change their rights in a property, and destroy the natural values that they value on their properties. You have spent 20 minutes besmirching the reputations of public officers who are involved in -

Dr Woodruff - Ms O'Connor did not mention them. You mentioned them. Excuse me, Mr Deputy Speaker, this is outrageous. You are the one attacking your own public servants.

Mr JAENSCH - everybody from State Growth, through the whole of the planning reform and Tasmanian planning system.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Ms O'Connor is well out of her depth on this. She fundamentally misunderstands the difference between a covenant on a title and the zoning of the underlying land - the relationship between the two.

Ms O'Connor - Breathtaking.

Mr JAENSCH - It is breathtaking that with your experience you come in here and get it so totally wrong, on such a simple thing.

Ms O'Connor is correct in that the protected areas on private land program is no longer taking applicants. I am advised that the protected areas on private land program was a partly

Commonwealth-funded program which involved paying landowners to undertake the covenanting process. The private land conservation process, under DPIPW, is open to new applications. It does not come as a Commonwealth funded program. That is the difference.

We are not winding back, watering down or weakening. We are doing nothing by stealth. We are transferring from the Interim Planning Schemes to the Tasmanian Planning Schemes state-wide as we said we would. We are going like for like zoning across the board as we do that. That process is being managed by the local elected planning authorities in councils, working with the independent Tasmanian Planning Commission, including public exhibition of the LPSs, hearings and representations. That is how you do statutory planning and change. Everybody has access to that process and if anyone has a covenant on their land, nothing in that process changes anything to do with their covenant.

What Ms O'Connor has brought here today, as a private member's matter for debate is based on a fundamental misunderstanding of what a covenant is and how it relates to the zoning on a piece of land.

Ms O'Connor - Minister, by interjection, can I ask you a question

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER - Order. No, you cannot, Ms O'Connor.

Ms O'Connor - Can you confirm that LUPAA is blind to covenants?

Mr JAENSCH - Ms O'Connor has spent 20 minutes, assassinating my character and my ethics in my roles as a minister of the Crown in two important portfolios. I am not going to indulge her reading stuff from her phone after being found to have misrepresented the planning system.

Ms O'Connor - No, it is an informed interjection. Can you confirm LUPAA does not recognise covenants and that the Tasmanian Planning Commission has confirmed this?

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER - Order, Ms O'Connor.

Mr JAENSCH - Thank you for your fantastic interjection. LUPAA does not recognise covenants because covenants are not part of land use planning and zoning. Covenants sit over it, on the title. That is the whole point I am making. Ms O'Connor, you do not understand this. These issues are different from zoning. LUPAA does not recognise covenants because they are not about planning; they are about an encumbrance on the title. They are like having, on your title, an easement for agreed access from one side of the property to the other for a pipeline, for a fence or for a neighbour to be able to travel across land. It is a legal agreement and it becomes part of the title. It has nothing to do with the underlying zoning.

The issue of whether covenants should be turned into zones comes back to the issue that zoning is strategic and is undertaken at planning scheme and landscape level, based on strategic needs for different types of land and different types of protections. You do not zone within a title to protect an area of vegetation. You use a covenant, which overlays the planning and the zoning. Ms O'Connor, you have got this very wrong.

The reason I have not been writing to everyone who has a covenant on their title to explain why it has been weakened and watered down or why they are going to be forced to

rezone their covenanted land to something that they do not like, which involves coal mining, is because it is not happening. There is no reason for me to do that.

You have made all of that up by joining all the wrong dots and adding a dose of your venomous, cynical, sort of fantasy narrative to it and it does not make any sense. There is nothing to be concerned about in terms of anyone changing the rules or the protections that your covenant provides if you have a covenant on your land.

I look forward to signing more covenants. I invite anyone who wants to have a covenant to write to me or to my department and to make application for one. I am quite happy with that. It is different from zoning, which is a completely different matter and is appropriately handled by the independent Tasmanian Planning Commission through a public process working with a local council elected by its community.

[3.16 p.m.]

Ms DOW (Braddon) - Mr Deputy Speaker, Ms O'Connor is quite right in that I have been speaking to one of my constituents about this issue. It was brought to my attention for the first time last week through a conversation with him. I had further brief conversations with him today about some of the concerns he had raised with me to clarify some of those points and to put some context to this motion.

We had some discussion about what could be a potential amendment but, to be honest, given the discussions on the floor of the House today, it is my preference to continue working with him and those within his affiliated group to understand better his concerns. I encourage the minister to do the same because it would appear that what the minister has put on the record today is quite different from what this group's understanding is of this situation. I believe that is -

Ms O'Connor - It is not just this group's understanding.

Ms DOW - This is the group I have spoken directly to about this, Ms O'Connor.

Ms O'Connor - It is not just their understanding.

Ms DOW - Fine, I take your point, but I am making my points as well. I will commit to understand his concerns better once I meet with him again after this. I sat quietly while you provided your contribution.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I understand that the Private Land Conservation Program was established in 2006 to provide a single point of management for all the departments' conservation programs that focus on private land. The program works with landowners to sustainably manage and conserve natural values on private land, and they are committed to helping landowners to look after these values now and into the future.

I also understand what a covenant is: a legally binding agreement between the Crown and the landowner and the Minister for Environment and Parks. Conservation covenants can exist over all or part of a title and conservation covenants are perpetual over the part of the title under the covenant. I am reassured today to hear the minister put on the record that they overlay LUPAA and have precedence.

Concerns have been raised with me about that issue and people I have spoken with are concerned that landowners have not been well consulted about the local provision schedules, the changes to zoning across local communities, and the introduction of the new planning scheme. They are also concerned that there is no requirement under LUPAA for local planning authorities to treat a development application differently because there is a covenant. I believe some further explanation to them is required following today's debate.

I will read some points from an email that was sent to me last week about this issue, to put on record the concerns of that constituent -

Most of the 890 conservation covenants in Tasmania are currently zoned rural resource under the interim planning schemes. When preparing their draft local provision schedules, planning authorities are mostly re-zoning these as rural/agricultural under the state planning provisions. Landowners with conservation covenants are generally not aware of this re-zoning because the LUPA Act only requires planning authorities to post a couple of notices in newspapers.

That has been discussed in other contributions today. They go on to say that according to the Tasmanian Planning Commission's guideline No. 1, the most appropriate zone for properties with conservation covenants is landscape conservation. The purpose of a landscape conservation zone is to provide for the protection, conservation and management of landscape values, which include both natural and scenic values. This zone provides planning protection against incompatible uses and developments such as plantation forestry and extractive industries.

Conservation Landholders Tasmania have been contacting covenant landowners informing them about the rezoning of their property to rural agriculture and encouraging them to request rezoning to landscape conservation during their local draft provisions exhibition periods. They go on to talk about some of the concerns that have been raised about the Department of State Growth and correspondence that has been sent to the TPC about that.

I note, and the minister alluded to this in his contribution, that the TPC rejected the arguments put forward by the Department of State Growth during the hearings and procedures of the Central Coast Council's hearings of their local provision schedules, which once again demonstrates the importance of the Tasmanian Planning Commission and the process and the fact that they provided independent advice about that and deemed those arguments not substantive. Generally, from my feedback from Conservation Landholders Tasmania, they were quite pleased about that and hoped that would occur now as we move through all the other processes around the local provision schedules in local communities.

I wanted to put on the record as well some of the disappointment that has been conveyed to me by the community about the communication process that has accompanied the exhibition periods, the hearings and the way that people have or have not been notified about changes to zoning across their local communities. I attended a rather heated meeting facilitated by the Central Coast Council at the Riana Cricket Club last year. There were people there who were really concerned and felt they had not been provided with good levels of information about that. Fortunately, Central Coast Council had written to all of those property owners, which is a good and sensible thing to do, but there is nothing directed to councils to do that.

I am not sure how you would do that, but if the minister could encourage councils to write and inform their communities about these changes that would help people be more informed about what is happening with their property, which they have every right to understand and know about. I ask the minister to consider that. I know some councils do it automatically but some do not and that leads to quite a lot of community angst and misinformation in the community.

Ms O'Connor made reference to the fact that I had discussed with my constituents what might be a potential amendment because I was concerned about the broad-brush nature of this when it came to rezoning and some of the implications of that, and whether a planning directive would be the most effective way of doing that. I have not undertaken to move a motion today because I wanted to go back to my constituents and understand more about their concerns. I know they are probably listening in to this debate today. It was suggested to me that conservation covenant land could be routinely rezoned to landscape conservation where the covenant fully covers the title or the non-covenant area is not suitable for agriculture, but that does not address the broader issue of that larger scale rezoning process which really needs to be looked at further before I could support the motion or any amendment today.

It is important that there is that direct consultation with the landowners because it is a private agreement. It is their own private legally binding covenant and they have the right to participate in what the potential implications of the rezoning might mean for that and opt in or opt out of that. It requires further consideration in my view. There is great risk in there being numerous and large-scale, perhaps unnecessary in some instance, rezoning processes that might happen if we were to support an amendment or the motion as it stands.

That concludes my contribution. I undertake to continue to work with the constituent and the group that have raised their concerns with me and I encourage the minister to do so as well and make clear and concise information that is provided to them to clarify some of their concerns.

[3.25 p.m.]

Ms OGILVIE (Clark) - Mr Deputy Speaker, planning law is a complex area and what I believe we are dealing with here today is the intersection of planning law and property law particularly in relation to lands titles. There is a deal of complexity. I feel there is an area here that will need to be clarified in relation to how these two sets of rights intersect with each other.

It is my experience that when a covenant is on a title, to seek to have that removed if you wish to do so - perhaps you were wanting to build a development that is in conflict with that covenant - you will need to make an application to do that. We have heard a little about how you can do that through council but also there is a possibility of going directly to the courts on this because we are dealing with lands titles law.

What a court would do is adopt quite a high and rigorous test and look at the context within which that lands sits. Part of that context is the planning zone. For example, if we were changing a planning zone around a property that had a specific covenant on it, it would become germane to the question of whether a covenant could or should be removed and that would be on an application by the landowner.

Covenants are there to protect not just environmental issues but also to protect rights. In my limited experience in this area a court would also turn its mind to the beneficiaries of that

enforcement. All sorts of covenants and restricted covenants can be applied to land. As I said, this is an area that is highly technical because it is the confluence of planning law, planning zones and restrictive covenants which can be applied for many reasons. I am sure there is quite a lot of precedent and technical legal argument around it.

It is fair to say that if you were to change an entire planning zone, which is the effective legal substrata to land on which covenants sits, it impacts how that land can be used. This is where the problem is, so in a sense both of these arguments are right in a way because there is an area here that could be clarified.

It is a contained piece. It is about somebody who owns a piece of land who has a covenant on it who may wish to do something else with that land, so it is when land is being transferred or applications are being put forward. This is not my area of expertise but I believe the Labor shadow minister for planning touched on planning approvals through the council process. I think that is a little clearer but this area of how the planning zone creates a context within which decisions can be made by court in relation to covenants will need a bit more clarity. I hope I have that right and I am interested to hear more about that specific point.

However, we are right to be concerned and careful when it comes to property rights and how we care for our land and make sure we get that balance right between different uses of land at a larger scale and those concerns we have for specific pieces of land where we might have particular concern around perhaps endangered species or other things. I wanted to put that on the record as being my concern.

[3.29 p.m.]

Ms O'CONNOR (Clark - Leader of the Greens) - Mr Deputy Speaker, I feel like I have been gaslit by the minister who is trying to pretend that there is nothing at all to see here. I will certainly be going back to stakeholders in this area with the *Hansard* to get some clarity, but it is our very firm view that this Government is seeking to undermine protections on covenanted land. A covenant provides protection from future development within the covenanted area under the Nature Conservation Act but there is no requirement under the Land Use Planning and Approvals Act 1993 for councils to treat a development application differently because there is a covenant.

Time expired.

The House divided -

AYES 3

Ms O'Connor
Ms Ogilvie
Dr Woodruff (Teller)

NOES 18

Ms Archer
Mr Barnett
Dr Broad
Ms Butler
Ms Courtney
Ms Dow
Mr Ellis
Mr Ferguson
Mr Gutwein
Ms Haddad

Ms Houston
Mr Jaensch
Mr O'Byrne
Mrs Petrusma (Teller)
Mr Rockliff
Mr Shelton
Ms Standen
Ms White

Motion negatived.

MOTION

Electoral Donations Laws - Motion Negatived

[3.38 p.m.]

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

That the House -

- (1) Notes that on 3 May 2018, then Premier Will Hodgman announced that the Government would conduct a review into Tasmania's Electoral Act.
- (2) Further notes that an interim report was released in December 2018 which led to the Electoral Amendment Bill 2019 implementing several administrative changes to the act.
- (3) Further notes that the Government commissioned a second review and community consultation was held on the more substantive issues surrounding electoral donations laws.
- (4) Understands the report from this consultation was received by government in December 2019.
- (5) Calls on the Attorney-General to release this report by tabling it in Parliament.

This is a straightforward motion on something that should be a fairly straightforward policy for the Government to take action on. Essentially, it is calling on the Government to release a report that we understand has been sitting with the minister since December last year. That report is into an inquiry that the Government commissioned into political donation laws in Tasmania, amongst other things.

To refresh the Chamber's memory, under Will Hodgman's leadership, when he was premier, he made a commitment to reform this area of law which, as people know, is appalling legate. We have the worst political donation laws in the country, and it was very refreshing that the premier at that time had, I believe, a genuine commitment to make change in that area.

The first step was done. There was community consultation, an interim report, there was legislation tabled and we debated that last year. That legislation, while it was welcomed and it made important changes, it essentially made a range of administrative changes, like dealing with the delivery time frame for postal votes, and changing use of the words that were outdated, like 'facsimile' being replaced with the words 'electronic means'. It dealt with definitions under the Electoral Act that needed updating, and we dealt with some issues around pre-poll voting - essentially some very needed but very straightforward administrative changes, which are often the subject of things like justice miscellaneous amendment bills, bills of parliament, bills of government that make changes that are required.

Quite rightly, the commissioner requested those changes. We welcomed those changes and we supported that bill. The most substantive change was around newspaper media reporting on election day, which was also necessary and has been called on by many members of the media as well.

That is not to disregard the fact that those changes were necessary and important, but they did not go to the heart of the issue that faces Tasmanians and, I believe, really feeds into the cynicism and lack of trust that people have in politics these days, and that is a world-wide phenomenon. People are losing faith in politics and this is one area where we could act right now to start repairing that trust in politics.

I believe former premier Hodgman was of the same view, because he commissioned a second review. A second community consultation was held, terms of reference were released, many community submissions were made by members of the public, community organisations, political organisations, individuals, and communities. They were made in good faith, and we believe the report was prepared - but some nine months later now, that report is still languishing on the minister's desk and it has not been released.

The new Premier, Mr Gutwein, took up the role just a short time later, in January 2020. In one of his very first media interviews as the new Premier, he went on Leon Compton's morning show on ABC radio. Amongst other things, he was asked by Leon Compton if political donation laws were still a commitment of his Government. His answer was very telling. He, in my view, walked away. He made a clear indication on the radio that day that this was not something on his radar, or something he would be pursuing with the vigour that his predecessor promised to do so. I will read a short extract from what he said that day. He said -

There was a commitment made by the former premier that we would look at this, and that is exactly what we will do, but I want to make the point, again with this, it is about getting the balance right ... I think we have to ensure that people don't feel that they can't contribute or make contributions to the public debate by supporting a political party, and feel that they are in some way going to be pressured as a result of that.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I listened to that interview live, and I thought what a strange comment to make in response to that question. People should not feel that they are in some way going to be pressured by making a contribution to the political debate.

Making a contribution to the political discourse in this place is very different from making a financial contribution to a candidate or a party, and members of the public should be

able to make financial and other contributions to political parties and to candidates. However, disclosing those donations in no way means that they are being prevented from being a part of the political process - or the words the Premier used, that they would not be able to contribute to the public debate.

I thought it was a shocking response, a questionable approach. It really showed me that our priorities are very different across the two sides of this Chamber. Somehow, he felt that by being upfront about who is giving donations, that is preventing people being part of our democracy. I believe that is a shameful view, because it is quite the contrary. By disclosing political donations, you are encouraging democracy. You are making a level playing field, because right now we have anything but a level playing field in politics.

That was the first sign to us that the new Premier is not as committed to this as the former premier, and we have seen more signs of that today and yesterday in question time where the Premier said that he has not put his mind to that issue. That made it clear to me that we have very different ideas about democracy across the Chamber, and also very different ideas about what our laws should look like.

We know that the laws we have in Tasmania governing political donations and declarations of political donations are the worst in the country. In fact I believe they are practically non-existent. It is not even accurate to refer to them as 'laws for political donation disclosure', because we do not have any at all. We are lagging behind not just the other states of this country, but the world in many ways.

It shocked me as a first-time candidate in 2018 that there was no requirement for me to disclose donations that I received. Notwithstanding that there were no huge sums of money, there was no obligation on me to disclose donations that I received personally, or disclose those publicly, or to disclose any of the spending that I made. As a candidate it shocked me that was not the case. There is no obligation on any member of this place, or any candidate for election to the House of Assembly, to make a declaration of the donations they receive to their party, to the Electoral Commission - or to the public, which is the important point.

The only obligation that does apply in Tasmania comes from Commonwealth law, not Tasmanian law - and that is an obligation on parties, not candidates, to disclose money they receive from donors that is above \$13 800. That is a huge threshold. I believe that is one thing we should all be able to agree on. It is not cumulative - that is just straight donations above \$13 800. If a party, not a candidate, received a donation of that huge size, well then, yes, that needs to be declared under the Commonwealth Electoral Act. That in itself is a laughably high threshold and needs reform in and of itself, but that is a job for the federal parliament.

Meanwhile in Tasmania we have no declaration laws at all. People would know we have a private member's bill on the books. It is out for community consultation. It is not the purpose of this motion to go through the detail of that bill, but in brief, it would require that donations made to a party, or to an endorsed candidate or a running candidate, or to a political party over \$1000, or cumulative donations up to \$1000 -

Members interjecting.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER - Order. I ask that the member be allowed to make her contribution without interruption please.

Ms HADDAD - Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. I will just reiterate. What our bill would do is that donations of over \$1000 - or cumulative from one donor up to \$1000 - to a party, candidate or sitting MP, would have to be declared monthly to the Electoral Commission and put on the public record by the TEC. It also would ban anonymous donations over \$1000, and it would put spending caps on lower House election campaigns for parties and candidates.

People in Tasmania are already quite familiar with spending caps. We have spending caps at the local government level, and we have spending caps in Legislative Council elections. Our proposed bill would also apply spending caps in lower House elections.

It is a draft bill that has been put out for public consultation, and we are genuinely listening to community feedback about it. We are listening, we are consulting, and we will adapt our proposals as a result of that community consultation because we genuinely want to know what the views of the public are about what legislation in this area should look like.

It is one step that we have put forward. The reason we have done that is that the Government will not and has not acted on this issue, despite promises at the last election to do so. What we have put in our draft bill is just one of what I believe should be several steps in political donation reform, but it is one step. The reason we are doing it is because the Government is not. Not only are they not moving forward with legislation but they are also not even releasing their own report and, as we have seen from the comments from the Premier in the media in recent months and in question time this week, it is not on their radar.

There has been increasing pressure on Government to release that report, not just in this place but in the media as well. A number of people in this place have been interviewed in the media about that including the Speaker, the Greens Leader and me. But the minister responsible, who has received this report, refused to add her voice to that media debate when she was asked to go on ABC radio and add the Government's view to what is happening in this area. That is demoralising for everyone who took the time to make a submission to that community consultation in good faith, hoping for change, only to be disappointed. It is also disappointing for every member of the Tasmanian public who wants honesty, transparency and trust in politics who is getting sick to death and fed up with the way they see politics going in this state and this country. They want better. We want better. It is disastrously disappointing for the public that this Government continues to refuse to act on this very important area of policy change.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the Premier said today and yesterday that he had not put his mind to this issue. Well, he did put his mind to it in January this year when he walked away from it and showed us that it is not a priority, not even to release their report. We have to ask: what do they have to hide? What is the impediment to moving forward with this area of law reform? We have tackled lots of other areas of law reform under this minister's leadership, many of which the Opposition have supported. What is the delay? Why not act on this area of law reform as well? What are they hiding?

We might have a bit of a hint about that in the letter that the Planning minister, Mr Jaensch, sent to my colleague the shadow planning minister, Ms Dow, yesterday. I will read it into the *Hansard*. He said -

Ms Dow,

I am aware that Labor is considering amendments to the major projects bill in the Legislative Council including amendments that were previously

debated and defeated in the House of Assembly debate. I am advised these amendments fundamentally alter the policy intent of the bill. They will render it unusable in practice and may have serious implications for the role and decisions of the Tasmanian Planning Commission and the broader planning system.

On that basis I confirm the Liberal Party's position on these amendments has not changed. We consider them to be fatal to this bill and will not support them in the Legislative Council debate. Further, we will not support the bill on its return to the House of Assembly if so amended.

It is disappointing that Labor is considering such amendments, especially given public comments prior to the last debate that they would vote in favour of the amended bill.

We did vote in favour of the amended bill but we will not walk away from an effort that we can make in a piece of government legislation that they have brought to the table. We will not walk away from making amendments that will improve that bill. That is the job of the Opposition and the job of the parliament, in fact. What Mr Jaensch fails to recognise when sending that letter to a shadow minister in this place is that he is sending a message to the Legislative Council, to the public and to the whole parliament that he is the boss and what he says has to go. It is born-to-rule entitlement that we see from the Liberal Party all the time in this place.

It is the will of the parliament that decides on what is legislation. It is the role of the parliament to amend legislation. We are not here to pass government legislation. No parliament in this country is there just to pass government legislation without question. The role of the Opposition parties and the role of the independents in the upper House is to look at legislation on its merits, speak to their stakeholders, constituents and the public, and to represent those views. Government members are not the only ones representing community views. Everyone in this place is elected to represent community views and everyone in the upper House is elected to represent their community.

It is the will of the parliament, not just the will of the Government. I found it an extraordinary letter that a minister of the Crown would write to a shadow minister expressing disappointment and demanding that she or the party not move amendments. It is appalling that a minister of the Crown could act in that way.

Sadly, it is not really a surprise because this Government has a born-to-rule, arrogant attitude. In fact, they have a history over the six years they have been in office of secrecy, hiding information, refusing to release reports, refusing to answer RTI requests, clogging up the system with extraordinarily long waiting times for RTI requests to be answered and for reviews to be handled in the Ombudsman's office. There is now about a three-year backlog of RTI reviews, notwithstanding the time it takes to do the original review within the department and an internal review within the department. By the time something reaches the Ombudsman's office it could already have been hanging around for a number of years.

There are some examples to refresh the House's memory of the hallmark of this Government, this dishonesty and hiding of information. In December 2018 it was revealed how much those health reports cost under Mr Ferguson's leadership at that time. The KPMG

and RDME reports cost \$100 000 or more and they were not released. I recall at the time that for a while he was denying that they even existed and then it was acknowledged they did exist but they were still not released.

In November 2019 there was a leaked report into Ambulance Tasmania with evidence of the crisis in the health system that had been sat on for a number of times and painted a very disturbing picture. In June 2019 it was more than six months that the Attorney-General had been sitting on a review of the Tasmanian community legal assistance sector. That report was eventually released but it took more than six months.

In November 2019, Rene Hidding's payout was not publicly released and it is still not publicly released. That information is not sitting on the public record now.

I talked a little about RTI time lines and will let the Chamber know, because I do not know whether we have shared this, that we have put in a number of RTI requests around the original Westbury site that the Government identified as their preferred site for their northern prison. We asked for the other shortlisted sites and were told they could not be released on privacy grounds because it could harm the interests of the proponents. How that justification was made, I am not quite sure. It is not relevant to the point I am trying to make now.

We narrowed our request and asked only for the suburb and the postcode for the other proposed sites on the EOI shortlist. That was refused as well. The argument was that in aggregate, those two pieces of information - suburb and postcode - could still constitute a privacy breach. That is pretty disturbing as well. We then asked for the postcode only and that was refused because it was a repeat request. You cannot win. You are asked to narrow down your request but then you are told that the request is a repeat.

I know we are not meant to have props but this was released in the end, the northern prison social and economic study, wholly redacted. It is quite laughable. I know we are not meant to have props in here but if people can see that on the camera, I have gone through it and other than the page numbers, I have spotted a couple of words that maybe were missed - the word 'days' at the top of the table and later on there is one more word that has not been redacted. They probably just missed those from the redaction, but that is a hallmark of this Government, to hide information and not be honest with the public about their actions.

It is a hallmark of this Government, hiding information, refusing to release information publicly and taking the parliament and the Tasmanian people for granted. The excuses we have heard from the Premier this week about why this area of policy, donations law reform in this state, has been dropped by this Government, will be wearing thin pretty quick. We heard yesterday that the Premier is not focused on this, he has not turned his mind to it and is not going to progress it. He will get to it when he gets to it, he said effectively in answers to questions today and yesterday. The reason for that is that COVID-19 has been his priority. However, the report has been around since before COVID-19.

Of course COVID-19 has been the priority. It has been the priority of every government in the world. We have supported the hard decisions the Government has made throughout the pandemic. You cannot use that selectively because the Government has done plenty of other work in that time. We are dealing with much of it today in the parliament, and have dealt with plenty of non-COVID-19 related legislation this week.

Just yesterday, we finished dealing with the Dangerous Criminals and High Risk Offender's Bill, Children and Special Witnesses Amendment Bill, Financial Management Bill, and the Teachers Registration Amendment Bill. They were all supported but for some reason this particular reform cannot be progressed because of COVID-19. Everything else can be and is dealt with according to the Government's agenda. I will read from a snapshot of some of the media releases the Government has issued over the last week or so. I will not read them all because I would like to hear other people's contributions on this matter.

The Government issued a press release on 13 September - assisting the transport industry to adapt to changes; on 12 September - preparing for bushfire season. Also on 12 September - EOIs are called before the EPA board. On 11 September - celebrating Tasmania's thoroughbred racing industry; on 11 September - Government welcomes conditional reopening of 24-hour gyms, and also breast milk for hundreds of Tasmanian pre-term babies. On 10 September, nominations open for the Tasmanian Honour Role of Women. On 9 September, encouraging results for wombat mange trial. Also on 9 September - continuing to level the playing field in Tasmania. What a pity that release was not about political donations.

Levelling the playing field is the reason we are here talking about this issue now because we have the worst political donation laws in the country. It is not even a fair characterisation to call them the worst because they do not exist. Every other state in this country has laws in place to declare donations that are received by parties, candidates and MPs - except for us. Why are we so different that these things should be kept secret from the public? They should not be. That is why we are progressing with our private member's bill. It is one step. Much more can be done in this area and there is a lot more we could discuss. I welcome the opportunity to discuss more reform in this area, if the Government was true to its commitment and brought forward legislation dealing with the range of issues that were in the terms of reference for that review.

That would be a great day for Tasmanians, for transparency, for honesty in politics and for democracy in this state, if we were all here discussing a Government bill to deal with the many issues raised in that report that we have not yet seen. The terms of reference were very broad.

Our bill deals with some of those issues. As I said it is one step, but we want to see much more. We want to see something from the Government in this very important area because the Tasmanian public is getting sick of it. They are getting sick of the way this Government takes them for granted, sick of the way they treat the parliament with contempt, sick of the way they treat this Chamber and the upper House with contempt. Independent members must be getting sick of the Government treating them with contempt as well and expecting them to pass Government legislation without question.

It is very disappointing that for some reason this issue has been dropped from the priority list of Government actions from the last election. It was on the list under premier Hodgman's leadership. It is still a huge priority for Labor. It is an area we are trying to act on from Opposition and we will continue to fight for reform in this area because it is fundamental to the way elections are run in this place.

The speakers who follow me today will have things to say about the draft bill that Labor has put forward. They will have oodles of criticisms about what Labor does or does not do, but at least we are having a go. We are putting forward our ideas for reform. Give us your

views. We are hearing from the public, and we are adopting changes that are in the public sphere.

The Attorney-General says by interjection that Labor does not self-disclose. I know we will be hearing that from other members of this place as well, but neither does her party self-disclose. Right now we are playing by the rules but they are broken. The Commonwealth legislation that affects us right now -

Members interjecting.

Ms HADDAD - The Opposition is doing our best to make that change from opposition. However, we encourage the Government to show some strength in this area, to go back to the commitments they made at the last election and bring forward a government bill. At the very least, as this motion requires today, release the report into their own review - the report that has been sitting on the Government's desk since December last year. Then people can have a look at the public submissions to that review and what areas of reform the public wants to see so we can respond. That is our job here - representing the Tasmanian public and our constituents.

I look forward to the contribution of others. I hope there are good contributions and that contributions do not go through without tangible or meaningful contributions to the debate.

[4.06 p.m.]

Ms OGILVIE (Clark) - Madam Deputy Speaker, I support electoral reform. I have previously talked about caps and how we might do those properly in the House of Assembly elections. Our electoral reform requirements are more complex than perhaps everywhere else in the nation other than the ACT due to the Hare-Clark electoral system.

I have read Labor's bill and I have emailed Ms Haddad. I hope at some point she will be able to respond to my concern the bill assumes that only parties will be contesting an election. According to the proposed legislation, all other candidates would be capped at \$100 000, plus a \$1 million party spend over the top. As an independent I have no party and that would not be the case for me. I find this fundamentally unfair and misconceived. I ask that Labor has a good hard look to see what else they could do. Upper House caps would seem to be a better model and having run as an upper House candidate I thought that system was quite effective.

Under that system, everything is brought into the cap and I think that is fairer. It is not only donated money but includes all of those other elements. If there is going to be a capped system let us run it as a properly construed cap system. No doubt there will be healthy debate about all of that and I look forward to being part of it.

Unfortunately, I was not in the House when the original bill or the review was taking place. I have a particular interest in telephone banking, and for the record I have written to the Attorney-General proposing my own electoral reform amendment to bring rules about telephone banking and digital campaigning into the Electoral Act. I believe this is a fundamental change that we need to make for our integrity as people and the integrity of our elections. We see these issues arising all over the world and we should act quickly here. I believe the way to manage it is perhaps a simple amendment to section 196 so that candidates' names may not to be used without authority, including those published or distributed digitally or via telephone banking and phone calls.

When I say phone banking, I do not mean robo calls. I am talking about telephone banking where people receive individual phone calls with a script. I came into this debate thinking that I would support the call for the release of the report. It is entirely sensible and exactly what should happen. I was a little disappointed with the tone of the contribution but have since changed my mind.

[4.10 p.m.]

Ms O'CONNOR (Clark - Leader of the Greens) - Ms Ogilvie, I was simply making a point that section 196 of the Electoral Act is arcane and outdated. We will have more to say about that in the very near future.

Ms Ogilvie - I appreciate that.

Ms O'CONNOR - Madam Deputy Speaker, we support this amendment. We have spent a significant part of this week in question time asking the Premier whether there is any commitment on the part of Government to reform Tasmania's nation-leading, for all the wrong reasons, political donations laws. We propose to amend it so at least there is a time frame put on there for the minister to be required to table the review report. That is at paragraph (5) 'Calls on the Attorney-General to release this report by tabling it in parliament'.

I move -

That the motion be amended by inserting after the word 'Parliament' in paragraph (5) 'by no later than 22 September 2020.'

That will put a time frame on the release of this review report which as we know has been with the Attorney-General since December last year.

It is very frustrating as a Tasmanian parliamentarian to feel like we are experiencing Groundhog Day. These debates about Tasmania's weak political donations laws have been a feature of the Greens' discourse in this place going back a very long time. We know that ABC Fact Check at the last state election asked the question, 'Does Tasmania have the weakest political donations laws in the country?', after I made that statement during the campaign. Their assessment is it is a fair call and RMI fact check went through all the information and found we are the worst in the country.

In many ways not only is this about transparency, accountability and a level playing field, it is also about a government having the courage to contest an election on the basis of values and ideas, the vision a party has to improve the lives and wellbeing of the people of Tasmania, hopefully a vision that a party has to chart a course for this island and its people through the coming decade, or so at least as we confront deepening climate impacts on our landscape, our communities and our economy.

We have made two submissions to the restricted review process. We have asked the Premier questions, both in early March and this week. I agree that the language the Premier is now using is discouraging at best, because it seems to me a clear intention to walk away from even the weak commitment made by his predecessor, Mr Hodgman. You should have the courage as a political party to have some constraints around political donations and be prepared to put yourself to the people without having to be bankrolled by corporate, vested and foreign interests.

We know from the last election, from Australian Electoral Commission returns that came out, that the source of about 75 per cent of the donations to the Liberal Party was not declared and is still not known. That equates to about \$3 million of mystery money donated to the Liberals who were bankrolled by the gambling industry to win the last state election. The source of donations from the Labor Party for \$875 000 remains unknown and should this Government not put some legislation before the parliament, or should the parliament not pass the bill that we understand is to come before it, it will be very interesting to see how Labor, for example, responds potentially to an offer of a contribution towards the campaign from, I do not know, the Federal Group.

What we know is that the principal position Labor took to the 2018 state election on pokies they walked away from three months after the election and, lo and behold, in the Tasmanian Hospitality Association magazine it said, 'Labor Leader Rebecca White is back and back in favour', and has been given two pages to write in the Tasmanian Hospitality Association's magazine. Remember, this is the same Tasmanian Hospitality Association that, after the last state election, received an extra \$4 million in recurrent funding.

This is the same Labor leader who, when she was interviewed about political donations in February last year and Leon Compton raised the issue with her of the pokies policy, said -

The fact of the matter is that we didn't win, Leon. The fact of the matter is once the Liberals move on with the new licence holder arrangements we're not going to be able to continue to pursue our policy to remove poker machines from pubs and clubs because there will not be a new deal struck until 2043. We didn't win the election, Leon. It has taken me a while to reconcile that fact as well, but the fact of the matter is that we can't give effect to our policy because it was a point in time, which was the point I was making throughout the campaign that we had a once-in-a-generation opportunity here to remove poker machines from clubs and pubs if we alter the deed and give effect to that. We didn't win so we can't do that.

That is what my Dad would have called a quitter, and in life you just do not want to be a quitter, but it will be interesting to see whether Federal Group, having invited the Leader of the Opposition to contribute towards the Tasmanian Hospitality Association magazine, will be chipping in for Labor's election campaign. They are probably pretty smart investors and why would you back a losing horse?

In our first submission to the Department of Justice Electoral Act review in response to the interim report, we made a number of recommendations for robust electoral reform in Tasmania. We support the Senate Select Committee into the Political Influence of Donations recommendations 3 and 5 for a fixed disclosure threshold of \$1000 to be calculated cumulatively over the whole party group and online, and continuous real-time disclosure to the Australian Electoral Commission donations to political parties, candidates and associated entities. We support public funding of election campaigns.

In the event that recommendations for expenditure and donation caps are adopted, consideration should be given to tying Tasmania's per vote payment rate to the federal election rate to be appropriate. However, under current rules we recommend the Australian average rate of \$4.15 per first preference vote in 2018-19 indexed at an appropriate rate each year.

I note that in his uncharacteristically weak responses to the questions we have asked about electoral reform, the Premier makes much of accusing us of wanting public funding for elections. Every Australian state and territory and the Commonwealth has a measure of public funding for election campaigns for precisely the reason that we need donations reform in Tasmania. That is in order to take vested interest money out of election campaigns and to make sure that electoral campaigns cannot be bankrolled by corporations who want to not only influence the outcome but have an influence on the government that is elected. It is actually an investment in democracy.

We support a cap of \$81 000 for individual candidate expenditure and \$810 000 for party expenditure in House of Assembly elections for the 2018-19 financial year, increasing by \$1000 and \$10 000 per year respectively. I note that because this process has been so long and dragged out, this submission is 19 months old.

We support corresponding regulation of the political activities of third parties and associated entities, including the same or similar rules regarding disclosure of expenditure and donations that apply to political parties.

We agree that the requirement to register with the Tasmanian Electoral Commission, and the adoption of a broad definition of electoral activity, and a definition of political campaigners, would be beneficial to such a scheme. We support the Senate Select Committee into the Political Influence of Donations, recommendation 7, that a donation cap be set at \$3000 aggregate per donor per parliamentary term. We support banning donations from corporate donors, and minimum donations from property developers. Tobacco, liquor and gaming industries should be banned.

We strongly support a state-based prohibition on donations from foreign interests. Madam Deputy Speaker, I will remind the House again that in 2015, after ASIO had warned federal parties not to accept money from a particular donor who was strongly connected to the Chinese Communist Party, the Yuhu Group of companies and their owner, Huang Xiangmo - who has since been banished from this country - the Tasmanian Liberals accepted a minimum of \$30 000 in donations from the Yuhu Group of companies. This review process ruled out banning donations from foreign interests, even though there have been moves at the federal level to do exactly that.

So, we do not even want to meet that bar. What are we saying here? Through a review process that, through its terms of reference, ruled out any prohibitions from developers or corporate interests - which even Queensland, New South Wales and Victoria have done - the review process was set up to fail from the start. It is a review process that has now been undermined to the extent that the report of the review has been sitting on the Attorney-General's desk for nine months.

I have a lot of respect for the Attorney-General on a personal level, but at the last state election I saw Ms Archer's face all over gambling venues, all over the electorate of Clark. That raises the issue of conflict - of being conflicted by the fact that your donors would be impacted by any restriction on political donations in Tasmania. We heard an argument - in fact the argument has been put by the Premier on radio, been put by the Attorney-General - that this is a freedom of speech issue, that we should not restrict entities from contributing to parties and participating in an election. This is actually about freedom from being bought. This is about the freedom of Tasmanian voters to know who is donating how much money to which political party, and potentially for what purpose.

We should have the courage to stand on our values, and our work ethic, and our commitment to this island and its people when it comes to an election. A premier who is sitting on 80 per cent to 90 per cent approval should have the courage within himself to acknowledge democracy in Tasmania needs repair. One of the most important things a government and a parliament can do to make sure the foundations of democracy are strong is to have robust political donations laws in place, that take the dark money out of politics.

Because the nexus between the gambling industry's bankrolling of the last state election, the fact that \$3 million of the donations made to the Liberal Party - the source of which is still unknown - the result of the election, the contribution towards the Tasmanian Hospitality Association, and the pokies legislation that we are going to see relatively imminently, the nexus between all those events is strong and undeniable.

The Attorney-General does need to release the report of the review. Many people made submissions in good faith. We made submissions. People who were revolted by the dark river of money from vested interests at the last state election made submissions to this review process in good faith, too.

It is disrespectful in the extreme not to release the report of that review. It is disingenuous for the Premier to get up in here and say 'I have been so focused on the coronavirus response I have not applied my mind to the issue of donations'. That is disingenuous and it does not pass the non-pokies pub test. It is possible for a Premier with the energy, the staff and the departmental resources at his disposal, and an Attorney-General there to work with him in Cabinet, to turn his mind to the issue of political donations.

Yesterday we had four non-COVID-19 bills on the blue, all of which went through Cabinet, so the Premier was able to turn his mind to those issues that were in the legislation we debated or started to debate yesterday.

I do not believe him when he says he has not turned his mind to this issue. We asked about it in March, Andrew Wilkie raised it in July, and we have been asking about it all week. Leon Compton, on ABC *Mornings*, undertook a number of interviews the week before last on the issue of political donations. The Attorney-General should go on his program to explain herself. That is part of being accountable to the people who have entrusted you with their vote, or the people you represent as, in this case, a member for Clark.

The need for donations reform in Tasmania is urgent. It is not a side issue. When you can have corporate, developer and foreign interests contributing towards a political party in order to influence a vote, and therefore outcomes for those corporations, it has a chilling and corrupting influence on democracy. Unfortunately, in Tasmania, it has ever been thus that there is an unhealthy connection between the big end of town, corporate interests and the main political parties.

It is good to see Labor coming back into this place to raise the issue of electoral reform. It is vital that one of the main parties in this place does that. I do not know what will happen at the next state election. I have a fair idea, but who can be sure. If Labor is committed to electoral reform, when they take that policy to the state election they must deliver on it after the election should they be elected to government. Should they not be elected, which is more likely, they need to stick with that policy, which they did not do on poker machines. They walked away from it in a blink after the state election. That has fatally undermined Ms White's

leadership. She has never recovered from the damage done by walking away from the pokies policy. That is sad for democracy, too, but it means the Federal Group won. They won an election, and then they won an Opposition.

Let us try to avoid that kind of corrupting influence on democracy in future. First of all, let us get hold of the report of the review into the Electoral Act in Tasmania, and then, as a parliament, let us collectively have the courage to commit to reform, which is in the interests of only one group of people who have no vested interest and that is the Tasmanian people.

I commend our amendment to this motion in order to try to get that review report sooner rather than later. I note that even Paul Lennon now thinks there should be donations reform in Tasmania - even Paul Lennon. The number of times you see former public figures walk out of public life and then have an epiphany about the things they could have done is again somewhat dispiriting. I was encouraged to hear Ms Haddad say that Labor is trying to act from opposition, of course except on the issue of pokies in pubs and clubs, and that Labor is having a go. Yes, that is true and on this issue we will support Labor, even though it will nauseate them to have to vote with us.

[4.31 p.m.]

Ms ARCHER (Clark - Minister for Justice) - Madam Deputy Speaker, as the Premier has clearly outlined today and yesterday in question time, the health and wellbeing of Tasmanians has been the Government's top priority since COVID-19 hit and that is where our focus has rightly been and continues to be to keep Tasmanians safe.

While Labor has been using the pandemic as a means for political gain at every turn, we have been strongly focused on keeping Tasmanians safe and delivering a plan to help Tasmania recover and rebuild. As the Premier made clear yesterday and today, the Government has been rightly focused on those matters that are important to Tasmanians right now. That is the correspondence I get from Tasmanians right now - keeping them safe, getting our economy going and framing up a budget that will deal with some very difficult challenges we have ahead of us.

Unlike those opposite, our Government recognises that proper process should be followed in this regard and that all stakeholders should have the opportunity to have their say on any proposed complex law reform. This is not something that is simple. I have made this very clear in a statement I have provided the media on numerous occasions. We will not be pushed into any kneejerk reaction to the political posturing by Labor in particular, which has rehashed its old policy and I might add missed out anything to do with the donations they receive from a third party, namely the unions. Basically, they have rehashed an old policy that is flawed. It is important to remember that Labor and the Greens want Tasmanians to effectively pay for their election campaigns and keep hiding the significant role that trade unions play in Labor campaigns.

I welcome Labor's call at least for a battle of ideas and we stand ready to battle on those ideas. However, I cannot think of one idea or solution that Labor has brought forward that will help one Tasmanian who has lost their job, or is worried about their business closing, or will assist to build one piece of essential infrastructure to secure our future in these unprecedented times. These are the things we are focused on at the moment.

Instead, what we know from Labor is that they are underperforming. They know their Leader is struggling and they are so desperate to turn away the gaze from their internal machinations that they will do or say anything for a headline. We see that constantly on a daily basis.

Labor and the Greens, not unexpectedly, have united to essentially call for taxpayer funding for election campaigns. This will be expensive and Tasmanians should be rightly worried and cynical about how much this will hit our bottom line and our back pocket.

I want to put this on the record. There are varying levels of dollars per vote in each state and it is as high as \$8 per vote in the ACT which has the Hare-Clark system. It can also involve base funding for registered political parties. The Labor party in Queensland has just increased availability of public funding over the next few years. That funding will be available to a party or candidate who receives at least 4 per cent of first preference votes, whereas the current threshold is 6 per cent.

Opposition members interjecting.

Ms ARCHER - They do not like hearing exactly what they are calling for.

In addition, the amount of funding has increased for parties to \$6 per vote, up from \$3.14 and for candidates to \$3 per vote, up from a \$1.57. That is an additional \$23 million to prop up political campaigns and payments to parties and candidates in Queensland elections. That is millions of dollars that would not be available for our health system, for our education system and to support small business in these very difficult and challenging times if we did it.

I have had a very preliminary read of the proposed Labor bill and it is very similar to the one the former Labor government tabled in the dying days of their government in late 2013, the main difference being changes to dollar values. It came as no surprise to me that the bill does not cap third-party donations, because Labor knows they have to protect the rivers of gold that come from their mates, the trade unions.

I would like to go into the review of the Electoral Act and what we have done so far. For the benefit of those Tasmanians watching this debate, and having trouble hearing probably, let us review the steps our Government has taken in regard to reviewing the Electoral Act 2004 and deal with this complex area of law reform.

The review commenced on 9 June 2018 with a general call for submissions and targeted stakeholder consultation on the terms of reference. A total of 33 submissions were received from a range of stakeholders and individuals. An interim report on a review was released on 20 December 2018 and was prepared having regard to the submissions received, research into electoral laws apply in either Australian jurisdictions and relevant international comparisons. The interim report contained 19 consultation issues seeking feedback to inform recommendations in the final report.

Following the release of the interim report, the High Court handed down a decision in *Unions NSW and others v New South Wales* 2019 High Court of Australia that won, and that was relevant to aspects of our review. The decision in *Unions NSW* directly relates to the issues of capping electoral expenditure by third-party campaigners in a differentiated sense to political parties or candidates and potentially also extends to limits on donations to third parties

for the purpose of electoral expenditure. That decision makes it clear that careful analysis, research and evidence-gathering is required to support and justify as reasonably necessary the formulation of legislation or policy that seeks to burden the implied freedom of political communication on governmental and political matters.

In response to this High Court decision, an addendum to the interim report was released on 18 February 2019. The addendum provided an overview of the High Court decision and posed a further consultation issue for feedback. The period of consultation on the interim report was extended to 15 April 2019 to allow feedback on the consultation issue. In dealing with this the first tranche of amendments were carried out. The interim report recommended a first tranche of amendments to the act to be made prior to the Legislative Council elections in May 2019. A draft bill was released for consultation at the same time as the interim report, with a shorter consultation period closing on 4 February 2019.

The bill made a number of technical and administrative changes to the act. There were only six submissions that made reference to the draft bill, most submissions focused on the interim report and in particular on matters relating to terms of reference 2 and 3. Of the submissions received relating to the bill there were only a few suggestions for changes. The bill passed parliament and received royal assent on 15 April 2019 and revisions commenced on 18 April 2019.

Much has been said about the final report. The Government received the final report, as expected, at the very end of 2019 and we must consider it thoroughly.

I find it galling, to say the least, that the Labor party, who sat on countless reports into the health system while in government, would use this as a political stunt to deflect from their leadership woes this week. It reminds me that the report into their 2018 election loss over two years ago also remains buried. This is rank hypocrisy, which is fast becoming their only trick in the book.

This sort of reform deserves to be looked at closely, particularly because of the public funding aspect, which every state has turned their minds to and enacted as a consequence to this sort of reform - an aspect which Labor and the Greens clearly support by their actions. The next state election is not due until 2022, and it is critical that this be considered thoroughly.

Much has been said about transparency, and this has been lost on Labor and the Greens, so I would like to take them on a history lesson of exactly what our Government has done in increasing government transparency that did not exist in the former Labor and indeed the Labor-Greens government as well. Our Government remains committed to improving the openness and transparency of government.

Since first taking office, we have adopted a number of measures in line with this commitment. Our Government has made a commitment and concerted effort to improve openness and accountability of government decision-making. Continued efforts to improve government transparency and accountability have accrued through numerous extensions to the information released under our routine disclosure of information policy that is pushing out information.

Since June 2018, the Government has released more than 60 new routine data sets online as it continues to expand public access to information on the activities of government - I notice

all the heads have gone down, because they do not want to hear this - launching a new Government Information Gateway webpage, which is available on the DPAC website, to make the Government information, proactively disclosed, easier to find. We have continued to publicly report on gifts, benefits and hospitality received - not done by the previous governments - and given by offices across all agencies at least quarterly on agency websites.

We have implemented the updated ministerial code of conduct, and supported parliament's adoption of a new member's code of conduct; continued to publish information released under the Right to Information Act 2009 within 48 hours of released applicants; and ongoing publications of public consultation submissions.

Other Government initiatives to improve government transparency and accountability have been implemented in the public submissions publication policy, requiring agencies to publish all submissions received in response to major policy and legislation reviews.

Delegating ministerial responsibilities under the RTI act to departmental offices, and improving the integrity of parliamentary decision-making by expanding the disclosure of spouse interests and financial information, through amendments to the Parliamentary (Disclosure of Interests) Act 1996 and requiring disclosures to be published on the parliament's website.

Our Government has been extremely open and transparent during the COVID-19 pandemic, as evidenced by the daily and lengthy press conferences ensuring that the public had access to information. The Government was literally available 24/7 to the public, and indeed members of this House as well. I can assure the House that this transparency will continue.

In a previous Budget we also provided the Office of the Ombudsman with additional funding of \$245 000 per annum. I understand from my discussions with the Office of the Ombudsman that this has enabled them to undertake reviews of RTI decisions made by public authorities referred to the office in a more timely manner.

It disappointed me to hear Ms Haddad's contribution and her reflection on our RTI officers. Those RTI matters are dealt with at arm's length from the ministers. I do not know about those RTIs in terms of content until you get them as well. To suggest that I somehow get my redaction pen out and I have a role to play in that is absolutely ludicrous.

In relation to that Ombudsman funding - and it is important, because Ms Haddad raised the issue of RTI - do not take my word for it. I am going to quote the Ombudsman himself who appeared before the Parliamentary Standing Committee of Public Accounts on 23 July 2019. Mr Richard Connock stated, and I quote -

I will start off with the good news and that is the RTI additional funding which we have been trying to get for years now. It has always been a problem having only one officer doing all of this work. The additional funding has allowed us to now recruit a principal officer and another Band 4 to augment the existing Band 6 so we actually have a team now in RTI or we will once we have recruited. We are well on the way to recruiting the principal officer and the successful applicant will then be responsible for recruiting the Band 4. We hope that will all be done very soon.

I am very pleased that this funding is being provided and, as you could see, the Ombudsman is putting his additional resources to good use.

I now want to talk about our priorities on our legislative program. A significant proportion of the Government's overall legislation program is delivered through my portfolios as Attorney-General and Minister for Justice. Members can not doubt that, with the amount of legislation that I take through this place. In the period 1 July 2019 to 30 June 2020, 16 bills were tabled, and 10 of these bills had been passed by both Houses of parliament. In addition, four bills that were tabled during the previous financial year were also passed by both Houses of parliament. Included in the bills tabled in 2020 were two bills specifically drafted in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, with another on the way in relation to my recently announced residential repayment plan for rent arrears.

I want to reflect on the enormity of the work that went into those COVID-19 emergency bills. It is not an overstatement to say there was a lot of weekend and overnight work by a number of people in relation to those bills. Reflective of the amount of work that was going on as well, we reduced the number of days we sat, and the hours we sat in this place. I thank - and I am sure I can do this on behalf of the Government, because the Premier has done this on a number of occasions - we thank the House for their indulgence and agreement, but it was necessary.

As the Premier said today, it is quite sad that we have to remind Labor, in particular, that COVID-19 still exists. Everything may seem normal on the surface, but we have a number of people within Government still dedicated to COVID-19, and they have also returned to their substantive positions. That means an incredible workload for a number of people, and my department is no different. In fact, there is a substantial workload on my department.

During 2019, I brought bills before the House that implemented a number of recommendations, also made by the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse. We have provided for significant reforms to the statutory framework of the Magistrates Court, as well as a bill that made serious cases of bullying and cyberbullying a crime. This significant output is continuing throughout 2020.

The Government has already completed a number of reforms with the safety and wellbeing of victims and survivors front and centre, including legislation to address one-punch incidents, the creation of the new offence of persistent family violence, amending section 194K of the Evidence Act 2001 to provide victims of sexual assault the right to speak out publicly should they wish to do so, and the numerous criminal and civil reforms as a result of our commitment to the findings and recommendations of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I am taking the time to run through this, because it seems the Opposition has a short memory as to how much has been done by the Department of Justice pre-COVID. The bills that I have since introduced and the bills that -

Ms White - We are not talking about a bill. We are talking about a report that is finished.

Ms ARCHER - No. I am referring to something that Ms O'Connor read out, a list of bills we have been dealing with most recently. I will address that issue. Ms O'Connor has an equal voice in this place.

The current bills before the parliament in my Attorney-General and Justice portfolio space only are Dangerous Criminals and High Risk Offenders Bill, Corrections and Electronic Monitoring Bill, the Evidence Children and Special Witnesses (Amendment) Bill, the Tasmanian Civil and Administrative Tribunal Bill, the Justice Miscellaneous and Court Backlog and Related Matters Bill.

I mention those because they were substantially advanced pre-COVID-19 and they were able to be returned to in the immediacy of still dealing with the pandemic, as we are doing, and also dealing with the recovery and rebuilding phase of the pandemic at the same time. We have returned to those matters that will address court backlogs that have worsened because of COVID-19, that will address the issues in our Corrections system which have worsened because of COVID-19. We have prioritised reform that deals specifically with the issues that have also come out of COVID-19. We are still dealing with COVID-19.

In conclusion, my focus since this deadly pandemic arrived in Tasmania, has been on keeping Tasmanians safe during this very difficult time. My energy, my colleagues' energy across government and indeed the Premier, more so than anyone, has been spent developing legislation to respond to this disease emergency and manage the risks associated with the spread of this disease and the financial hardship affecting the community as a result.

A number of things have been done. The COVID-19 Miscellaneous Provisions (No 2) Bill and the COVID-19 Commercial Leases legislation was developed during the peak of the emergency to respond quickly to the issues faced by Tasmania as a result of the COVID-19 emergency. So much work went into those bills by so few people. We relied on only a small few and I cannot thank them enough. They know who they are. They are people I would not normally single out in very high roles, but they know who they are and they know it was deeply appreciated. The work that went on literally 24/7 by some of them has been incredible.

My department and I have spent significant time preparing COVID-19 notices for our institutions, our courts, our tribunals and critical businesses to ensure they could continue to function effectively and efficiently during stage 3 restrictions. This included guaranteeing we could hold the 2020 Legislative Council elections safely and as soon as practical, to ensure the integrity of democracy was kept intact. That was a huge issue that we had to deal with.

The future wellbeing of Tasmanians continues to be the focus of my resolve as we move to the recovery phase of this devastating pandemic. This focus includes the further reforms I have introduced today to assist the efficiency of Tasmania's court system, to deal with those backlogs, to deal with the issues being raised by the courts themselves, and the challenges they have faced throughout this period. We have been able to address some of those issues on top of the matters that were prepared and ready to go pre-COVID-19.

Those things have been prioritised because they directly respond to those challenges we face, that we need to recover from as a result of COVID-19 and as we rebuild.

I have said consistently, the health and wellbeing of Tasmanians has been our government's top priority since COVID-19 and that is where our focus has rightly been and continues to be to keep Tasmanians safe.

The Premier has made a commitment today, in question time, that once he has formed a view he will release the report. I support the Premier's commitment. However, our priority

remains on stepping Tasmania out of this difficult and challenging time. I will continue to put my energy into driving our economic recovery through this pandemic by delivering on key reforms in each of my portfolios.

[4.55 p.m.]

Ms WHITE (Lyons - Leader of the Opposition) - Mr Deputy Speaker, I had to endure the Attorney-General reading through a list of jobs she is paid to do. I do not know to whom she is trying to prove a point - maybe some of her colleagues who she believes are not working as hard as she is. However, the fundamental principle of this motion is calling on the Attorney-General to table a report, a report that is already finished, a report that was finished and handed to the Attorney-General in December 2019.

This is critical work. The Government invited Tasmanians to provide submissions on the review into Tasmania's electoral reforms and they provided submissions in good faith, understanding that the Government would act, because that is what they were told in 2018. Then premier, Mr Hodgman, promised reform of Tasmania's electoral donation laws. I do not know what is happening at the moment but it seems that the government is walking away from Mr Hodgman's promise, under the leadership of the current Premier, Mr Gutwein.

We know that Mr Hodgman has gone, and we know that there has been a change in leadership. We know that there was tension around that at the time and, of course, the Attorney-General thought she would make a better deputy premier than the current deputy premier, and they have not reconciled their differences, because she did not vote for this premier.

We need the Government to get on with the job of reforming Tasmania's electoral donation laws, which is what they promised the Tasmanian people in 2018. This is a very simple motion. The minister went on about the fact that this is not simple. This is very simple, Attorney-General. This is about tabling a report - a report that has already been finalised and handed to the Government.

There is no doubt that this has a stench about it. This Government is incredibly secretive. What are you hiding? Yesterday the Premier said that he had not turned his mind to it. Then today, when he was asked whether he had been able to turn his mind to attend political fundraisers, he could not answer the question.

It is a fact that this Premier has been busy responding to COVID-19, but it is also a fact that he has not been so busy that he has not been able to go to political fundraisers for the Liberal Party. He can spend time going to political fundraisers for the Liberal Party, but apparently cannot turn his mind to donation reform that was promised by his predecessor, an initiative that was progressed by this Government, calling on the community for submissions to a report that sits on the minister's desk. That is a report that is finished. This motion is straightforward. The motion calls on the Attorney-General to release the report by tabling it in the parliament.

The amendment calling on the report to be tabled by 22 September, has our support. We would love to see the Government table it today, but given the statement by the Attorney-General just then, it does not seem likely. This parliament, acting on behalf of the members of our community who in good faith made submissions through a process initiated by the Government, deserves to see that report, and the Government should table it by 22 September. It is simple; it is as simple as tabling that report. Once that is tabled we can use that to inform debate about what reform needs to look like in Tasmania.

It seems the Attorney-General does not like our bill, and that is fine. Bring in your own bill; let us have the debate informed with the evidence provided in the report that sits on your desk. We are willing to have the debate. If the Attorney-General does not like the draft bill that Labor has put out for consultation, bring on your own bill. Let us have the debate; make sure it is informed through the report that has been provided to you that is sitting on your desk which has been fed into through submissions from the community.

Let us get on with it because there is no excuse that this Government can use to explain why they cannot table a report that has already been finished. Trying to blame COVID-19 for something they received in December does not stack up. There is a stench here of secrecy which we have come to expect from this Government, particularly when it comes to donations they receive and the reasons they do not want to disclose those donations.

We have seen it again recently with the threatening letter sent from the Minister for Planning, claiming that he would kill his own bill if amendments were moved so that donations from developers have to be disclosed. We are seeing it repeated time and again.

Just table the report so we can have an informed debate about what electoral reform needs to look like in Tasmania so we can bring a bill to this place that improves the transparency of donation disclosures in Tasmania. The Tasmanian community has a right to know who is donating to political parties and deserves to know that candidates running for election and elected to parliament are competing on a level playing field. People should be elected to this place because of their ideas and their passion to represent their community, not because of the size of their bank balance.

Time expired.

Question - That the amendment be agreed to - put -

The House divided -

AYES 9

Dr Broad
Ms Butler (Teller)
Ms Haddad
Ms Houston
Mr O'Byrne
Ms O'Connor
Ms Standen
Ms White
Dr Woodruff

NOES 11

Ms Archer
Mr Barnett
Ms Courtney
Mr Ellis
Mr Ferguson
Mr Gutwein
Mr Jaensch
Ms Ogilvie
Mr Rockliff
Mr Shelton
Mr Street (Teller)

PAIRS

Ms Dow
Ms O'Byrne

Ms Hickey
Mr Tucker

Amendment negatived.

Question - that the motion be agreed to - put -

The House divided -

AYES 9

Dr Broad
Ms Butler
Ms Haddad
Ms Houston (Teller)
Mr O'Byrne
Ms O'Connor
Ms Standen
Ms White
Dr Woodruff

NOES 11

Ms Archer
Mr Barnett
Ms Courtney
Mr Ellis
Mr Ferguson
Mr Gutwein
Mr Jaensch
Ms Ogilvie
Mr Rockliff
Mr Shelton
Mr Street (Teller)

PAIRS

Ms Dow
Ms O'Byrne

Ms Hickey
Mr Tucker

Motion negatived.

MOTION

COVID-19 - Economic Recovery

[5.10 p.m.]

Mr STREET (Franklin) - Madam Deputy Speaker, I move -

That the House -

- (1) Acknowledges that the COVID-19 pandemic emergency has had a significant effect on employment levels in Tasmania, but there is a cautious optimism in Tasmania right now and confidence is building.
- (2) Notes that increased confidence is seeing jobs growth return, evidenced by the recent positive Australian Bureau of Statistics labour force and payroll jobs data showing Tasmania had the highest monthly and fortnightly, respectively, employment growth in Australia.
- (3) Further notes that in Tasmania, home loan numbers are up, more houses are being built, and retail trade is back at record levels.

- (4) Further notes that Tasmania entered the pandemic from a position of economic strength, with a strong budget and balance sheet, and that this is helping our recovery.
- (5) Further acknowledges that the positive jobs and economic data reported in recent weeks is good news for Tasmania as we cautiously step out of the COVID-19 pandemic emergency.

The global coronavirus has taken a heavy toll on the global economy, the national economy and our own state economy and jobs. Sadly, some Tasmanians have lost their lives and at no stage would I ever seek to downplay how tragic that has been for the families and friends and extended communities who have lost loved ones during this pandemic.

The Government has taken decisive action to protect lives and livelihoods and now through our responsible and sensible actions, we are seeing a steady and measured recovery. There is a cautious optimism in Tasmania right now. Confidence is building and it is important that we talk about it because if you listen to those opposite you would be led to believe that the doom and gloom they talk of is the new reality for Tasmania, when nothing could be further from the truth.

The positive jobs and economic data reported in recent weeks is good news for Tasmania as we cautiously step out of the COVID-19 pandemic emergency and work our way back towards a somewhat more stable environment. I will not use the word 'normal' because I am not sure that what we considered normal before this pandemic took hold is either achievable or necessarily desirable in every instance.

In the face of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Government put in place the largest support package in the country, more than 3 per cent of our economy and more than double any other state or territory proportionate to economy size, and this speaks to what the Premier has been talking about recently and what the Labor Opposition are constantly trying to deny against the presentable facts. That is that Tasmania went into this pandemic with a far healthier economy and balance sheet than most other jurisdictions, in no small part due to the Premier's economic leadership over the last six years.

This support package has provided strong foundations for our social and economic recovery in Tasmania and, importantly, support for Tasmanian jobs. Our social and economic support packages included a number of areas and while I will not list them all, it is important that we put on the record that as a government we have rolled out over 18 000 business support grants worth more than \$80 million.

Across Tasmania, around 22 000 small businesses have received electricity bill relief and recently the Government announced that even those in embedded networks will now receive the support they need at this difficult time. Payroll tax waivers for 2019-20 have been provided for small businesses with wages under \$5 million and also for the seafood, tourism and hospitality industries that have been hit so hard.

We have made a decision as a government to waive land tax for impacted businesses this year and we have also waived or frozen government fees and charges. Motor vehicle registration fee relief for 298 businesses and registration extensions for another 135 businesses have occurred. Rent waivers on government leases for six months to around 1500 leases have

been granted and as I have travelled around the great electorate of Franklin - perhaps the only thing that Mr O'Byrne and I will agree on in this debate - I have spoken to many business owners and community organisations who have benefited from this decision to waive their rent.

At one stage there was a concern that the Arts sector had not been supported, but the Attorney-General and Minister for the Arts established the Tasmanian Contemporary Music Fund which has supported 150 music and music production professionals with more than a \$250 000 worth of support over this period.

Twenty-one local government authorities have received \$144.3 million in zero interest loans to support their local communities. I mention that the current construction of the playground at Kingston Park in my electorate of Franklin has only been made possible by a \$5 million interest-free loan to Kingborough Council. I am very much looking forward to visiting the completed playground in the new year, nearly as much as I am looking forward to the debate between the Minister for Infrastructure and Transport and the Kingborough Mayor over whether the new playground surpasses Riverbend in Launceston as the preeminent playground in Tasmania, a conversation I have already witnessed twice.

We have provided emergency relief to 4100 temporary visa holders who may lack family and other support, and we assisted 26 people to return home at a cost of over \$1.8 million. Again there was a concern at one stage that this stakeholder group would be forgotten, but as a government we stepped up and provided the necessary support. We have supported 500 GPs and pharmacies with grant funding of \$4 million and the government support for our response and recovery continues.

On Monday of this week, the Premier and Minister for State Growth announced an extra \$60 million for loans to boost Tasmanian businesses' recovery through the Tasmanian Government's new Business Growth Loans Scheme. I visited a business last week that amidst all the uncertainty that the pandemic has caused is still looking to expand, both in product offering but also new premises that will extend their business appeal to the tourist market. We need to encourage these businesses to look forward with hope. That is exactly what the \$60 million will do.

Two weeks ago, the Premier announced the \$7.5 million Make Yourself at Home tourism vouchers. Since they were released and taken up, we have heard from a number of tourism operators that their bookings have gone gangbusters, so that plan is working as well.

We led the nation in our response and on some indicators we are leading the nation in our recovery already. Our decision to accept and implement all 64 PESRAC recommendations is helping with business confidence. Our construction blitz of \$3.1 billion will support 15 000 jobs and is stimulating demand, demand that continues to grow. This construction blitz will deliver 2300 more homes and HomeBuilder is already leading to more construction activity. Reports in *The Examiner* on Monday showed that construction companies are reporting spikes in demand.

We are investing millions into infrastructure right around the state, supporting jobs and providing long-term benefits, not just in terms of employment now but also increased productivity and efficiency into the future. The \$70 million public buildings maintenance program is rolling out and delivering shovel-ready, screwdriver-ready and paintbrush-ready maintenance around the state, providing much-needed work for contractors and tradies.

As a government we talk about confidence all the time. The reason we continue to do so is that it is critical in driving the economy, both as we recover but also as we continue to grow in the future. The recent Sensis Business Index found that our businesses are the most confident about our economy across Australia. The August NAB business survey released last week found that Tasmania once again had the best business conditions in the country, our businesses were amongst the most confident in the country and Tasmanian businesses had reported the highest capacity utilisation of all states. These are all really positive results for Tasmania going forward.

Renewed confidence is flowing through our economy and into employment because as we know, businesses will not invest the time, effort and capital into employing new staff if they do not have confidence in where their business is headed. ABS data shows that 13 400 Tasmanians have returned to work since the height of the pandemic's impacts in May. In the fortnight to 22 August, jobs have increased by 1.3 per cent, the highest growth rate in the country.

Respected independent economist Mr Saul Eslake last week confirmed that two-thirds of jobs lost have either returned or new jobs have been found for those who lost their jobs during the worst of the pandemic. As I keep saying, businesses are hiring again. Internet job vacancies rose 11.2 per cent in July, higher than national growth, showing businesses are hiring.

In July there were 1008 new home loans in Tasmania and new owner-occupier home loans grew 16.9 per cent in the month, the second highest growth of any state. Tasmania remains a great place to buy your first home, with a 14.8 per cent increase in first home buyers, and why wouldn't they? In July, dwelling approvals were 50 per cent higher than June and 28 per cent higher than last year, the highest monthly and annual growth in the country.

The average number of DAs approved per month is now 270 per month, which is 100 per month more than just six years ago. That is hardly surprising, as six years ago Tasmania's population was going backwards so the need for new houses was negligible at best. In the 12 months to July 2020 there were 3243 building approvals in Tasmania and the total value of these building approvals in the 12 months to July was \$1.59 billion.

In its latest magazine *Building News*, the HIA president and the executive director led the magazine with the headline "Tasmania Leads the Way" -

[The building industry has highlighted the] significant spike in enquiry and signing of contracts [as a result of our new home stimulus package].

With the announcement by the state and federal government of their respective stimulus measures, it now appears that Tasmania will remain relatively unscathed ...

With Tasmania the first state to pass legislation or sign an agreement with the federal government giving effect to the stimulus, it is clear that it is leading the way.

Madam Speaker, we know that construction flows through to our wider economy. Tradies support suppliers, stores and shops around the state and this further supports job growth in other sectors. In July retail trade hit \$656 million, 18.7 per cent higher than July last year. This was the highest annual growth in the country. In further good news Deloitte forecast

strong retail growth to continue for the rest of the year. These are good results, positive news, and it demonstrates there is a quiet optimism in our economy right now. Cautiously optimistic, as the Premier says - that is, unless you are those opposite - the prophets of doom of the Tasmanian Labor Party.

Despite the good news, at a time when we need optimism and a constructive opposition the Labor Party continues to talk down our economy, our recovery, and talk down Tasmanian jobs. Mr O'Byrne opposes our search for more local jobs as we replace the *Spirits of Tasmania*. Instead, he advocates for jobs in Finland. I would give anything to be a fly on the wall when he tries to explain to his union comrades why he is advocating for Tasmania's single largest infrastructure investment in history to be wholly spent overseas rather than supporting the jobs of their members.

Mr O'Byrne - That is actually completely untrue.

Mr STREET - He whinges from the sidelines without anything constructive to say. His so-called recovery plan, which is more like a sham plan, is not costed, nor does it mention a single job number. Last week he claimed that 300 retail jobs were lost over the month when in fact retail jobs grew by 1.1 per cent over the same period. I am reliably informed that Mr O'Byrne made a \$210 million mistake during the Budget debate session last year but never corrected the record.

This sort of carelessness with the budget is characteristic of Labor's poor financial management record and shows that the shadow treasurer is not up to the task of rebuilding Tasmania's economy. If Labor simply does not care about the maths then Tasmanians should definitely not trust Labor with their money. The question has to be asked again, as so many have at this despatch box: why has Labor not ever released a fully-costed alternative budget? They have been in opposition for six-and-a-half years and have dodged it every single year - first Mr Bacon and now Mr O'Byrne.

This is despite Mr O'Byrne's ebullient pronouncement in the paper nearly a year ago, 'I will do the hard work needed to put before Tasmanians a vision and plan for the state's finances'. The over-confidence is quite extraordinary, given that Tasmania went backwards the last time Mr O'Byrne was minister for economic development. Where is it? Where is your vision and plan for the state's finances? Will it be just your vision and plan or will it include your Leader's input as well? As someone pointed out to me recently, there is no 'I' in team but there is a big one in 'David'.

Even the Tasmanian Greens do an alternative budget - an alternative budget that has been described variously as kooky and strange but, as the Premier pointed out yesterday in this place when speaking on another bill, at least they do it and they do it with a fraction of the resources at Labor's disposal.

Not Labor though. They think they are above telling Tasmanians how they will pay for their thought bubbles. Labor's prophets of doom over there are all good at constantly talking down the Government's plan, which we can say with quiet optimism is working, but they have no long-term plan or vision for Tasmania of their own. The best they can do is continually talk down Tasmania and the green shoots of our recovery.

As a great man once said, whingeing is not a plan, Mr O'Byrne, and complaining is not a policy. But what was it actually like for Tasmanian businesses and jobs when Labor was in

government? Here are some of the Tasmanian newspaper headlines about what businesses really thought of the Labor-Greens Government: 'Government undermining business confidence; Jobless rate hurts business optimism; Business confidence at lowest level; Tasmanian economy is nation's weakest link -

Mr O'Byrne - Stop talking the state down.

Mr STREET - I am not talking the state down. I am talking about what it was like six years ago, Mr O'Byrne, and you know it. 'Business suffers in anaemic economy; Tasmania in recession and business confidence in tatters'.

Ten thousand Tasmanians lost their jobs. Business confidence was in tatters in Tasmania and it is important to remind Tasmanians that this is the truth of what it was like under Labor for businesses in Tasmania. Back in the dying days of the Labor-Greens government the Sensis Business Index stated that -

Business support for the state government in Tasmania has collapsed and is the worst in the country.

According to Sensis at that time Tasmania businesses said the State Government did not support small business. What is not in dispute here is that this Liberal Government has supported small business and provided a strong policy environment for businesses to succeed in Tasmania.

The most recent business survey and Sensis business survey have shown under the Liberals Tasmania has the best business conditions in the country. Businesses trust this Government because of our strong record. They want certainty and they want a safe pair of hands. Quite a different story to what is on offer opposite.

I repeat, the fact is Tasmania under a Liberal Government entered the COVID-19 pandemic from a position of strength and that is aiding our recovery. Our economy was the strongest in the nation, our budget was strong, and our balance sheet was strong. The Government rebuilt our budget once before and we will rebuild our economy to be number one in the country.

We should have confidence that Tasmania can do that again. The positive jobs and economic data reported in recent weeks is good news for Tasmania as we cautiously step out of the COVID-19 pandemic emergency. By mid-March of this year 23 200 jobs have been created under this Government with the highest annual job growth rate of any state in Australia. Tasmanian state final demand grew 0.8 per cent in the March quarter and Tasmania was one of only two states to see growth while national GDP declined.

Private new capital investment grew 20.2 per cent in the March quarter in real seasonally adjusted terms - again, the highest growth rate in the country. Nationally, private new capital investment declined 2 per cent for the quarter. Equipment plant and machinery investment grew 28 percent in the March quarter, again the highest growth in the country and demonstrating our businesses were gearing up and confident about the future. Building and structure investment was 10 per cent higher in the quarter and 13 per cent higher over the year. Tasmania had the highest annual growth and the second highest quarterly growth behind Western Australia.

Over the year to February 2020 annual growth in retail trade was the highest in the country. Independent reports confirmed our pre-pandemic strength. The March Sensis business survey again found that Tasmania was the most confident state for businesses. The April CommSec State of the State Report ranked Tasmania equal first with Victoria, and we are now number one independently by ourselves. The May ANZ Stateometer found that Tasmania had above trend growth and is accelerating.

These statistics are good news and are important because they have placed us in good stead to weather the storm before us. This strength in our economy before the pandemic means that we are well placed for our recovery. Before the pandemic, CommSec ranked us equal first as I have said, and in July they ranked us the best overall. There is a quiet optimism in Tasmania right now and you can see it as you travel the state. Home loans are up, building approvals are up, retail is up, confidence is up and jobs are returning.

We know that more needs to be done and the road ahead will not be easy. It is a fine line balancing our health response with our economic response. The Government has achieved the right balance so far and we are seeing the results flow through into our economy. Tasmanians can be assured we will work harder every day to continue to grow business confidence and to grow our economy to be the best in the nation once again. I commend the motion to the House.

[5.28 p.m.]

Mr O'BYRNE (Franklin) Madam Speaker, let us be clear about this. We do agree on one thing - that the economic impacts of this pandemic have been significant. There is no corner of Tasmania that has not been impacted by the COVID-19-related health restrictions and the associated economic ramifications. We are not questioning the bulk of the Government decisions around those health decisions because they have delivered a fantastic health outcome but we all acknowledge that the economy has been significantly impacted, that our communities are suffering, and communities are looking for hope.

I will get into your comparison with Labor in a minute because if you are saying that the economic conditions we faced in government between 2008 and 2013-14 were basically due to the management of Labor, discounting the impacts of the GFC and post the stimulus, then the argument follows through that the impacts of the pandemic are irrelevant to your budget and economic management. The argument runs similar. There was no doubt an economic impact of the GFC and there is no doubt that the pandemic has had a massive impact.

I have had many conversations with businesses small, medium and large about what they have faced over the last five or six months. I have been talking to small businesses that within 24 hours' notice were told basically to shut down and tell their employees to go home. The small business or business they have worked on for so long has had the future and the rug basically pulled out from under them. It is hard not to get emotional when you talk to people who have poured their heart and soul into a business and through no fault of their own are suffering massive economic losses. The mental and social impacts are reverberating around our community. It has been such a difficult time.

I stood in this place in late March, early April and stood shoulder to shoulder with the Treasurer as shadow treasurer authorising significant state government taxpayers' money to respond to the needs of the Tasmanian community, so regarding the list you read out, Mr Street, on all the initiatives you had 110 per cent support from the Labor Party. Having been economic development minister at a time when the global financial crisis was still impacting Tasmania

and the massive stimulus packages of both the state and federal governments were coming off the boil, I knew the challenge that would be facing businesses, what I wanted from the opposition at the time and did not receive, but what we needed to do together as a parliament to respond to that need. The initiatives that you read out and highlighted had absolute support from the Labor Party because we knew that was what was needed to get people through this first phase.

We agree there is cautious optimism. We do not disagree that people are starting to look more hopeful towards the future. However, experience and history has demonstrated time and time again that this is not a month-by-month proposition. We will have the economic impacts of COVID-19 on the economy for years to come. There will be waves and phases that the Government needs to adapt to and to respond to the changing needs of business and the community in Tasmania across not only service delivery, as Mr Street outlined, but also in how we keep a functioning private sector in Tasmania, how we support a diversified Tasmanian economy, and how we use this time to strengthen our businesses so that when things get better we can build stronger and be better than before.

This is not only a time where we put our arms around Tasmanian business. It is a time where we sit together and work with them to challenge them about how we can be better, how we can be stronger and what the opportunities are that have opened up.

We said in this place that we do not think there is enough money allocated to some of the support programs. I will use one example of a small business in a multi-tenanted building who did not get the benefit of an energy concession. That small business that raised it with me had said six weeks prior they had written to the Energy minister asking for some support and consideration because other like small businesses had received that concession and that they had concessions from their tenant for rent but they could ask no more. We asked about that and at the time there was a no from the Energy minister, there was a maybe from the Premier, and after consideration there was an announcement about that.

That arguably is democracy at work. There was a gap in the support program, the small business raised it, we raised it on their behalf, we made it public and through the workings of democracy there was a delivery on that outcome. We welcome the Government's initiative on that.

However, let us be clear about the challenge before us. Let us face it, all sides of politics cherry-pick some of the statistics to suit themselves at times, but we need to have a holistic approach. We welcome some of the green shoots. We welcome the return to business in some industries across Tasmania, but it would be Pollyanna-ish to think that we can now put the cue in the rack, that all of a sudden all we need to do is build confidence and that is the magic ingredient.

Unfortunately when we just talk about confidence in and of itself, some people see that as the mantra. I will foreshadow that we will talk about this in an amendment I am proposing but you need the Government to intervene. At this time in the economic cycle, now is the time for Government to step up, step in and help business traverse these rough waters. That means being honest about the numbers and the stats. Let us not be Pollyanna. Yes, be confident about the future, but let us not be blindly hopeful about it. Let us not just say, 'Oh well, we'll talk it up. We've done a couple of narrow-cast stimulus measures, that's the tick and flick and we're done. We've done the measures for the COVID-19 time, we have a bit of stimulus out there,

we'll just step back and get out of the way', which arguably, if you want to be ideological about it, has been the Liberal way for many years - just get out of the way, the laissez-faire approach to economic development and building a diversified economy.

Mr Street - We had the largest COVID-19 stimulus of any state in Australia.

Mr O'BYRNE - That is not true. I would argue that the Western Australian Government has spent more. I would argue that the ACT Government, per person, has spent more. We are not arguing with the number; you have done the right thing. Before you were in this place, we were on our feet commending the Government for the initiatives and voting for supply bills that delivered the money to allow that to occur without argument, without question, with absolute support.

Let us be honest about the numbers in terms of where we are. In terms of payroll jobs, we had lost 4 per cent since mid-March, or approximately 10 500 jobs. That is horrific and the worst result in the country except for Victoria. The accommodation and food industries are down 3180 jobs, and forestry and fishing are down just under 3000 jobs. Construction, despite the stimulus, is down over 1000 jobs, almost twice as many in July. The underemployment rate is 12.7 per cent. The youth unemployment rate is 13.6 per cent. School leavers in work, training or further study is only 48 per cent, so 63 000 Tasmanians are on JobKeeper.

Billions of dollars of federal government funds to JobKeeper and JobSeeker are coming into the state. Arguably that is the key determinant of the health of our economy at this moment in time. We ask the state Government to do more to advocate for an extension of JobKeeper, particularly given we have travel restrictions. We are a visitor-based economy, it is a big part of our economy and we need the Government to continue the support.

I propose to move an amendment. We are not going to argue with paragraphs (1), (2), (3) and (5). We think it is a bit of cherry-picking so we are not going to argue with that. We do not want to be seen as relentless and negative apparently, as others would have us, but the paragraph we want to amend is that 'Tasmania entered the pandemic from the position of economic strength with a strong budget and balance sheet and that is helping our recovery'. That could not be further from the truth. We know in the December quarter, state final demand dropped by 1 per cent. Two consecutive negative quarters is a technical recession and whilst there was a slight recovery in the March quarter, when you talk to industry and business, the economy was softening.

When you said the economy was growing, it is a figure from the gross state product for the 2019-20 year, so that was a figure plucked from the middle of last year. What we say is that following that time the economy started to soften, and that was of concern to a whole range of key industry groups we were talking to.

You constantly refer to saying the Tasmanian economy was rated by CommSec as the best in the nation. What is the CommSec report? The CommSec report is not a point-to-point comparison of an economic indicator at any given point in time. It is a comparison of the percentage change of that economic indicator over the previous 10 years. To be honest, for the first four or five of those 10 years we were still in the grip of the global financial crisis and its impact. If it was not good, it would be a disgrace actually given the fact that I remember sitting with all our major industrials in 2011, when the Australian dollar hit \$1.08, and the metals prices in the UK went through the floor. We are an export-oriented economy, and to have those

kinds of terms of trade meant that our business and our economy was at a massive disadvantage. That had an impact on the factors that are measured by CommSec.

Do not pretend that it is a state-by-state comparison. It is a comparison of the percentage change of economic indicators within that state for the last decade. If you had not received those results, given the first four or five years were very tough for the Tasmanian economy, I would be surprised. You would be disappointed.

You refer to state final demand in the June quarter as the 'worst in the country behind New South Wales and Victoria': the two states that are most impacted by COVID-19 and economic restrictions. There is no doubt there are some shards of light, but it is pretty grim out there, and we need to be honest with the Tasmanian community, that as a government we need to be there for the long haul, and we will continue to support you and respond to the needs of the economy.

When you say that the Budget and the bottom line were in good nick heading in, we had this debate yesterday in this place. When you have the March quarterly update, which gives you \$100 million deficit and on a trajectory of billions of dollars of net debt - and if you cast back even to the February report, which was the revised Estimate report, we were on a trajectory of significant net debt. There was a \$10 million surplus in the net operating balance, but we were on a trajectory of significant net debt.

I will read the amendment for the benefit for the House -

I move the following amendment -

That we delete paragraph (4).

You compare the books now to when we were heading into the global financial crisis - over \$1 billion in the bank in reserves and cash to respond and a surplus budget. You compare the two. We are in worse shape now than we were heading into the GFC. We need to be honest about it.

In the debate yesterday, there was much discussion around the work of government and how you diversify the Tasmanian economy. There is not one economic reform or initiative that this Government - the Hodgman, Gutwein governments - can point to, to say that they have diversified or fundamentally changed the Tasmanian economy.

You have had rivers of gold in terms of GST uplifts and stamp duty increases, and you have dividends from the GBEs. You were ripping dividends out - a 400 per cent increase in dividends - yet in the same period of time, before the GFC, the Tasmanian Labor Party in government actually went to work. Yes, as people have mentioned, there was, with the implementation of the GST, increased revenue for the state government, but what we did with it was to build the irrigation scheme.

Mr Ellis - You shut down the forest industry.

Mr O'BYRNE - What absolute garbage. We built the irrigation schemes, which meant that we could diversify our agriculture industry and build the food bowl of the nation. We bought the two new TT-Line vessels, and that meant someone could pick their product in the morning, get it in a truck, get it on the boat at 6 o'clock every evening, every year, and get it

into the major Melbourne hub market by 6 a.m. or 7 a.m. the next day. That meant we had a competitive advantage over all the other growers, not only across the country, but across the world. Labor did that: the irrigation, the food bowl; diversifying, value-adding in our agricultural crops and making sure we could get it off the island every day and into the markets.

Basslink, gas to Tasmania and tourism. Jim Bacon, the father of tourism in Tasmania - he really turned us on our heels in promoting Tasmania to the rest of the world. We deregulated shop trading hours, we worked with the airlines to make sure they could lift their capacity into Tasmania.

Time and time again, the Labor Party did not sit back and do a narrow car stimulus, and then pick a school hall here, or pick a golf club there, to do a bit of marginal seat campaigning. We fundamentally built the modern Tasmanian economy, which is a diversified economy. Imagine how bad it would have been during the global financial crisis had Labor not done that. Even during the global financial crisis, we established the economic development strategy which many communities around Tasmania are still working from.

When the pandemic hit, the fact that the Premier had to establish an economic recovery council in the absence of a strategy - because you are very good at doing lists and announcing all these things which are off into the never never: underground bus malls, the Hobart ferries, fifth lane on the Outlet, bridge over the Tamar. You are good at listing a whole lot of projects. You are just not very good at delivering them.

It is important that there is confidence in the Tasmanian community, but it is more important that the Government is honest and open about the situation we find ourselves in and actually comes up with a plausible plan - not just glossy brochures, not just glossy magazines that lead nothing to build us out of this economic recession that we will be facing for quite some time.

I take no joy in saying that, because there will be kitchen tables around the state where toughest of decisions will be made. People are losing jobs, they are losing businesses, their future is falling down and crumbling in front of them.

We have an obligation to lead. We have an obligation to build a diversified economy that has a place for all Tasmanians. If you think the social indicators that Tasmania lead the country on, in all the wrong places - if you think they are going to be improved with a bit of stimulus around building, no they will not. It will help some families, but we need to do more, and motions like these self-congratulatory motions at this time in the cycle do this place nothing.

[5.47 p.m.]

Ms OGILVIE (Clark) - Madam Speaker, that was an energetic contribution. I rise to add some thoughts in relation to this motion, specifically to do with commercial activity, and shipbuilding in particular. I am very excited about the shipbuilders and the manufacturing community that we have in my fabulous electorate of Clark, in and around Derwent Park.

I would like to talk about opportunities in this area, given that there does seem to be some energy from the federal government to assist with a project and a program of work. From my background having worked on defence projects in a previous life, as both a commercial manager and inhouse counsel, I would like to see a program of industry development. What I mean by that is that we have an opportunity to build a particular vessel. The structure of that,

or how that will be designed, is yet to be known, but we can already start talking about how we are going to embed the know-how, the technology, the jobs, the opportunities, in and around local areas. For me, it is Clark; for others in this place I know their electorates are just as important. We have fantastic organisations such as Incat, Liferaft Systems and Taylor Brothers.

Recently, I have had a look at this sector. In speaking with some of these organisations I have been very impressed by the work that they have continued to do from their Tasmanian base, both in South Australia and Western Australia. We are in competition to some extent with South Australia, and when it comes to shipbuilding we think we do it best, but there are limits to that. We have the opportunity to put some more funds, energy and capacity into this sector in Tasmania. I would like to see both jobs landed here but also those training opportunities.

In the northern suburbs of my electorate we have some large schools. The boys and girls at those schools who are hitting grades 10, 11 and 12 and are thinking about a life in the area of making things in the trades, who want to run small businesses, who want the dog on the ute, who want that kind of life and work, who are good at welding - and I trained in welding at art school so I can do it if I lose this job - are able to get on board with these projects. It is going to require some thinking around what sort of contractual arrangements we put into place.

Putting to one side the decision around what the structure of these ships would look like, when it comes to the decision about how we work together to do that I am very interested to know whether we will be looking at perhaps a prime contract with a multitude of subcontractors or whether we would have some other sort of joint venture-type operation. I am interested to know that.

I know that there are large shipbuilders based in other mainland states who have expressed interest and have other sets of skills, technology and capacity that they could bring to the table, but I would like to see a serious effort at local content and local industry knowledge development built into whatever contract and program of work it is that we have going forward.

As a much younger person, I worked on a project called the Jindalee Over the Horizon Radar, the JORN project, which was one of these joint ventures. It was a major infrastructure project with Defence, international companies, Italians, English and Australians, and the management of the technology transfer, the skilling up and the packets of work that were distributed internationally, from systems integration to spare parts and the manufacture of those to the knowledge base that we are seeking to grow in Australia, was a major project.

What I see with these sorts of projects, if we are able to land a majority of the capacity here in Tasmania, is that there is work not just for those who can make and do, but those who are able to think and teach, those who are able to do the accounting, the legal work, the marketing, the fit-out and the design - all of that becomes a specialist area for us.

I have to give it to the South Australians. They have done a great job over probably 20 or 30 years in growing their defence industry. I have a number of times met with Admiral Gilmore who has been doing a superb job locally, and I am fortunate to have a copy of his report looking at the capacity we have across the state in this area in particular, across maritime sea space, which is a special interest of mine, and shipbuilding generally. It is something that we have always done well as a state, right back to our whaling days. We have always been an

international port and have always welcomed ships here. I do not like whaling, I am not suggesting that by any means, but we were a whaling port; that is just a fact of history. I am very pleased to see that we have moved on beyond that, but it brought people here and our Antarctic exploration and all of that.

I was fortunate to meet one of the grandsons of the Shackletons at one stage in my life and their love of Tasmania and what we do here resonates through generations. We have this amazing maritime history. We need to get Macquarie Point up and pumping. We need to invest in science and technology, research, and maritime research and engineering. Our university is incredible. They are doing it a bit tough at the moment and we need to look after that asset very carefully, but I wonder whether we need to rethink how we are delivering those skills and what settings we have for the university. If we get this right and get our capacity in place, our TAFE training in place and the ability for people to connect into that, utilising the Glenorchy jobs hub which I have been banging on about now for a long time, that can be at the centre of these things and our manufacturing capability to specialise in the parts of shipbuilding that we can do well. It might not be all of it or it might be all of it, depending on the design of the ship we go with.

It is a big thing to do and would be a marvellous project to land in Hobart but I am happy to share. There might be other electorates where great things are happening in maritime as well but I am always shamelessly pro-Clark and our people here and the work we are able to deliver for these types of projects.

I was interested to see that the Marinus project looks like it has some real traction now. That is very exciting but I would like to reiterate my call for consideration of a special-purpose vehicle, a joint shareholding between state and federal governments. I would very much like to see Tasmania in charge of its own destiny in relation to the ownership of that cable, not just the electricity side but the telecommunications aspect as well because coming from that telco background myself I see the benefit of that.

If we are able to grasp, build and own this opportunity it puts us in a much stronger position going forward. Let us face it, we have the skills, the capacity and the engineering nous. We have done it before and we know how to do it with renewable energy. That project has great legs. That looks like it might have more capacity to deliver jobs in the north-west of the state so sharing this around fairly is a very good thing to do.

We have a range of small businesses, consultancies, sole trader organisations and outfits that really thrive and live off the back of these larger initiatives and projects. I can tell you the commercial lawyers are looking for work at the moment and previously when things were grim during the GFC there was a lot of work for liquidators. That was a very depressing and hard time for everyone and we do not want to see that again.

It is about optimism but it is also about practicality and landing the deals, funding the deals, getting the contracts struck and making sure that Tasmania comes out on top and we get what we need as a state from these major projects. I am quite excited about those conversations that no doubt will come tumbling out of the work being done around what Tasmania wants to see happen with the *Spirits* and how that program of work might pan out.

The final point, which is almost as important as getting these projects up and running, landing the money, getting the workforce in place, doing the contracts and meeting the

deadlines is to make sure that we have a really firm grasp and plan for normalising travel. These major projects, these big deals that we can do, will require people to move around and already we know it is very difficult, so I am hoping very much that as we learn to live with COVID-19 and manage our own human quarantine in a way that we have been dealing with in the agricultural side of the world for so long, that we are able to get people moving again.

We need freedom of movement, particularly for commercial operations and for our kids. We need to go out there and get these jobs and travel and have full and happy lives and get that happening again. I was very pleased to hear today the Premier speak of going to the National Cabinet talking about these things and I want to keep the pressure on for that.

I thank Mr Street who talked about the multicultural community. I pushed very hard for that funding and was grateful that happened and there was a second tranche of that.

We also need to talk about getting our people home. I know I have been like a broken record on this, but we need to get our people home. We need to stand up for our fellow Australians who are trapped and stuck overseas. We are smart people. Let us find a way to make this happen.

[6.00 p.m.]

Ms O'CONNOR (Clark - Leader of the Greens) - In broad terms, we have no issue with this motion except it is very self-congratulatory. Paragraph (3) says -

Further notes that in Tasmania, home loan numbers are up, more houses are being built and retail trade is back at record levels.

I remind the House that at the housing inquiry we were told there is a shortfall of 11 500 homes for Tasmanians. As a parliament we have not yet regulated short-stay accommodation. It is manifestly clear that we need to because houses are meant to be for people and not for profit. We know short-stay accommodation was distorting the housing market and we can do better.

Question - That the amendment be agreed to - put -

The House divided -

AYES 10

Dr Broad (Teller)
Ms Butler
Ms Haddad
Mr O'Byrne
Ms O'Byrne
Ms O'Connor
Ms Standen
Ms White
Dr Woodruff

NOES 12

Ms Archer
Mr Barnett
Ms Courtney
Ms Dow
Mr Ellis
Mr Ferguson
Mr Gutwein
Mr Jaensch
Ms Ogilvie
Mrs Petrusma (Teller)
Mr Rockliff

Mr Shelton
Mr Street

PAIR

Ms Dow

Mr Tucker

Amendment negatived.

Motion agreed to.

ADJOURNMENT

Department of Education - Historical Child Abuse

[6.06 p.m.]

Mr ROCKLIFF (Braddon - Minister for Education and Training) - Madam Speaker, I would like to provide some clarification to my previous statement in relation to some serious allegations of historical child abuse that have recently arisen and to provide more information. I said in my statement that it is not a matter about which the Department of Education had any previous knowledge.

It would be more accurate to say it is not a matter about which the Department of Education had any recent knowledge. No-one in the current executive team of the department had any awareness of this allegation until it was recently raised. Action was then taken to remove this person from their place of work and, as I have informed the House, the matter has been referred to police.

I have also been advised late this afternoon by the secretary that the person concerned has now been formally suspended and an investigation has commenced.

**Launceston General Hospital - Letter from Doctors
ICT Industry - Government Engagement**

[6.07 p.m.]

Ms O'BYRNE (Bass) - Madam Speaker, I wanted to comment on two issues that were raised in question time today. The first issue goes to the Launceston General Hospital and the letter that was written by staff and the attack on doctors who have desperately called out their concerns about safety risks at the LGH. I should not have to quote from their letter again but I will -

We are a dedicated group of professionals and have repeatedly demonstrated this by our commitment to our community during the turbulent time of COVID-19. We have risen to the challenge time and time again, when our colleagues in the North West were in trouble, we remained determined. As the Mersey Community Hospital's ED was scaled back, presentations to our hospital (which was already beyond capacity) increased significantly. Anyone that comes through our doors will be cared for. We will continue to treat those who are unwell as best we are able. However, working with this

increased workload in a department that is constantly bed-blocked is unacceptable, dangerous, and unsustainable.

I also want to reference as a result of that some advice that was provided to the Government in *The Examiner* editorial -

Perhaps it is time for the Gutwein Government to focus on meetings, stick with the facts and implement real change to improve the systems and therefore health outcomes at the LGH.

Off the back of that advice and clearly ignoring it, the Premier in parliament today indicated that perhaps the doctors did not write that letter by interjection, which he then backed in by saying:

Did you guys help them write the letter? Were you part of that?

Madam Speaker, his comment was not only untrue but offensive and dismissive of those staff who have taken this extraordinary and unprecedented action. It is a sneaky political game that the Premier is playing to undermine what are very genuine concerns they have raised. It is an appalling way to respond to the LGH clinicians. I asked at the time for the Premier to apologise. He chose not to. I call again on the Premier to apologise. It is time for us to stop playing politics. We have to work with our clinicians. LGH staff and our community deserve no less and they deserve an apology for that attack.

The second issue I wish to raise goes to the ICT industry which employs over 7200 people. It is an important industry and one that can be an opportunity to take our state forward, to recast our future and to provide better services to Tasmanians. The industry wants to see a greater government engagement, particularly, they want to see investment in ICT services, in digital infrastructure, in skills, in government procurement policy and, of course, an appropriate 'buy local' policy.

The Government has hidden behind its Our Digital Future report. The TasICT president, in response to that strategy, said, and I quote -

... this document is good in intent, but lacks any real conviction. The last ICT strategy, which was released in 2011, set measurable goals and dates for completion, but in stark contrast the latest documents state what major actions are to be taken without describing how or when they are to be completed.

Since the response to that document, we also had a submission both to PESRAC and to the Public Accounts Committee. The industry said that for too long in Tasmania underinvestment in ICT infrastructure and digital transformation meant that Tasmania has fallen behind other states and territories, leaving critical infrastructure ageing, unreliable and unproductive. This underinvestment was laid starkly bare during the COVID-19 response, with antiquated paper-based processes slowing the response to emergency, and choking delivery of essential services.

The industry also said that TasICT has been urging the Tasmanian Government to take many of the items that they put in their submission to the document response to Our Digital Future.

At the onset of the global health crisis, TasICT devised a list of seven initiatives that would have an immediate and positive impact on helping businesses survive. They said -

To date, the Government and the Premier's Economic and Social Recovery Advisory Council have ignored the initiative ... The Government's response (or lack of) demonstrates an unwillingness to adopt a programme which helps the public service, private enterprise and the community.

They went on in that submission to say -

The Tasmanian Government's Digital Transformation appears to have stalled.

In evidence to the committee, they went further with some of their concerns. They again reported on the details of the submission they had put in, and the fact that they have had less than a positive response from Government. They said what they see overall is that underinvestment is a real key issue, so we are still tabulating investment in ICT services, with our initial work suggesting that ICT as a proportion of the Tasmanian budget is somewhere around 1.5 per cent, whereas New South Wales is 4 per cent to 4.3 per cent.

They go on to talk about the fact that Tasmania is behind in terms of digital readiness. The intermediate report on state and territory governments in Australia ranks Tasmania last behind the Northern Territory, behind South Australia, and we are getting further behind. They are moving at a higher and faster rate than us. This was a report about the level of state and territory governments' digital readiness across a range of policy and service delivery, and Tasmania ranks last in that report.

The industry was delighted to be able to respond to the digital policy. They have had good meetings with Glenn Lewis, and people speak incredibly highly of him and his engagement. However, they are still continuing to fall further behind, and underinvestment is a major part of that.

The industry talked a little about some of their concerns about Apple. They have said overwhelmingly that they want to be part of the solution. They are a significant part of our economy. They have the capacity to deliver support that would change the way that we behave, change the way we engage, and change the way that we support our community.

Our digital readiness is of grave concern. For the minister today, in his answer to a question around our overall health's digital strategy, to simply attack the Opposition on issues around the COVID-19 app, was offensive in the extreme to an industry that wants to be part of the solution, that are providing opportunities to be part of that solution, and are being ignored by this minister.

It is great that he has produced a strategy document for our future, but if there are no time lines to that, if there is no money attached to that, and if the very agency in government is not

resourced to deliver it, frankly all he is doing is putting out words and failing our industry, once again.

I urge the minister to do more than lip service. Work with our industry and invest in our IT services.

**Westbury Primary School
Midland Highway - Access to Myrtlewood**

[6.14 p.m.]

Ms WHITE (Lyons - Leader of the Opposition) - Madam Speaker, I had the great pleasure in visiting Westbury Primary School last week and seeing firsthand how strong and terrific the relationships and respect are between the students and the teachers.

I was invited to join in a game of netball at lunchtime. It has been a long time since I played netball, but I very proudly lined up with the teachers to take on the students. It might seem like a bit of an unfair advantage to have all of the adults line up against the students, but the reality was that the students had us on the back foot very early. The students at Westbury Primary School are fit and they are very good at netball. The game was very friendly, but also quite competitive. I thank all the students and teachers for welcoming me to join in. A special thank you to principal, Christine Brown. The game was fair and in the end it was decided we would call it a draw.

Westbury Primary is a delightful school with strong parent engagement in the learning of children, and a very close connection with the community-based organisations that are all working together there to give our children the best start. I wish them all the very best for the future.

I would also like to talk about an issue that is affecting my constituents who live on the Midland Highway at a property called Myrtlewood. It is based at Cleveland, and the proposed upgrades to the Midland Highway are going to have an impact on their access to their property, which is a farm property, but is also the home of the Midlands Pony Club for the last 12 years, a venue for the Midland Hunt Club and Northern Hunt Club. It is also used for training for the Tasmanian Horse Drawn Vehicle Foundation.

This means there is a lot of vehicle traffic into and out of the property, including horse floats, trucks and stock trucks as well, requiring access to that property from the Midland Highway.

In conversation with the family, the concern that has been raised with me is the intention of the department to install a wide barrier down the middle of the highway to separate the traffic from travelling in either direction. What this will do, though, is impede access to their driveway easily, and mean that, depending on the direction that traffic is travelling, they will have to complete a U-turn back on the highway to get into and out of that property.

Given the strong engagement from the community on that property, a concern that was raised with me is the potential for emergency services to be called to that property, with horse riding being quite a dangerous sport sometimes. They were quite worried that the barrier across the highway would mean it would take longer for those emergency services to be able to enter

the property, not to mention the impact this is going to have on the stock brought to and from that farm.

I took the opportunity to write to the Minister for Infrastructure and Transport, Michael Ferguson, both bringing this issue to his attention and asking for him to consider other options that would safeguard the access to the property at Myrtlewood, and address the safety concerns his department have with traffic on that highway, and also to arrange for a briefing with the department before any further action is taken. I wrote that letter on 31 July. That was also after the family at Myrtlewood, the Scott family, had tried, without success, to engage with the minister directly. They had written to him and unfortunately had not received a response.

I was provided with a response by the minister on 15 September to my letter written on 31 July. In the letter, the minister advised me that the Department of State Growth has advised the Scott family that the project team will be engaging with them prior to start of the design, and throughout the design process. He has advised that the discussions are ongoing. He says, 'The department is continuing to work with the Scotts to address the specific needs of the property.'

Nowhere in this letter did the minister respond to my request to have a briefing from the department - which, I will have to say, was frequently made available to members on this side of the House and me whenever we asked the former minister, Jeremy Rockliff, when he had that portfolio. When we asked him for a briefing from the department, particularly for major infrastructure projects, it was always provided. I have never had any luck, sadly, from the minister now, Michael Ferguson, in getting access to any briefings from department staff, and this is not the first time that I have tried.

It does make it very difficult to advocate on behalf of our constituents when we are denied access to the department officials who are making those decisions. I will be visiting the Scott family this weekend to see for myself exactly what their concerns are, because they have not been resolved. I remain concerned the Government is going to push ahead with a design that is not going to address the safety concerns of this farming family, and all the different users who reside or who use that property for different purposes.

I express my frustration and disappointment in the Minister for Infrastructure and Transport, Michael Ferguson, that, again, he has denied a polite request for a briefing from the department about an infrastructure project in my electorate that was raised with him, to seek further clarification about how safety improvements could be made.

I ask again, minister, could a briefing be provided by your department officials to me on behalf of the Scotts to gain some further information, because sadly, this matter has not been resolved. Unfortunately, it does not seem like it is going to be resolved to the satisfaction of the Scotts.

Stewart McSweyn - Tribute
Richie Porte - Tribute

[6.20 p.m.]

Dr BROAD (Braddon) - Madam Speaker, I rise on adjournment to once again talk about King Island's own Stewart McSweyn. Last time I was in this place talking about Stewart I was congratulating him on being selected for both the 5000 and 10 000 metres at next year's

Olympics where he will make his Olympic debut. We are all very proud of Stewart. Since I spoke he has competed in Europe on three occasions and has excelled and is doing a wonderful job. The Monaco Diamond League is his first race.

Stewart opened his European campaign by placing sixth in the 5000 metres but it was the third-fastest time of his career at 13 minutes, 33.22 seconds. He posted the result just 20 hours after getting off the plane, which is a pretty good result considering his legs must have been a little tired from all that time sitting around airports and getting to Europe. The next competition was at Stockholm Diamond League where Stewart ran the perfect race which saw him come close to a 10-year-old national 1500 metre record.

This is how versatile Stewart McSweyn is. Not only can he run the 5000 and the 10 000 but he is very competitive at the 1500. He produced a personal best time of three minutes 31.48 and this was the second-fastest time by an Australian. Stewart is still a young man. He has time to mature. Runners typically become their fastest in their late 20s to early 30s, so we have high hopes for Stewart if he can maintain this sort of form and a healthy body and so on.

Then he went on to Gothenburg in Sweden where he won the 5000 metres in 13 minutes 9.83 seconds and this was his third-fastest time over this distance. Congratulations once again to Stewart. We look forward to keeping track of his career as he gets faster and faster.

I would like to reiterate just how competitive athletics is. These sorts of distance races are very competitive. There are a number of athletes from all over the world who are so good and so close that the fact that Stewart is not only posting personal bests but is also starting to win races is testament to the effort he puts in, and the time and the dedication. We are all very proud of Stewart and are backing him in.

I would also like to talk about Launceston's own Richie Porte. I am a bit of a fan of the Tour de France and have been watching it over a number of years. I especially liked watching it when I was a member of the Australian rowing team because it fitted in nicely between training sessions. We could go training in the morning, watch the Tour de France and then go training in the afternoon. I really fell in love with the Tour de France and am proud that we have a Tasmanian competing in the Tour de France, and not only competing but actually in the front of the field.

We saw a few years ago when Richie was in contention for leadership and unfortunately crashed out in what was a horrific crash. I remember it was about 2 o'clock in the morning and he came around a corner and I just could not believe the crash that he had, but he has bounced back.

It has been an up and down tour, not only just up and down the mountains but he has had some issues on this tour. Richie Porte rides for the Trek-Segafredo team and in stage 7 he and his team got pummelled in the wind, the bunch split and he lost 1 minute 21 seconds, which is an eternity in the Tour de France, but now that the bunch is in the mountains he has been pushing his way steadily up the list as he goes up these mountains and cracking the contenders.

He is now up to sixth and we really hope to see him on the podium. It was great to see him on stage 15. Right towards the end of that very hilly stage he actually led the race but it was unfortunate that the current leaders Roglic and Pogacar, the two Slovenians who are

dominating the race this year, got just in front of him to win the stage and come second. Richie was very proud to come third and also pull a lot of time on the other contenders.

We know that the Tour de France is still in the mountains. There was a stage last night that was won more in a break-away. It would be great to be able to watch these stages but unfortunately they finish quite late and it conflicts with parliament, but these next two stages and especially tonight I think will be a real special one. They are going up two cliffs tonight and I really hope Richie Porte gets a chance to make up some more time so that he can get on the podium because he has sacrificed a lot this year. Not only has it been a tough year because of COVID but he missed the birth of his second child.

Let us hope that Richie Porte can make the podium and do Tasmania proud. We are already proud of Richie; we love him. He is a wonderful ambassador for Tasmania and is proudly Tasmanian. Let us get behind Richie and see if he can make the podium in the Tour de France when they finally get to Paris.

Housing Tasmania - Mould and Condensation Issues Gail Maddox - Tribute

[6.25 p.m.]

Ms BUTLER (Lyons) - Madam Speaker, I rise to report a positive story this evening on the adjournment. I would like to report back to the House on Gail Maddox of New Norfolk. I raised Gail's story here in the House on the adjournment during our last sitting.

Gail has lived and raised her family in New Norfolk in the same property for over 37 years and the property itself is over 80 years old. For the last 20 years Gail has raised the issue of condensation and mould in her property. The issue is structural and not a cleanliness issue. Journalist Emily Baker raised Gail's story on the ABC news which was beautifully reported and showed the human side of the topic of mould and condensation in Housing Tasmania's stock. Mould is a serious health issue.

It is important that Housing Tasmania recognise that structural mould and condensation in housing stock must be addressed and rectified. If cleaning is an issue, sending information to people on how to clean mould and condensation is appropriate. That is one thing, but ignoring the plight of people living in properties with structural mould and condensation is mean and simply not good enough. We have an obligation to look after people in our community and if they are coming to us with issues such as structural mould and condensation we need to follow that up for them and seek justice and action for them.

We have maintained close contact with Gail and her family who have advised that Housing Tasmania has come to the party. Large industrial fans that sound like a Boeing 747, as she put it, are currently switched on inside her property. Work is being undertaken to fix the footings and base of the property. Walls are being replaced, carpet is being replaced and a full industrial clean is also underway. The ABC has reported the good news that action is being undertaken to fix the problems. Gail has suffered cleaning that mould daily for over the last 20 years.

I especially thank Emily Baker and cameraman Janek Frankowski for telling Gail's story so beautifully and caring enough to follow through on the progress of the case. They ensured

that Gail was comfortable and felt safe so she could tell her story and they reported it beautifully. I would also like to thank Gail and her family for trusting me with their story and I have come to know the family really well in that time. Gail only decided to go public to make sure that other people's voices in the same position as her are heard. She is brave and strong and once more I thank her for trusting us to tell the story.

I would also like to thank Madam Speaker for her support. This is an indication of what Housing Tasmania can do when there is excessive structural condensation and mould in their properties and we will continue to raise this issue. It is about decency, accountability and putting all Tasmanians' health first.

Robin Gray - Tribute

[6.29 p.m.]

Mr BARNETT (Lyons - Minister for Resources) - Thank you, Madam Speaker, for the opportunity to speak on the adjournment tonight to pay tribute to former premier Robin Gray and his wife, Judy. The Liberal Party hosted an event in his honour on Sunday 30 August at the Nigel Peck Centre Woolmers Longford. You might recall being there, Madam Speaker. It was a very special day and I was delighted to attend to pay tribute to Robin Trevor Gray.

He has recently produced a book, *Proud to be Tasmanian*, co-authored with Andrew Tilt, a former chief of staff. The book is an excellent resource, and a very comprehensive summary of his time in office particularly his time as the 37th Premier of Tasmania from 1982 to 1989. Robin served initially as a member for Wilmot from 1976 through to 1984. From 1984 to 1995 Robin served as a member for Lyons - nearly 20 years.

I got to know Robin when I was at university and in fact he attended my 18th birthday party. We knew each other pretty well when I was President of the Tasmanian University Liberal Club and involved in student politics. I was very grateful for his support of the Tasmanian University Liberal students.

He was only the second non-Labor Premier in 48 years and the first in 51 years to govern in majority. I was honoured to work as his senior adviser when I returned from working in a law firm in Washington. Apparently at the time I was the youngest senior adviser in Australia. That was from early 1988 through to 1989 when the Gray government lost office to the Labor-Greens government. Along with Robin I should mention Sandy Witterson who still graces this place with her presence.

Robin's tribute luncheon was notable for a number of reasons not least of which was the attendance of three former Liberal Premiers - Robin Gray, Ray Groom, and Will Hodgman, and current Premier, Peter Gutwein. Will Hodgman and Peter Gutwein gave excellent tributes, commending Robin and his service to the Tasmanian people and his contribution over many years.

I will make a special note of Judy. Judy was at Robin's side every step of the way. There would be very few spouses or partners who have been so closely connected to their member of Parliament. Judy campaigned for Robin up hill and down dale and she is formidable in so many respects. She is a wonderful person and I caught up with her and Robin not so long ago in Launceston, as well as at the special luncheon.

Robin was a member for Wilmot then Lyons for a period of nearly two decades and remains one of the party's strongest vote winners. In fact I understand he was the highest Liberal vote winner until 1995. A remarkable performance. He was well appreciated and very popular indeed. He is one of just two Liberal Premiers who won back-to-back elections and he is fondly known as a northern leader. He has received life membership of the Liberal Party and I know all Liberal Party members know that is a privilege given to very few. In fact I am advised only 13 members have achieved this great tribute since the Liberal Party was formed at the Mechanics Hall in Launceston on 21 July 1945.

Robin undoubtedly set the gold standard in political campaigning and as I say a lot of us have followed in his footsteps, including more recently the new Legislative Council member for Rosevears, Jo Palmer. Well done, Jo, on a wonderful first speech this week and also for your election.

Door knocking, hard work and a personal touch were Robin's trademarks and Judy was by his side every step of the way. A truly Tasmanian style of politicking and that remains relevant today and probably more so in my view, given the often impersonal technological world in which we live now.

Robin was very pro-development. He was pro-jobs and that won him government in 1982, 1986 and with a massive majority again in 1989 despite Labor and the Greens doing a deal behind closed doors to gain government at the time despite the Labor leader Michael Field saying uphill and down dale that he would never do that deal.

The state certainly flourished under Robin and he should be congratulated. As a member for Lyons myself, and as the Minister for Primary Industries and Water, I am proud to be associated with Robin Gray as he was very connected to the land and was minister for Agriculture for many years. He still lives and works on a farm in the north east and also in Launceston with his wife Judy.

Robin left a lasting legacy and he should be proud. I reflect on some of his key achievements including the Craighourne Dam in the Coal River. Look at that now with the fruit trees, the vegetables, the poppies and the opportunities that have flourished from that dry land farming.

Robin also had the vision to build a Meander Dam in the mid-1980s. It did not happen until many decades later but again, Robin Gray's vision. He had the maxim 'you can make it in Tasmania'. I love that maxim. It is as true today as it was those decades ago. Well done to Robin Gray. Congratulations to you and your family and all those involved, and I am happy to pay you a special tribute tonight.

Time expired.

Dr Jennifer Sanger - Withdrawal of Scientific Paper from Publication

[6.36 p.m.]

Dr WOODRUFF (Franklin) - Madam Speaker, I rise to put on record concerns the Greens have at the low attack by a member of the Labor Party on some highly respected and credentialled Tasmanian scientists.

Dr Broad is scientifically trained, but he is discrediting his qualifications by his comments that wilfully misrepresent the normal scientific process. The scientists Winoto-Lewin, Sanger and Kirkpatrick showed enormous integrity by withdrawing their paper that was published in May in the journal *Fire* as soon as errors in the data they had used were pointed out to them. This is the normal, appropriate scientific practice.

The editor of the journal *Fire*, Professor Alistair Smith, had this to say about the authors of the paper that Dr Broad attacked last night. Professor Smith said -

The retraction was made at the request of the authors of the original paper after they were alerted to an error. This is an excellent example of research integrity by the authors.

He also said -

The science was driven by data and scientists showed their integrity when they retracted studies after being faced with data that countered conclusions. This is what sets apart scientists from special interest groups. As such, all I can do is applaud the integrity of the authors as being of the highest standards.

It was not the approach that was taken by the author, the scientist, Attiwill and others who published a paper called 'Timber harvesting does not increase fire risk and severity in wet eucalypt forests and southern Australia' in the journal *Conservation Letters* in 2014. Their paper is one piece of science that the forestry industry relies on but when errors were found in that research, the authors did not retract their paper. A rebuttal to that paper by Attiwill was published by the leading fire scientist Ross Bradstock, highlighting multiple errors.

The fact that Attiwill and others did not retract their paper or do anything to correct their errors shows an abject lack of scientific integrity.

Madam Speaker, let us be clear about what Dr Broad was doing last night. We know he has an ideological position that is morbidly opposed to sunlight shining on the many well-established destructive practices of native forest logging. Now he is stooping to attacking expert scientists who dare to conduct research into the range of human health risks, associated with current forest mismanagement practices in our native forests.

Dr Broad, do not shoot the messenger and especially, do not shoot your arrows of slander at scientists who are working with integrity. Why not take up your ideological cudgel and write to the authors of the paper that the forest industry still loves to cite, which has errors and has never been retracted?

Dr Broad falsely accused Sanger et al, of blaming Forestry Tasmania for the errors in their paper.

Dr Broad - It was in the newspaper, it was a quote. I quoted her.

Dr WOODRUFF - They did nothing of the sort. You totally misinterpreted that quote: completely and abhorrently misinterpreted it.

The media statement from Dr Sanger said they were frustrated with the difficulty of being unable to access the high resolution forestry coupe data that have been withheld by Forestry Tasmania from researchers.

Why wouldn't the scientist have asked Forestry Tasmania for detailed records of forest activity in coupes? It is because they had heard that Forestry Tasmania does not part with that data. They have not in the past when they have been asked to by researchers.

What they did, like any scientist would do, is use the best publicly available data they had, and that was the LISTmap: the Government's own LISTmap.

A forestry researcher who alerted Sanger et al to the existence of high-resolution aerial photographic data has now made it clear to them these data exist, because they were not aware of those data, and that is the material the researchers would like to access so they can repeat their work and assess the fire risks in Tasmania from forestry activities.

As Professor Jamie Kirkpatrick, who is a distinguished professor of geography and conservation ecology, said -

The clear and overwhelming evidence is that logging makes forests more flammable.

I would like the permission of the House to table eight papers from Australian and international journals that demonstrate that relationship. I have circulated them to members of the Opposition and to Government, and those papers make it very clear.

Before I table the papers, I say to Dr Broad, you should listen to the words of the veteran Australian forestry scientist Dr John Dargavel in *The Guardian*. He has launched a blistering attack on his professional association after it used the retraction of that scientific paper to dismiss links between logging and increased bushfire risk. In an open letter to the Institute of Foresters Australia that was seen by *The Guardian* Australia, Dr Dargavel said the institute's reaction, quote, 'damages our standing' and 'demeans all foresters in the public eye'. Professor Dargavel is retired, but remains an associate professor at the Fenner School of Environment and Society at the Australian National University. He said, quote -

We cannot afford to continue to present ourselves as a blustering, reactive, negative profession, when the heart of forestry offers positive hope for the future.

Dr Broad, you cannot continue to present yourself and the Labor Party in this blustering, reactive and negative manner to scientists. If you continue to do so, you should rethink your use of your professional title.

Madam Speaker, I seek leave to table the papers.

Leave granted.

Dr WOODRUFF - Thank you, Madam Speaker. I will read the names of the titles of the papers into *Hansard*:

- Article from Nature Ecology & Evolution, Vol 4, July 2020 titled 'Recent Australian wildfires made worse by logging and associated forest management'
- Article from Pacific Conservation Biology, August 2020 titled 'Extensive recent wildfires demand more stringent protection of critical old growth forest'
- Article from PNAS, Vol 117, June 2020 titled 'New spatial analyses of Australian wildfires highlight the need for fire, resource, and conservation policies'
- Article from Ecological Applications, 2018 titled 'Severe fire weather and intensive forest management increase fire severity in a multi-ownership landscape'
- Article from Austral Ecology, Vol 43, 2018 titled 'Flammability dynamics in the Australian Alps'
- Article from Conservation Letters, Vol 2, 2009 titled 'Effects of logging on fire regimes in moist forests'
- Article from Conservation Letters July/August 2014 titled 'Nonlinear Effects of Stand Age on Fire Severity'
- Article from Nature Geoscience, Volume 12, February 2019 titled 'Long-term impacts of wildfire and logging on forest soils'

The House adjourned at 6.44 p.m.

