



**PARLIAMENT OF TASMANIA**

**LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL**

**REPORT OF DEBATES**

**Tuesday 31 May 2022**

**REVISED EDITION**



# Contents

<b>TABLED PAPERS .....</b>	<b>1</b>
PUBLIC ACCOUNTS COMMITTEE REPORT - REVIEW OF PUBLIC WORKS COMMITTEE REPORTS.....	1
GOVERNMENT ADMINISTRATION COMMITTEE B REPORT - INQUIRY INTO DISABILITY SERVICES IN TASMANIA	1
<b>SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS .....</b>	<b>1</b>
EXTENSION OF SITTING TIME .....	1
<b>RECOGNITION OF VISITORS .....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>SPECIAL INTEREST MATTERS .....</b>	<b>2</b>
EPILEPSY TASMANIA .....	2
MCINTYRE ELECTION .....	4
PETER MACFIE - TRIBUTE .....	6
CLIFTON BEACH SURF LIFE SAVING CLUB .....	8
TRUE TRAILS EQUINE ASSISTED LEARNING .....	10
<b>YOUTH JUSTICE AMENDMENT (SEARCHES IN CUSTODY) BILL 2022 (NO. 9).....</b>	<b>10</b>
SECOND READING .....	10
RECOGNITION OF VISITORS .....	11
RECOGNITION OF VISITORS .....	14
<b>YOUTH JUSTICE AMENDMENT (SEARCHES IN CUSTODY) BILL 2022 (NO. 9).....</b>	<b>15</b>
IN COMMITTEE .....	15
RECOGNITION OF VISITORS .....	18
<b>MOTION .....</b>	<b>19</b>
BUDGET PAPERS AND APPROPRIATION BILLS (NO. 1 AND NO. 2) 2022 - NOTING.....	19
<b>QUESTIONS.....</b>	<b>32</b>
SCHOOL ATTENDANCE FOR TERM 1.....	32
CRESSY RESEARCH STATION - FUNDING .....	32
CRESSY RESEARCH STATION - FUNDING .....	33
INDEPENDENT LIVING UNITS - LEVYING OF RATES .....	33
<b>MOTION .....</b>	<b>34</b>
BUDGET PAPERS AND APPROPRIATION BILLS (NO. 1 AND NO. 2) 2022 - NOTING.....	34
<b>SUSPENSION OF SITTING .....</b>	<b>87</b>
<b>MOTION .....</b>	<b>87</b>
BUDGET PAPERS AND APPROPRIATION BILLS (NO. 1 AND NO. 2) 2022 - NOTING.....	87
<b>ADJOURNMENT .....</b>	<b>113</b>
<b>APPENDIX 1 .....</b>	<b>114</b>



**Tuesday 31 May 2022**

The President, **Mr Farrell**, took the Chair at 11 a.m., acknowledged the Traditional People, and read Prayers.

## **TABLED PAPERS**

### **Public Accounts Committee Report - Review of Public Works Committee Reports**

[11.03 a.m.]

**Ms FORREST** (Murchison) - Mr President, I have the honour to present the report of the Parliamentary Standing Committee of Public Accounts review of selected Public Works Committee reports No. 27 of 2015: Midland Highway, Mangalore to Bagdad Stage 1 and Midland Highway, Kempton to Melton Mowbray Stage 1; and No. 28 of 2015: Midland Highway, Perth to Breadalbane Duplication Report No. 17 of 2022.

Mr President, I move -

That the report be received and printed.

**Report received and printed.**

### **Government Administration Committee B Report - Inquiry into Disability Services in Tasmania**

[11.04 a.m.]

**Ms SIEJKA** (Pembroke) - Mr President, I have the honour to present the report of the Legislative Council Sessional Government Administration Committee B on the Inquiry into Disability Services in Tasmania. I lay upon the Table a copy of the evidence taken by the committee.

Mr President, I move -

That the report be received and printed.

**Report received and printed.**

## **SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS**

### **Extension of Sitting Time**

[11.05 a.m.]

**Mrs HISCUTT** (Montgomery - Leader of the Government in the Legislative Council)(by leave) - Mr President, I move -

That so much of sessional orders relating to the 4 p.m. break be suspended so as to enable the Council to sit beyond 4 p.m. for today and tomorrow's sitting.

**Motion agreed to.**

## **RECOGNITION OF VISITORS**

[11.06 a.m.]

**Mr PRESIDENT** - I welcome to the Chamber guests of the member for Hobart, and welcome to the President's Reserve, Epilepsy Tasmania CEO Ms Wendy Groot and her colleagues Shirley Poetschka and Liz Kemp. Welcome to the Legislative Council today.

I would also like to welcome to the public reserve, members and friends of Peter MacFie, who the member for Launceston will be speaking about a little bit later. Of course, the name MacFie is synonymous with this Chamber as the grandfather of Peter who was the president and a member in this Chamber for a period of time. You can see his photograph in our landing area. Welcome to the Chamber and I hope you enjoy your time here also.

## **SPECIAL INTEREST MATTERS**

### **Epilepsy Tasmania**

[11.07 a.m.]

**Mr VALENTINE** (Hobart) - Mr President, I rise this morning to talk about the serious neurological condition of epilepsy and our local organisation, Epilepsy Tasmania. I will also offer a small window of understanding into the lived experience of a person diagnosed with epilepsy by sharing their words with you.

Let me also extend a warm welcome to the CEO of Epilepsy Tasmania, Wendy Groot and colleagues Shirley Poetschka and Liz Kemp who are here with us today. Thank you very much for attending.

Every 33 minutes, someone's life is turned upside down by epilepsy. A diagnosis can be life altering, affecting personal life, employment, education, and wellbeing. Seizures occur when there is a disruption to electrical activity in the brain, leading to changes in a person's movement, behaviour, level of awareness and/or feelings, and they can include a loss of consciousness, a range of unusual movements, or odd feelings and sensations.

Epilepsy is not simple to diagnose, it can take years. In the meantime, a person can endure unpredictable seizures, sometimes many each day, and grief for the life they used to live before epilepsy turned it upside down. Epilepsy is more than seizures alone. As well as trying to prevent seizures, a person can typically face an array of additional challenges to their quality of life including cognitive, social, medical, mental and psychosocial health.

The seizure we see is a visible tip of the iceberg. Underneath, this person can be dealing with reduced concentration, memory loss, isolation, reliance on others, anxiety, loss of income, depression and a genuine struggle to function day-to-day.

Sadly, 30 per cent of people with epilepsy are not able to prevent their seizures with medication. Continued research is essential to find better medications and hopefully one day, a cure. Nearly half of people with epilepsy have no idea what triggered the condition because the causes are complex and dependent upon the age the first seizure was experienced. Known risk factors include serious head injuries sustained during motor vehicle accidents, trauma, serious falls, strokes, brain haemorrhages, prolonged oxygen deprivation, brain infections and abnormalities, tumours, degenerative conditions such as dementia and genetic factors.

Tasmania has the highest prevalence of epilepsy of any state or territory in Australia, with 20 000 people diagnosed annually. This figure is expected to continue rising due to our older than average population and the increasing number of people who survive incidents that can lead to epilepsy.

The impacts of these diagnoses are felt by the 80 000 family members, employers, colleagues, teachers, carers and friends, who are relied upon to provide logistical, physical and emotional support. Epilepsy is, in fact, the second-highest neurological condition after dementia across the world. It is a fact that I did not know about. It is most interesting.

Epilepsy Tasmania provides necessary additional support by raising awareness of the condition and gathering vital funds for research, support and education, seeking to bring stability and peace of mind to those affected. Their work aims to generate lasting discussions about epilepsy and make real changes for people living with the condition. These changes include greater understanding of the extra challenges people with epilepsy face and the additional support they often require to be able to go about their lives. Changes include a realisation of how common epilepsy is, how it can happen to anyone at any time and that right here in Tasmania, one in seven people who present to hospitals is due to epilepsy. That is an amazing fact. I did not realise that.

Now some words from Epilepsy Tasmania's Peer Support and Volunteer Project Coordinator, Amy Lewandowski, who lives with epilepsy. This is her self-described journey, and I thank her for sharing this:

Epilepsy started for me 17 years ago when I was due to have a colonoscopy. The oral preparation caused my first tonic-clonic seizure.

This used to be termed grand mal, for people who may wonder what that term means.

I then continued to have more of these, always nocturnal. In the first year, I lived in denial because I did not want to accept that I have epilepsy. I also have complex partial seizures. However, as these too are nocturnal, I never truly know when I have had one.

In an effort to be seizure-free, I had a lesionectomy, six years ago. In the first year afterward, I took a small quantity of anticonvulsants and was not aware of having seizures. I was so excited thinking I was in the category of 70 per cent who are seizure free after this surgery.

However, the very first night after following the neurologist's instructions and slowly weaning myself off the anticonvulsants, I had a tonic-clonic

seizure and knew that I would need to come to terms with living with uncontrolled epilepsy.

Since then, on average, I have had four or five tonic-clonic seizures a year, and an unknown amount of complex partial seizures. I acknowledge that I am very lucky to only have this many, and for them all to be nocturnal. However, they do still throw me into fear, not knowing who I am, or where I am, when I first come out of them, followed by a week of anxiety and a vague and fuzzy mind. I always seem to have a panic attack afterward. This and the other impacts of the seizures cause a big dent in my self-confidence for a while that I must work very hard to pull myself out of. Epilepsy may bring on a world of fear, the unknown, a sense of closeness to death, anxiety, and going to bed with the thought, will I have a seizure tonight? Also, no matter how strong you are within yourself, via a healthy diet, regular exercise, avoiding or working, or managing stress, getting enough sleep, staying hydrated, et cetera, you can still have a seizure and be left with the realisation that there is a very big part of this that is beyond your control.

The really good thing about epilepsy is that it does take you to another world where your gratitude for life and the little things grows, such as being grateful that you are alive when you wake up, the beauty of nature and the abundance of fun to be had with those around you. I am very lucky to have a wonderful husband, who has been by my side, showering me with unconditional love, support, care and humour throughout this journey. In addition, I have many close, caring and accepting friends and family members around me, who have encouraged me to stay strong and courageous, no matter what.

By having peer support, Epilepsy Tasmania is offering people with epilepsy and their carers a closed group in a safe space to make contact with others who might be in a similar position or experiencing similar things to them, due to their own medical condition. This provides them with a chance to talk about living with epilepsy, and share stories, challenges, fears, questions, and concerns, or provide lifestyle tips, shared understanding, support, encouragement, and compassion. We hope this will help them feel like they have a voice about with life with epilepsy, reduce any feelings of isolation, normalise epilepsy and increase their feelings of acceptance and connection.

I really do thank Amy for sharing those candid details with us of her own story. A big thank you to Wendy and her team here today for the role they play in supporting Tasmanians with epilepsy.

### **McIntyre Election**

[11.16 a.m.]

**Ms RATTRAY** (McIntyre) - Mr President, a couple of weeks ago I decided I would take this opportunity in special interest to briefly talk about the recent election of McIntyre and take the opportunity to thank a few people who were generous in their time and support for me. Obviously, 7 May was polling day and the member for Elwick and the member for Huon will know that date very well, as you have to sit and wait. The final preference figures for polling



day were announced on Tuesday 17 May at around 12.30 a.m. and I had a phone call prior to that. There are 29 391 electors enrolled, with a progressive turnout of 83 per cent, not bad. Who would not want more than that? Still, in my view, that is not bad.

**Mr Valentine** - They wanted to make sure you got in.

**Ms RATTRAY** - They wanted to make sure. I acknowledge the fellow candidates, because without those two gentlemen there would not have been an election. Often, we say that it is important to have an election, because that is part of the democratic process. To Mr David Downie, fellow Independent and Mitchell Horton, Tasmanian Greens representative, there was an election for McIntyre. I did not have the pleasure of meeting Mitchell Horton, he was not there for the declaration of the poll and Mr Downie sent his apologies. Again, I want to thank those two people for allowing a contest.

As we know, elections are very stressful and I do not mind saying it does not matter how many times people close to you - and particularly members of this House or elected members from the other place - tell you you will be okay, it never feels like you will be okay when you are going through the process. I really acknowledge the support I received from my fellow parliamentarians, who were always encouraging and trying to calm me, particularly as you sat in this House those three days prior to the election on the Saturday. That is a very stressful time. My mind went back to when the former member for Windermere went through exactly that situation. I remember him being nervous at that time, but he had his wife back in the electorate doorknocking. I did not have that person.

**Ms Forrest** - You could have enrolled her, she probably would have helped you.

**Ms RATTRAY** - She probably would have because she was very good at it.

**Ms Forrest** - She is a very good person.

**Ms RATTRAY** - I am very mindful the former member for Windermere, Mr Dean, mentioned that on many occasions, without his wife Anne - Jill - he would have really struggled.

I am going to name a few people and there will be people who perhaps have given some support that I will not actually put on the public record, but they know who they are and I am very grateful. To Melissa and Hayley from my office and because we know the rule in this place, they spent time on their weekends supporting and helping. Certainly, a wonderful effort and I very much appreciate the work they did. To my very good friends Jill, Ros, Gaynor, Karen, Ken, John, Janine, Rosemary, Maureen and family, Jan, Lachie and Degan - they did the wobble boarding - Tony and James, and Deb and Greg. Without forgetting, Mr President, my mum Norma has one official outing each week and I believe that she was handing out leaflets at the local card game on a Tuesday night. I am very impressed. My mum has never been a campaigner but she obviously thought I needed my job and I am very grateful. To my family, who are always there for you, as everyone in this Chamber will know, it is really heartfelt not only to have that support but to then be returned.

This was the first time there had been an election for McIntyre. As you know, I have been through three former elections, one unopposed, but two actual elections as the member for Apsley. This one certainly had a different feel about it and as we know about 6500 more

electors, so that meant a lot more work. I did wear out a pair of shoes and I know people often say that, and you think it could not be. I did. The ones I wore pretty much every day literally have no soles. That is how it is.

To the 29 booths, I was absolutely blown away with the response that I received from the community. There were only two out of the 29 booths where I did not top the poll. I have a lot more work to do in Cressy and Hagley. I understand that and they will be seeing more of me. They obviously did not have the chance to get to know me as well.

I really thank everyone who gave some time, who were prepared to put up a sign, because that in itself is not always easy as even though we are Independent, it means you can be a target. We had a number of signs stolen or perhaps they wanted to souvenir them for genuine reasons, or they thought they could re-use them somewhere else. At \$22 each, you are thinking, gosh, then to have to go around and take a sign from somewhere else to replace it because you want them to understand that you are really committed to this election and to this role. I place on the public record my sincere thanks to everyone.

What a privilege it is to be returned as the member for McIntyre and I look forward to serving my community in this House for at least the next six years.

### **Peter MacFie - Tribute**

[11.23 a.m.]

**Ms ARMITAGE** (Launceston) - Mr President, I will not go to the lectern because I do not want to turn my back to the friends and family of Peter MacFie, whom I am speaking about today. I will stand here in my place.

Peter H. MacFie - social historian, researcher, person of letters, composer and musician. Peter was born in Launceston on 6 November 1943. Peter's paternal grandparents were from Devonport. Hector McFie II was the MLC for Mersey in this House from 1954 until retiring as president in 1972. Prior to that, Peter's great-grandfather, Henry McFie was an MHA for the seat of Darwin in north-west Tasmania, having changed his support from Labor to Nationalist over the matter of conscription in World War One.

Peter's other forebears included three convicts: Hector McFie from the Isle of Bute, Scotland, and his wife Bridget Connor, from Ireland; also, John Price from England, who arrived as a Point Puer boy. Peter's maternal grandparents were Archers from the east Tamar Dilston property, Landfall. They were well-regarded lay preachers and had a long history in the Wesleyan tradition as well as being successful farmers. There Peter developed his fascination with old farm machinery and methods of land management.

After a teaching career spanning from 1965 to 1979, Peter embarked on his lifelong passion of historical research, commencing with saving the historic Miller's Cottage, Richmond from demolition in 1981. Peter then became resident historian to the Port Arthur authority at Port Arthur from 1983 to 1991. Peter's office was in the accountant's house and it was always piled high with papers. He responded to numerous inquiries and questions on a huge range of topics, from buildings and structures to convicts and the free. Staff witnessed hundreds of Peter's responses in the files. Pete wrote a huge range of articles, published and unpublished, including those related to Point Puer, but also topics such as the colonial gardens of Port Arthur,

rock-and-roll, the First World War soldiers who did not return, and much more, mainly focusing on people in lower socio-economic conditions or difficult circumstances.

On leaving the Port Arthur authority in 1992, Peter became an independent historian and commenced far-ranging social history research, including that of the Maydena-Tyenna Valley forestry on behalf of the then-Australian Newsprint Mills. Peter interviewed over 100 families during a 10-year period, accumulating a significant oral and written history. Due to changes in mill ownership, this project languished for some years, but was published in 2020 to wide acclaim as a 400-page book, *The Newsprint*.

Peter either established or participated in the setting up of Tasmanian historical societies, with his template for establishing such groups widely adopted. These include the Sorell History Society and the Derwent Valley Historic Society.

In the new millennium, one of Peter's important projects was the research and publication of a book concerning the former convict fiddler, Alexander Laing, based on the handwritten manuscript of tunes presented by Laing in 1863, with most of his tunes dedicated to Tasmanian people and places. Peter rediscovered the manuscripts within the Tasmania state Archives and set about having these arranged by fellow Tasmanian musicians Steve and Marjorie Gadd. They were then performed by various ensembles, including at the biennial National Folk Festival Ngunnawal Country, Canberra. Peter presented his paper detailing his research and was also invited to Cambridge University UK in 2006, again talking to this paper. The Laing tunes have been published jointly with the Gadds' notation in Peter's book, *On the Fiddle*, for future generations to explore and enjoy.

Peter was a talented musician and composer, and his sublime folk tune, *Lean Too*, and wicked country dance song, *Everyone is Dancing at the Forcett Hall*, represent two Tasmanian folk arts, and add to Peter's other much-loved works. Over many years, Peter conducted with great enthusiasm historic re-enactments, bus tours and events featuring the Laing tunes, plus his own and other folk rock through the Derwent Valley, Coal River, Sorell and Tasman Peninsula districts. Peter also authored books for various councils, including the acclaimed *Underground Hobart: The World Beneath the City*, allowing Hobartians to rediscover the hidden world beneath their feet.

In 2020, the College of Arts, Law and Education at University of Tasmania presented Peter MacFie with a distinguished service award for exceptional and sustained contributions to historical research.

Whilst historian at Port Arthur in the 1980s, at the suggestion of his much-loved mother, Lilian Elsie, Peter commenced researching the early Wesleyan preachers who had been assigned the contract for the penal site's religious affairs after the Anglicans declined. With the onset of his disabling motor neurone disease in 2016, Peter's editor and dedicated friends worked with the near completed manuscripts, and *The Wesleyans of Port Arthur* was published in April this year.

As a descendent of a Point Puer boy convict, a sixth generation Tasmanian, Peter MacFie's *Wesleyans* has also effectively and vividly evoked daily life at Point Puer for those boy convicts, an exceptional legacy. When in 2019 Peter had to move out of his beloved cottage at Dulcot near Richmond, retired archivist Margie Bryant packed 130 boxes of research

material that Peter then donated to the Tasmanian state Archives, a valuable resource which future historians and students can get access and gain knowledge.

Despite being bed-bound for the last two years of his life, Peter continued to be interested in the publication of his works, both written and musical. Peter's lifelong friend, David John Wilson, recently stated:

My friend had quietly evolved into a venerated, respected, highly-esteemed historian, one who felt driven to chronicle the history of the island he loved.

Peter Henry MacFie passed away peacefully this year on 28 April 2022. As a footnote, Peter's brother, Robert MacFie, and his editor, Jan Horton, will continue to publish those of Peter's works that were substantially completed prior to the onset of MND, as he requested.

**Members** - Hear, hear.

**Mr PRESIDENT** - I would also like to thank Peter for his work and mention he was always a very engaging person whether talking to him about music, history or numerous other topics - old machinery was another favourite. I know Peter will be missed by many people, but he will live on through his historical works and musical compositions. He was a great Tasmanian who should be remembered.

**Members** - Hear, hear.

### **Clifton Beach Surf Life Saving Club**

[11.30 a.m.]

**Ms LOVELL** (Rumney) - Mr President, this past Saturday evening it was my pleasure to attend the Clifton Beach Surf Life Saving Club annual dinner and presentation evening. For those members who are unfortunate enough not to be familiar with my electorate of Rumney, Clifton Beach is a beautiful two kilometre stretch of beach facing south-east into both Frederick Henry and Storm bays, about 30 kilometres from Hobart.

Clifton is a very popular beach, but it can also be a fairly dangerous place for swimmers and surfers of all abilities and skill levels, due to constant swells and strong weather from the Southern Ocean. Frequent rips and big troughs in surf can create a tricky environment for beachgoers. Sadly, people have drowned on unpatrolled sections of Clifton Beach.

The core business of Clifton Beach Surf Life Saving Club is exactly what the name would suggest: to patrol the beach throughout the summer months and provide a vital surf lifesaving service to the community. Since the club was established in the summer of 1963, this has been its most important focus. In addition to regular patrols at Clifton, the club also provides water safety services at various community events, as well as water safety education and training to its members.

Clifton Beach is one of 14 Surf Life Saving Tasmania clubs around the coast of Tasmania, I know several other members who are lucky enough to have some of Tasmania's stunning coastline and beaches in their electorates and would also have surf lifesaving clubs.

Surf Life Saving Tasmania has been operating in the state since 1921 and, to this day, holds an important place in our communities and in our history with countless hours of beach patrols and countless lives saved. In a state that loves our beaches and our coastline as much as we do here in Tasmania, the hundreds of Tasmanians who volunteer around our state to keep our beaches safe are invaluable.

Just a fortnight ago, it was National Volunteer Week. It is timely to recognise the contribution made by volunteers through Surf Life Saving Tasmania, patrolling our beaches, keeping the community safe and establishing and running successful clubs right around the state.

In addition to this vital community service, surf lifesaving clubs also facilitate surf sports. Clifton has a thriving Nippers program, introducing kids to surf lifesaving and surf skills, as well as surf sports from an early age.

Clifton itself is nationally renowned for hosting three very successful Australian championship carnivals in 1969, 1976, and 1983, with thousands of spectators flocking to the beach to watch champion surf boat crews and with legends of the sport like Barry Rodgers and Olympians Ken Vidler and Grant Kenny taking gold medals.

More recently, Clifton has had a busy year, hosting a regional carnival, a senior statewide carnival, a junior statewide carnival, the senior state championships, and the hydrothon. About 20 members from Clifton headed to the Aussies in Queensland in April, where the 314 clubs from around the country compete in more than 480 beach and ocean events.

Clifton hosted a development day for the state development team, provided water safety for triathlon events in the south, held a demonstration event at the Sandy Bay Regatta, and ran a barbecue for the Tasmanian jobseeker expo. Around 100 lifesavers volunteered at Clifton over the summer patrolling, performing rescues, and providing medical assistance to beachgoers.

The Nippers program has grown to involve about 150 Nippers, including my own two Nippers who had their first season with the club earlier this year. There are now around 350 members of the club, and I am proud to be one.

The awards night on Saturday was a chance to recognise the hard work of the volunteers over the last 12 months and the achievements of the members. It was a real honour to be there to help celebrate the huge year the club has had and to witness the incredible sense of community between club members, something that is always evident at the club. More than one person on the night spoke of the Clifton family and that is what this club really is to its members who span all ages.

Congratulations not only to the award recipients, big congratulations to them, but also to every one of the volunteers who make this club the family it really is. I am very proud to support Clifton Beach Surf Life Saving Club and look forward to seeing what is to come in the year ahead. If the last few years are anything to go by, it is going to be huge.

## **True Trails Equine Assisted Learning**

[11.35 a.m.]

**Ms HOWLETT** (Prosser) - Mr President, Cheri Allanby is the founder and developer of True Trails, an equine assisted learning program located in the serene and picturesque Marion Bay. She is a qualified teacher, trainer, and an assessor as well as a riding instructor and has extensive experience working with people who learn differently or have a learning disability. The focus of True Trails is to assist those struggling to learn in a classroom environment - the disengaged, the neurodiverse and those diagnosed with learning disabilities - to engage in learning and the Australian core skills: literacy, numeracy, communication and learner skills. True Trails utilises equine interaction, riding, hippotherapy, transferrable horsemanship learning, and its rural facility, as a soft approach and means to motivate and engage its students to assist and acquire practical and academic skills and to apply these skills to curriculum standards.

The idea of True Trails was conceived when Cheri secured a Community Fund grant in 2013 to set up youth riding programs to help re-establish community cohesion following the devastating Dunalley bushfires. Whilst running these programs, the idea dropped that she could combine horsemanship with teaching to assist struggling learners. True Trails supports and strengthens its students with gaps who have slipped through mainstream education. It works collaboratively with parents, schools, psychologists, speech therapists et cetera to ensure students' outcomes are supported beyond program participation hours.

True Trails has been highly successful in educating and re-engaging students who have been unable to engage or learn in a mainstream education setting.

I recently had the pleasure of meeting CJ, who is one of Cheri's students. CJ has autism and dyslexia, and experiences difficulty in engaging in the classroom. His mother, Sheree, was able to enrol him in True Trails through the NDIS 12 months ago. Since beginning at True Trails, CJ has transformed. Sheree says that CJ is now so much more confident since starting at True Trails and the skills he has acquired are transferable into the classroom. Now in class CJ asks questions and is engaging in learning. CJ is one of the many students that Cheri has been able to successfully help engage in education through the program. Cheri treats all of her students as unique and is able to tailor the way she educates them to the way they learn, not the way prescribed in a classroom.

The work she does is wonderful. She is helping to improve the futures of young people who learn differently to others. I sincerely thank Cheri for the work she does through True Trails and encourage all members to pay a visit and see the tremendous work done and what she achieves with her students.

**Members** - Hear, hear.

## **YOUTH JUSTICE AMENDMENT (SEARCHES IN CUSTODY) BILL 2022 (No. 9)**

### **Second Reading**

**Continued from 26 May 2022 (page 29).**

[11.40 a.m.]

**Mrs HISCUTT** (Montgomery - Leader of the Government in the Legislative Council) - Mr President, as we finished off, I was summing up and had only just launched into it, so I will repeat those few little questions that were answered before, to keep it all on the same page.

We started off with some questions from the member for Murchison. Why has use of force not been defined as a last resort in the bill?

Recommendation 5 of the commissioner's memorandum of advice proposed that the use of force should be limited to circumstances of last resort, and if force is required there should be clear lines of authorisation. Unlike other recommendations, it did not explicitly propose that this is achieved through legislative reforms. The commissioner has advised she would have preferred the use of force provision, and referred to use of force being a last resort, which was a term used in her recommendations.

However, this was considered difficult to implement given force is technically any force applied to a youth without their consent, including, for example, touching the youth during a pat down or frisk search. It was therefore discussed with the commissioner that the bill should provide that whilst force is authorised under the bill, it must not be used unless it is the only means in the circumstances by which the search can be reasonably conducted.

The bill further provides that use of force is subject to other requirements in the bill, such as minimising distress to the youth and using the least amount of force that is reasonable and necessary. The drafting effectively gives use of significant force as a last resort. The bill is consistent with the commitment to provide a consolidated and consistent legal provision in relation to the use of force, providing that force may be used where reasonable and necessary in the circumstances to conduct a search.

Another question, are searches of youth in police watch houses recorded in the register currently?

Yes. They are recorded in police systems. Youth arrested by police are the minority of arrests, forming only 7.6 per cent of arrests. Of these youth in the last reporting period, most were over the age of 15. No 10-year-olds were arrested in that period.

---

### **Recognition of Visitors**

**Madam ACTING PRESIDENT** - On behalf of the Legislative Council and the staff, we welcome to the Chamber Blackmans Bay Primary School students and their teacher. We hope you enjoy your time in the parliament.

The Leader is replying to questions that were put to the Leader on behalf of the Government when members debated the bill last week. It is about youth justice, and she just referred to 10-year-olds, and there might well be some 10-year-olds sitting up the back, so this is surely of interest.

We hope you enjoy your time here today.

**Members** - Hear, hear.

---

**Mrs HISCUTT** - Madam Acting President, I note that in relation to the number of unclothed searches of youth, it is even rarer and only conducted in exceptional circumstances, which reflects the framework applied by this bill.

There was a question, will the search register be available to the Commissioner for Children and Young People to review?

Under section 25K(2) Register of searches, the Secretary of Communities Tasmania, the Director of Corrections or the Commissioner of Police, must ensure a search register is established and maintained. It is expected the register will be reviewed by the agencies regularly.

Such reviews may identify issues that will require consideration and review by the Commissioner for Children and Young People. The bill also provides that the register is available for inspection by the Ombudsman, Custodial Inspector, approved persons, and prescribed persons or bodies.

The Commissioner for Children and Young People did not request to be specifically provided with review rights under section 25K when consultation occurred on the bill. However, the Commissioner for Children and Young People can still inspect registers, as needed, under the general permission in section 25K as:

- (4)(c) a person approved by the person in charge of the custodial facility;
- or
- (4)(d) a prescribed person or body.

There was a question about how will search officers ensure young persons have been provided with information about searches, and that they are confident the young person understands what they have been told.

There are a number of sections in the bill that clarify how information regarding searches is to be given to youths. These requirements will mean the youth will have many opportunities to help them understand what is happening.

Section 25H provides that information is to be given to a youth before a search is conducted. The provision seeks to ensure that the youth is given appropriate notice about the search and an opportunity to undertake actions that may lead to a less intrusive search being undertaken, or for the search to no longer be necessary. The commissioner identified that informing youths about search procedures is a priority, including making information publicly available.

Section 25L provides for the provision of information to youths, including in person, to their advocates and via websites. The person in charge of a custodial facility must ensure that there is material available for viewing by a youth who is in custody in a custodial facility. The person in charge of a custodial facility must also ensure that if a youth makes a request for further information in relation to searches, it is made available to them. It must also be made available to a person who represents the youth, and for viewing by members of the public on a website in relation to the custodial facility. The required information is the information about the circumstances and manner in which searches are authorised, information about rights to



complain and any instructions relating to searches. Staff do everything they can to ensure youth understand what is being told to them about search processes.

Then there was another question about the gender breakdown of the Tasmania Police, Tasmania Prison Services and Ashley Youth Detention Centre search officers. With regard to Tasmania Police, in 2020-21, 917 male and 489 female police officers were employed by the Department of Police, Fire and Emergency Management. In practice, some small police stations only have male officers or female officers. If a search is required that requires a different gender, another officer will be radioed in for assistance. For searches that do not require any removal of clothing or touching, the preferred gender must be used as far as is reasonable or practicable. For searches that involve removal of clothing, the person in charge of that station can only authorise that search by another gender on the grounds of urgency to address risk of harm or trauma.

The Ashley Youth Detention Centre - current staff who undertake searches are the manager, the assistant manager, the operations manager, operations coordinator and youth workers. Currently, there are 31 male and 31 female staff across these positions.

The Tasmania Prison Service, as at 31 March 2022 the total breakdown of correctional staff was as follows: 310.3 FTEs are male, 105.1 FTEs are female and 1 FTE unspecified. I can give you a breakdown of where they are in a minute. This means the percentage of total TPS search officers who are female is 25 per cent of the total number of officers. For reception prison watch houses, the staff breakdown is Hobart Reception Prison six females and 27 males, 18 per cent are females; Launceston Reception Prison, nine are females and 26 are male, so the female GM and 25 per cent are females. If a particular gender TPS officer is not available, the TPS staff can request a police officer in attendance to assist them.

Another question, why does this bill not apply to all youth searches, including those in the community, i.e. not in custodial facilities? The bill responds to the commissioner's advice to Government, which made recommendations in relation to the search of youths in custodial facilities. The bill is understood to be unique in Australia, as it applies the same rights-based framework to youth in all custodial settings, particularly in extending these explicit rights to police watch houses. Other states and territories tend to have different frameworks for different custodial settings, with limited frameworks applying to police custody.

Searches of children in the community are relatively rare and subject to existing legislative powers for police and the Commissioner for Police orders in the police manual. The Government has previously committed to consolidating relevant powers of police and this would examine powers in the community such as arrest, seizure and search.

The member for Rumney asked whether the search register will record if things are found during the search. Section 25K provides that the register must include information prescribed in regulations, details of the search intrusiveness and details of reportable force. It is expected that the proposed regulations will require recording of whether the item being searched for was found during the search of the youth.

Other information likely to be included in any search register is: the name of the youth who is subject to the search; the date and time of the search; the reason for the search; the nature of the search performed; and the name of authorised officers who conducted the search.

The member for Nelson had a question about how search officers will be trained regarding the requirements of the bill. Training will support and improve the existing cultural shift in the search practices of search officers. Agency training will support officers in complying with the new requirements. The agencies have worked collaboratively to progress any amendments and are updating supporting material in their documents, such as their practice directions or standing orders. This will aid training of search officers. All facilities have active training programs that will also be updated. The requirements in the bill are mandatory. There could be consequences for contravention of the bill by search officers. There are complaints mechanisms for the conduct of searches to be investigated and appropriate action taken. Misconduct by police officers and state servants can be dealt with in the usual way.

There was another question about whether a youth under 10 can be searched. A youth is defined under the Youth Justice Act 1997 as a person who is 10 or more years old but less than 18 years old at the time when the offence was committed or is suspected of being committed. Section 18(1) of the Criminal Code provides that 'no act or omission done or made by a person under 10 years of age is an offence.' Persons under the age of 10 years are therefore incapable of committing an offence and therefore are unable to be arrested or searched in custody. Operationally, police only bring youth into custody if they have reason to believe they are over 10 years of age. If information becomes available that they are under this age, they are immediately released from custody.

There was a question about the meaning of 'reasonable grounds'. Section 25E requires that the search must not be conducted unless the search officer believes on reasonable grounds that the search is necessary for a relevant search purpose and the type of search and the manner of the search are proportionate to the circumstances. There must be some basis for the belief related to the individual personally which can be considered and evaluated by an objective third person. This may be observations by police or custodial officers stemming from the behaviour of a person, or information provided by a reliable source. The decision-maker must consider and give appropriate weight to all relevant information when determining whether to search, based on a risk assessment. Establishing reasonable grounds is supported by organisational policy and procedures issued under statute which include: Tasmania prison director standing orders; protocols within the Tasmania Police manual; and Communities Tasmania operating procedures.

There was a question about whether the search register can be scrutinised by parliament during budget Estimates or hearings. In brief, the answer is 'yes' - although a de-identified register would be prepared to protect youth privacy.

Question 16 asked what does the police manual currently say about searches in the community and how will it align with the new bill. This bill will apply to all searches of children in custodial facilities.

---

### **Recognition of Visitors**

[11.54 p.m.]

**Madam ACTING PRESIDENT** - I take this opportunity to welcome the next group of Blackmans Bay Primary students, and their teacher. Welcome to the parliament. The Leader is responding to questions that have been asked through the debate about an amendment to the Youth Justice Act. It is talking about young children like yourselves, and some of the issues that might arise relating to their welfare. We trust that you have an enjoyable time and learn

lots in the parliament, and we look forward to seeing you whenever next you choose to visit the parliament. Thank you.

**Members - Hear, hear.**

---

[11.55 p.m.]

**Mrs HISCUTT** - Madam Acting President, police can only search youths in the community when permitted by explicit search powers under legislation, which is targeted to specific purposes such as the Misuse of Drugs Act. In addition to these search power limitations, the Commissioner for Police has exercised his powers to give additional limitation to police about strip searches, which are referred to in the bill as 'unclothed searches'. This will continue to apply to the extremely rare unclothed searches of youth in the community.

The key requirements are that: the search must be authorised by an inspector; recorded in writing; take place in the presence of a parent, guardian, or responsible adult unless not reasonably practical; and be authorised by the inspector. It must take place in a private setting and not render the person naked at any stage; it must be as limited in clothing removal as necessary so the youth can dress again as soon as possible; it must be done and observed only by police officers of the same gender as the person.

There was one last question from the member for Hobart about the implementation of the bill. The bill reflects changes already implemented regarding the routine searches of youth in custodial facilities in Tasmania. We are pleased to advise that the practice of routine personal searches has already ceased. The departments have already commenced the extensive review of current risk assessment documents, search registers, and reporting frameworks in preparation for the proclamation of the bill.

The interagency working group continues to engage to work collaboratively through the implementation phase. Madam Acting President, that completes the summing up and I hope I have answered everybody's questions.

**Bill read the second time.**

## **YOUTH JUSTICE AMENDMENT (SEARCHES IN CUSTODY) BILL 2022 (No. 9)**

### **In Committee**

[11.57 a.m.]

**Clauses 1 and 2 agreed to.**

**Clauses 3, 4, and 5 agreed to.**

**Clause 6 -**

Part 3, Division 3 inserted

**Ms WEBB** - Can we break this down into bits? There might be a lot of questions on clause 6.

**Madam CHAIR** - We made a decision at the Table that most of the questions that were asked during the second reading were responded to, and you have three calls.

**Ms WEBB** - I was crosschecking what I had covered in that summing up from what I have not, so I am making my way through it slowly. I had a lot of questions that related to many of the parts of this clause and this is crosschecking, trying to see which ones -

**Madam CHAIR** - We will break down areas that were not part of the Leader's response answering your questions. I will get the Deputy Clerk to call subclauses of clause 6.

**Subclauses 25A, 25B, 25C agreed to.**

**Subclause 25D agreed to.**

**Subclause 25E agreed to.**

**Subclause 25F agreed to.**

**Subclause 25G agreed to.**

#### **Subclause 25H**

Information to be given to youth before search conducted

**Ms WEBB** - I appreciate that we have broken them down like this and have gone a bit slower. That is helpful. Many of my questions were answered. Thank you to the Leader.

On 25H, I wanted a little more of a response in relation to what constitutes informing the youth. I had questions on whether a determination needs to be made that the youth has in fact understood the information provided through whatever means it is provided. To then be able to confirm that they have not just 'been informed', as in had information put to them, but have 'been informed', as in they understood the information provided to them.

**Mrs HISCUTT** - There are people within the facility as outlined earlier, who make it their job to make sure that the youth does understand to the point where the youth says, 'I understand'. Now, whether you presume that they understand and if they do not there is a support person there who will help them understand or at least understand on their behalf. Every effort is made consistently and maybe repetitiously to make sure the youth does understand, or is informed to the point they are believed to understand.

**Ms RATTRAY** - That was exactly the same area of understanding I was looking for. But again, is it something that needs to be a written confirmation that they understand, or is it generally we believe they understand? I am not sure that is exactly making me comfortable. 'Oh, we believe they understand' seems leaving it to chance that they understand. Particularly, to a 10-and-a-half-year-old this would be a very daunting process. Even for guardians, as by interjection the member for Pembroke said. Perhaps, there is something that could alleviate my concerns, and perhaps others, whereby the represented person, or that support person, is even able to provide something where they are clear that their young person understands the information that is being given for a search, because this is a search. This not just, oh you have done this. It is not just information; it is a search. So, thank you, Leader.

**Mrs HISCUTT** - I do have quite a lengthy response here so hopefully we will work our way through. Every effort is made to ensure that the youth has understanding about what is happening or about to happen when they are searched. Information is provided verbally as well as in writing, to the youth, their parent, guardian, or support person. Currently, this happens and takes place as follows in the different youth custodial facilities.

We will start with Tasmania Police: police are trained so that when they deal with all members of the public, including youths, during their policing duties, they are to explain what they are doing and why and then ask whether the person understands. If they do not understand, the process is explained again.

In accordance with the Tasmania Police manual, it is practice when dealing with youths that parents or guardians or responsible adults are notified and are in attendance with the youth throughout the process. Processes are explained to the youth. Then the youth's parents, guardian or responsible adult are asked whether they are satisfied the child understands. Where youths are in custody, these processes are overseen by the custodial officer responsible for the facility.

In the Tasmania Prison Service, correctional staff verbally inform the person being searched of what type of search they are undergoing and ensure they understand the nature, processes, and reasons for the search. Further explanation or clarification will be provided by the search officer if it is thought the person has not understood. All correctional officers receive training in search processes. Posters explaining the person search process are also displayed in reception prisons.

With regard to the Ashley Youth Detention Centre detainees, most of these youths are familiar with the justice system, as they have been remanded or detained in custody and previously searched, whether by Tasmania Police or Tasmania Police service staff. When they arrive at the detention centre, young people are informed of the process and guided through the search process by staff. This is done in a way and using language they understand, being mindful it also needs to be undertaken in a sensitive manner. If a search is then required the AYDC operational staff must inform the young person of the intent to conduct a search, the reasons for the search and ask for their cooperation. This includes explaining how the search will be undertaken, and providing an opportunity for the young person to ask questions.

**Ms SIEJKA** - On that, one of my concerns has been in the past cases where you have a person who is very young and this may be their first experience in this situation. They are relying on their guardian or parent to inform their consent, and unfortunately - I wish it was not the case, but it is - not all parents have the best interests of their child at all times. There are occasions where, for example, it may suit someone to point to the child instead of themselves.

What safeguards are in place when it does appear that perhaps the parent or guardian is not the best advocate for their child?

**Mrs HISCUTT** - I will seek some advice on that one.

---

## Recognition of Visitors

**Madam CHAIR** - While the Leader is seeking some advice, we have another group of young people from Blackmans Bay Primary School from the electorate of Nelson. Your local member is down there, Meg Webb. We are actually in what we call the Committee stage of a bill, where we have legislation on youth justice and every part of the bill is being considered now. The members of the Council ask the Leader of the Government - sitting at the front middle table here - questions, and she will respond on behalf of the Government. The other people at the table assisting her are people who work in the specialised area of youth justice and they know everything about it, so they provide the proper advice to the Leader to respond because they cannot speak in the House, only the Leader can.

I hope you enjoy your time here and we wish you all the best.

**Members** - Hear, hear.

---

[12.10 p.m.]

**Mrs HISCUTT** - The police make every effort to find a responsible person. If perhaps, the child is feeling they are being pushed around by its parents, the police do ask the child, are you comfortable with this? Do you want somebody else? They will make every effort to make sure that child is comfortable before they go through the process.

**Subclause 25H agreed to.**

**Subclause 25I agreed to.**

### **Subclause 25J**

Reporting of use of force

**Ms WEBB** - Part (4) and the question relates to the end of part (4) where it speaks about:

... unless the touching or force is such that the person conducting the search had reasonable grounds to believe, or ought reasonably to have been aware, that the touching or force has caused or may cause an injury to the youth.

To clarify a question on the use of the word 'injury' there and whether that is by definition a physical injury or taken to mean also, potentially, psychological injury as well as physical injury. We are talking about touching or force, but the injury caused could be psychological in nature.

**Mrs HISCUTT** - Both of those causes are taken into consideration, physical or mental.

**Subclause 25J agreed to.**

**Subclauses 25K and 25L agreed to.**

**Clause 6 agreed to.**

**Clause 7 agreed to.**

**Clauses 8, 9 and 10 agreed to.**

**Bill reported without amendment.**

**Third reading made an order of the day for tomorrow.**

## **MOTION**

### **Budget Papers and Appropriation Bills (No. 1 and No. 2) 2022 - Noting**

**Continued from 26 May 2022 (page 36).**

[12.14 p.m.]

**Mrs HISCUTT** (Montgomery - Leader of the Government in the Legislative Council) - Mr President, the 2022-23 Budget is all about balance. I am talking about the balance needed to responsibly direct resources towards those priority areas of concern that Tasmanians rightly expect to be addressed, while at the same time curtailing our expenditure where it is fair to do so, and strategically considering our debt levels following increased government spending associated with the COVID-19 pandemic.

Despite the impact of COVID-19 on our economy, the Government is now carefully getting the Budget back on track and into surplus over the forward Estimates. In 2023-24, the Government will return to a net operating surplus of \$19.1 million, with \$32.2 million in 2024-25 and \$30.5 million in 2025-26. This is not a shock-and-awe budget, and that is a not bad thing at all. It is a good thing. It is a responsible budget. The COVID-19 pandemic required governments to step up with strong action to ensure a resilient economy, to spend in a way perhaps not normally considered prudent, and we did. We did so to ensure the continuation of businesses and employment at a time of unprecedented challenges to the standard of living for millions of Australians. Here in Tasmania, our Government was part of that process. The Tasmanian Government provided economic and social support measures in excess of \$1.5 billion, and our leadership and responsiveness has been widely recognised.

However, now we have emerged from COVID-19 and we are in a very good position to move forward with optimism. COVID-19 has changed our way of living, and I suspect it will continue to do so. But we cannot continue to allow it to dominate our lives, and we must move on and embrace the opportunities that present themselves.

This Budget is part of that post-COVID-19 strategy. It is a natural progression of the Government's strategic approach to COVID-19 and the need to be responsible as we emerge from it.

We are in a good position. The figures bear that out. We are one of the strongest-performing economies in the nation. Since the Government came to office, around 26 000 jobs have been created around the state, and the unemployment rate is 3.8 per cent as of April 2022. It is the lowest level on record, and half of what it was in March 2014. In April our full-time employment rate hit its highest level ever. For nine consecutive quarters, the Tasmanian

Government has led the nation in the CommSec State of the States reports, holding the mantle of the best-performing economy and ranking highly in key economic indicators.

As the Treasurer noted in his speech in 2021-22, the Tasmanian economy is expected to grow by 3.75 per cent, and Treasury forecasts that above-average economic growth will continue in 2022-23 and 2023-24. Retail trade was \$665.9 million in March. That is 15.3 per cent higher than before the pandemic, and a staggering 45.4 per cent higher than when the Government came to power. Exports are growing. Tasmanian exports of goods are at record highs, growing by almost 25 per cent to reach \$4.6 billion in the 12 months to March 2022. The annual Trade Scorecard is a check of progress against the goals of the Tasmania Trade Strategy 2019-2025, and focuses on the areas of building trade in key sectors, showcasing Tasmania in priority markets, supporting trade logistics and market access and building export capacity in Tasmanian businesses.

The scorecard shows that goods exported recorded growths of 5.2 per cent across the 2020-21 financial year. Services exported contributed \$646 million despite the challenges facing our domestic and international markets. Importantly, our goods and services exports reached \$5 billion over the year, keeping us well on track to achieve the Government's ambitious target of \$15 billion in export trade by 2050. The scorecard also shows that almost 1500 businesses accessed the Tasmanian Government trade-related services across the year, and more than 450 Tasmanian businesses were promoted directly to or within their targeted export markets. Business confidence is also surprisingly resilient in Tasmania. Businesses are investing and hiring.

Having a strong economy is all well and good, but what is really important is that it enables the Government to invest more in those areas that really matter to Tasmanians - into health, education and housing. In last year's Budget speech, I referenced my own discussions with a former premier when I saw first hand his determination to tackle the issues that were raised during the election campaign - issues that were still outstanding in Tasmania and that continue to raise concerns for many Tasmanians.

It is pleasing to note that the new Premier clearly has a very similar disposition. Ongoing issues such as health, housing and education are rightly still the issues that the Premier and the Government recognise and are determined to address. The Budget we see before us clearly demonstrates this to be the case.

Mr President, health is an absolute priority in this Budget. The Government will invest a record \$11.2 billion into health, which now accounts for 33.6 per cent of the total budget operating expenditure. An average of \$7.3 million will be spent every day on delivering health services to the Tasmanian community. To meet demand pressures in our hospitals, a further \$50 million will be invested to lock in the beds opened in preparation for border changes last December. This is complemented with more than \$12 million for public-private partnerships to meet demand, and the Government's \$196 million statewide, four-year elective surgery plan to deliver more surgeries sooner. The Government is already investing significantly in community GP-led healthcare and hospital avoidance programs, and this Budget includes \$30 million for the Community Rapid Response Service across the state.

Significantly, this Budget also includes \$654 million invested over the next four years for upgrades at all four major hospitals, and investment into rural hospitals and community health services. I particularly want to refer to the Mersey Community Hospital - the



MCH - which plays a critical role in the delivery of health care to the north-west community. I am very pleased to see that work is now underway to expand the Mersey Community Hospital outpatients clinic and operating theatres, with Fairbrother Construction being awarded the \$41.1 million contract to deliver these essential upgrades.

This Budget also includes a truly significant investment in digital health, with \$150 million allocated over the next four years to continue improving access to health care. This important investment will provide for a fully integrated health care system, while increasing capacity and efficiency by better connecting our community health care and hospital sectors so more Tasmanians can access the health care that they need.

Education and training are additional areas where Tasmanians have understandably expressed their concerns. The Government continues to invest record amounts into education, skills, and training, with expenditure in this Budget of over \$8.5 billion. The Budget also allocates \$250 million in infrastructure investment for new and upgraded schools around the state, to build and improve classrooms and essential facilities. Last year's Budget invested almost \$100 million to transform TasTAFE into a government business that is fit for purpose in the booming jobs market. Funding of over \$37 million was allocated to employ 100 extra TasTAFE teachers, and now the Government is providing a further \$7 million for additional support services for these extra teachers. In conjunction with the federal government, the JobTrainer Fund has provided low or no-fee training places for people looking to upskill or retrain. This Budget provides a further \$8 million to extend the JobTrainer Fund.

Last month, I was particularly excited to see an announcement from the Minister for Skills, Training and Workforce Growth regarding the Agricultural Training Centre of Excellence in Burnie. Site works have now officially commenced, and this \$5 million centre will train people for employment in the agricultural sector and support families to upskill. At the same time, the minister also welcomed TasTAFE and UTAS signing an MOU to enhance research and education outcomes for our agricultural industry. The centre of excellence and the MOU will support the Government's plan to upskill Tasmania's agricultural workforce, and its goal to increase the annual farmgate value of this sector to \$10 billion by 2050. This happened at Freer Farm, at the back of Burnie - which I believe might be in the Murchison electorate.

**Ms Forrest** - It is now.

**Mrs HISCUTT** - It is now. I did my four year apprenticeship in agriculture up at Freer Farm. I must admit, when I turned up there it was pretty well the same, so I was very pleased to see that this money has been contributed to that. I was also very pleased to sit alongside the minister for agriculture who was there at the time. It was very good to see something happening up there.

The Tasmanian Government is delivering the most ambitious and comprehensive social and affordable housing program in the state's history. Through the 2022-23 Tasmanian Budget and over the forward Estimates, the Government will invest up to a record \$538 million into social and affordable housing and homelessness initiatives, with \$204 million this year alone.

The Government will build 1169 homes this year, meeting our target of 1500 by June 2023 and raising to a total of 10 000 new homes by 2032, as part of a 10-year \$1.5 billion housing package.

The Budget will also fund a package of initiatives designed to make home ownership more accessible and affordable, including the First Home Owner Grant, unlocking more residential land, lifting the land tax thresholds, the Housing Market Entry Program and stamp duty concessions.

From a housing perspective many Tasmanians are doing it tough right now and there is clearly more work to be done. That is why Government is investing more than \$36 million per year into specialist homelessness services, including shelters, which are often the first step towards stable accommodation for many Tasmanians on the pathway to living independently with improved health and wellbeing.

The 2022-23 Budget includes \$6.58 million to continue to provide Safe Spaces. There is \$3.86 million for Hobart, \$1.9 million for Launceston and \$1.9 million for Burnie. Safe Space is an innovative and integrated response for people sleeping rough, which is uniquely Tasmania, making a real difference to addressing homelessness.

This Budget will also provide \$3.2 million over two years, for Youth2Independence homes. In the south, the Budget will provide \$277 000 for the Hobart Women's Shelter emergency response and \$172 000 in 2022-23 for the continued operation of 18 units of crisis accommodation managed by Bethlehem House.

There is \$16 million to be provided for supported accommodation facilities for older Tasmanians in the north and the north-west. This is on top of the builds already underway in the north, including the \$4 million expansion to Magnolia Place, to support homeless women and children and \$2.2 million for the Launceston Youth at Risk Centre and \$4.5 million expansion to Thyne House.

In addition, in the north-west there will be \$2.5 million to support the operations of the Devonport Men's Shelter. A new 8-unit facility for men, including a unit to accommodate men with children.

This is on top of the \$9.5 million Burnie Youth2Independence facility, with 25 studio apartments for young people aged between 16 and 24, that start construction in the next few months.

I will turn for a moment to some more local stuff that I found interesting whilst reading through the overview.

I wanted to make note of the \$1.9 million for the implementation of the Wild Fallow Deer Management Plan. The Legislative Council did a review into the wild fallow deer, of which the -

**Ms Rattray** - Select committee inquiry.

**Mrs HISCUTT** - Yes. Which was reported upon in 2017, with 13 recommendations from that and I was very pleased to see the former minister for agriculture had picked up on that and started working his way through that it. I am told by the current minister for agriculture that will be continued, which was lovely to hear.

**Ms Rattray** - The numbers are certainly increasing and also in places I have never seen them before.

**Mrs HISCUTT** - Yes, 800 000-plus. They are over on the west coast also.

One thing I want to point out to the member for McIntyre is that she might be pleased to have read, and I am sure she has read it - \$16.5 million for the \$70 million Sideling upgrade stage 2. For the member for McIntyre we might have some more pull-off areas for her and that is good.

**Ms Rattray** - Happy to start on the first stage, Mr President.

**Mrs HISCUTT** - Moving on, there is \$10 million investment in the outdoor learning areas. I know one of the schools up the road from where I live, the Riana Primary School - the old stamping ground for the member for Murchison as well - has an outdoor learning area so I had to ring Anna from Riana to get an update -

**Mr PRESIDENT** - You made that up.

**Mrs HISCUTT** - No, I did not. She said to me, Anna from Riana. So, Anna from Riana, who is also heavily involved with the school, tells me that it is going gangbusters up there. She said builders are coming in, decking boards are ordered, they have hothouses and raised garden beds. There are tracks through the bush that they have made safe for the little ones to also play in there.

**Ms Forrest** - Not like in my day.

**Mrs HISCUTT** - There are great things happening up there. She also mentioned that there is very strong community support and input. I know that my office and I have given them a great amount of support. She said there are three dads who are helping volunteer and they are builders so things are going ahead up there. She said it is all on track, just about to take off. She said the kids - this would be the older children - have had great fun digging the foundations for some of the uprights for shelters and she said they had great fun writing their names in the cement before it set. We all like doing that.

The other thing I noticed was the \$5.2 million supporting safer schools and school bathroom programs. I had to look up the school bathroom programs and it is all about combating bullying.

**Mr Willie** - Plenty of work to do.

**Mrs HISCUTT** - I am sure you will have your say. So 86 per cent of students feel safer at school. However, during 2017-20 there was an increase in suspensions.

As we know, the older-style toilet blocks were a hotspot for bullying. I remember when I first went to high school, everyone said, 'Don't go to the toilets, you'll get your head flushed down the loo', so this sort of thing is good, to have safer bathroom programs happening.

**Ms Forrest** - That is why Montello needs a rebuild, not a fix-up. Anyway, we will get to that.

**Mrs HISCUTT** - I have also noted that there is \$1.3 million for prison body scanning technology so that would be relating to the bill that we have just passed. That is good.

Moving on, there is \$7 million towards the redevelopment of Montello. This was a 2020-21 election commitment. So far to date, there has been extensive community, staff and student consultation that has been undertaken. It was undertaken in late 2020-21 and that was to seek feedback on the priorities for the redevelopment of the school.

Architects have been appointed and are working on the development of a master plan for the school with the project working group which includes the principal and a representative from the school association. It is expected that a master plan will be developed in the coming months and this will be shared with the school and local communities for feedback.

The Tasmanian construction industry is currently very buoyant and while this is great news for local jobs, it also means there is strong competition for labour and building materials, leading to high cost escalations. At this stage, it is unclear how the project may be impacted by these matters. However, a range of options is being canvassed as part of the master planning process.

I also note that there is \$8.6 million to complete the new Burnie Ambulance Station. In years past, I remember standing here saying that it is happening and it was great to see it finally happening.

The only thing is, as the member for Murchison would know, there is a bit of hill behind the hospital. There was a bit of a challenge to the height of the ambulance station. The roof of the high doors was impeding some of the views of the people behind. I am happy to report that this has been sorted and I think everybody is now happy. They lowered the roof a little bit and redesigned.

**Ms Forrest** - Through you, Mr President, they dug the building in a bit into the hill but it was not so much about the height as much as the noise. Ambulance Tasmania and the team have worked closely with them.

**Mrs HISCUTT** - That may be the complaint you received. The complaint that I received was about the height of the building.

It is good to see some money going into West Ulverstone for our new child and family learning centre and \$25 million for the Dial Regional Sports Complex at Penguin. That will help make sure that it is ready to go. It already has an AFL-standard oval but this will help with more seating. When we are ready to go, it will be ready to go.

Every year I talk about Cradle Mountain. There is \$61 million to go towards roads and upgrading roads at Cradle Mountain. That is one of our iconic drawcards for the north-west coast, so it is important to keep it in tip-top shape.

Notwithstanding our strong economic and social position, we continue to live in troubled and often unpredictable times. The global and economic outlook deteriorated following the invasion of Ukraine and the lockdowns in China, affecting key manufacturing hubs and putting pressure on supply chains. We in Tasmania are not immune from the machinations of the international community and these, together with the lingering impacts of COVID-19, will

continue to impact on Tasmanians, often through higher costs for Tasmanian households and businesses. The Budget is built on that foundation.

More than ever, responsible budget management is important. In 2022, the Budget is a budget about strengthening Tasmania's future while delivering in priority areas for all Tasmanians. It is about adopting a strategy to ensure our debt levels remain within manageable limits into the future so that we can use our balance sheet to shield Tasmanian jobs and families should unexpected external shocks occur to our economy. It is a budget that draws on the principles of fairness and compassion, together with need to deliver responsible and manageable fiscal outcomes.

Mr President, this is a budget that gets the balance right. I commend it to the House.

[12.36 p.m.]

**Ms FORREST** (Murchison) - The Government deserves plaudits for achieving a better result for the year about to end, the 2021-22 year, than was expected in the 2021-22 Budget when it was handed down last August. The better bottom line is principally due to extra general purpose grants from a bigger GST pool, higher receipts from state taxes, which includes extra stamp duties of \$64 million, and extra payroll tax of \$32 million. It must be noted that extra specific purpose grants also helped to cover the extra pandemic costs.

Not wanting to detract from the Government's achievement, and I acknowledge the good, we nevertheless need to remember that these are windfall changes or 'parameter changes' if we use the budget jargon, not the effects of any policy change. Most pleasing was how much was spent on capex, purchases of non-financial assets to use the budget jargon, which principally includes the Government's infrastructure spending.

In the 2020-21 Budget, the Government said it intended to spend \$776 million in 2021-22. The estimated outcome for the 2021-22 year in capex spending was \$807 million, an extra \$31 million. For a long time, there has been a chronic failure to spend capex in a timely manner to address the critical need for more infrastructure via projects that have been pushed aside as the Government has tried to get the Royal Hobart Hospital upgrade monster under control, a monster that has been devouring so much of the capex in recent years. Let us hope that the Government is able to continue with this pattern of doing what it says it will do in a timely manner.

I will have a bit more to say about infrastructure spending in a moment but I first wanted to touch on this year's Budget and the context of the Budget as a plan for a sustainable Tasmania. As I said in my recent state of the state reply - which was very recent - there has been a noticeable toning down of backslapping rhetoric from the Government that they have righted the ship and fixed the budget mess inherited from their errant predecessors. Only a couple of lines mentioned the prospect of a net operating surplus.

The Treasurer said in his Budget Speech that in 2023-24 we will return to a net operating surplus of \$19.1 million with \$32.2 million in 2024-25 and \$30.5 million in 2025-26. What he did not say is that even if net operating surpluses are achieved, there will be cash deficits every year. This Budget, plus the three years of forward Estimates, will see cash deficits totalling \$3.8 billion. That is, cash deficits: \$3.8 billion of cash deficits.

The projected net operating surpluses are a mirage, as I keep saying. We are spending more than we receive when all spending is included and there is no sign that this will change. In case members have not read Saul Eslake's instant analysis of this year's Budget, I urge you to do so. He zones in on the cash deficits, as I have done and have been doing for years, as the only way to get a realistic grasp of our financial position.

The net operating surplus is irrelevant when it does not include all outlays. Even so, no-one cares if governments make profits. Their job is to sustainably deliver services, not profitably, according to some arcane accounting standard. The Treasurer did mention our ballooning debt, but he is still categorically resisting stating that we are spending, and will continue to spend, more than we are receiving.

It is not until this really sinks in that we can begin the task of fixing the problem. We have to acknowledge and accept the problem in the first instance. The Treasurer then made an attempt to indicate the problems ahead when he said in his Budget Speech, 'I have also tasked Treasury with providing advice to me on strategies to ensure our debt levels remain within manageable limits into the future so we can again use our balance sheet to shield Tasmanian jobs and families should external shocks to our economy occur in the future'.

The budget papers also make mention of the problem when discussing the Budget's fiscal strategy on page 31 of Budget Paper No. 1. I notice, however, there may be conditions attached to the search for a solution. On Sunday 29 May, the *Mercury* reported Mr Ferguson's comments. It said Mr Ferguson signalled that tax reform could be on the agenda in Tasmania, only if the Albanese Government ensured Tasmanians would not be disadvantaged beyond 2026. 'Before we start talking about tax reform, I actually want to lock-in the GST we depend on to ensure the guarantee is secured long term,' he said.

I presume the Treasurer is being accurately quoted in this. If so, what he said is ridiculous. We cannot wait any longer to address the issues that we face. We have wasted too much time already. It is the same with every issue this country is facing, whether it is climate change, living cooperatively with our Pacific neighbours, the housing crisis, or the government spending more than they receive with no idea how to fix the problem without crashing the economy - we stuff about.

It is a sad indictment of failed processes and the longer we leave it before we take real and targeted action, the larger the task and, possibly, the pain that may be experienced for some. But act we must. The short-term election cycle and the risk of electoral backlash, lest any party makes a suggested policy change, means we never get to move forward in a sensible fashion.

The only progress is achieved when we are dragged, kicking and screaming, in the face of reality. The problem of our GST share beyond 2026 is due to an incredible handout given to Western Australia, and I have spoken about that numerous times in this place. Given the massive swing to Labor in that state in the recent federal election, that is unlikely to change any time soon. They will not bite the hand that fed them.

So, do we wait with fingers crossed for a few more years before we do something? Is that what the Treasurer is suggesting? Whatever happens, we will still have the problem to fix. Why not start now? We should have continued what we briefly started 14 years ago, those of us who were here at the time, when the last tax reform process got underway.

Ever since the fall of Lehman Brothers in 2008, turning the world upside down, state government sustainability has been a problem. The Liberals, once they took over in 2014, basically were trying to put lipstick on a pig, but in 2019 it was obvious to everyone that we were falling behind in delivering the services that people not only want, but desperately need in many cases.

Then COVID-19 struck, which added to the woes, but it did not cause our current woes, it exacerbated them. It is not the Liberals' fault. It is a Tasmanian problem and we all need to own it. I sincerely hope the sanctimonious in the Labor party do not try to remind us that when they were evicted from office the debt was not near as bad as it is now. As we can see from the two major parties, the commentary on this vitally important issue is more tit-for-tat, and we simply do not move forward. We have been on the same inexorable slide for well over 10 years, regardless of who has been sitting and occupying the Treasury benches.

So, let us be nonpartisan about this. As a first step, let us all acknowledge we have a problem and we need to do something about it. This Budget does not categorically state the extent of the problem. It merely makes passing reference to the debt problem and the need to find a solution, which the Treasurer appears to qualify by demanding the GST transition guarantee of 'no worse off' be continued indefinitely.

It is difficult to give the Treasurer a pass mark for his first budget. I hope that Treasury is serious about the need for change but I am always sceptical about Damascene conversions. As the finance minister a few short months ago, he was responsible for one of the most egregious acts of failing to act in the state's best interest when he rammed through the outrageous handouts to the gaming industry. It would have been possible to extract another \$25 million a year from the industry, still leaving participants making better returns than their colleagues in the rest of the hospitality industry.

The jobs arguments presented in support of the changes were bogus, as well as the selection of a North Queensland template to justify the tax rates. It was a shameful handout to mates. The most prominent - Federal Hotels - was already swamped with \$40 million of JobKeeper awarded by the Australian Government which it did not actually need, and which resulted in the company posting its biggest ever profit. By trampling poker machine changes in the way he did, the Treasurer committed the state to borrow an extra \$25 million a year. You can all do the sums. That is \$500 million over 20 years. There is a lot of money at stake, and it is also a lot of money for a small state such as ours.

Then we look at the most recent land tax changes. I know we passed them through this House and I did not oppose them. This year's Budget clearly sets out the effects of these changes on our finances. The Policy and Parameter Statement on page 51 outlines the effects of the land tax changes. Under parameter changes we see the extra land tax that would have been collected with existing taxes - a total of \$172 million over three years. Under the policy changes on the same page but further up, a total of \$125 million over the same three years, which would continue indefinitely at the rate of almost \$50 million each year thereafter. The Treasurer chose to give property owners a handout, happy that the Government could easily borrow an extra \$40 million to \$50 million each year to cover this. Barely two months later, the Treasurer is admitting to asking Treasury to present ways to keep our borrowings at a manageable level.

I am staggered by this chronology of events. Our problems have been glaringly obvious since the first Fiscal Sustainability Report in 2016. It is not as if the Treasurer was unaware of our ballooning debt when he gave \$25 million a year to the gaming lobby, and \$45 million a year to property owners - predominately those who own investment properties. The argument for the land tax reductions was that it would assist those property owners to lower rents. There is very little evidence this likely to occur; just like the gaming handout, it was basically based on voodoo economics. The effect of the land tax changes will be, as I pointed out in my second reading contribution at the time, that property yields will rise and as a consequence property values will follow suit, which will then lead to even higher rents and an even greater distortion between the haves and have-nots in the housing market. Is that really what we want?

How are we ever going to do tax reform? It is akin to the climate denialists being put in charge of the climate policy. It simply is not going to work. I am sorry to be so blunt - or maybe I am not; but attitudes and understanding need a giant shake-up to make it to square one of any reform process. We have wasted 10 years with unedifying nonsense about a return to surplus being around the corner, when the cash deficits were all but guaranteed but which nevertheless were still not enough to service the needs of Tasmanians.

We have a crook system, in as much trouble as aspects of our health system. The fiscal strategy, specifically Strategic Action No. 3, covers the role of state taxes: to be fair, simple, stable and sustainable. The commentary on Strategic Action No. 3 is that we rank second last when it comes to raising revenues had we applied the Australian average level of effort to our available revenue base. In other words, we should be raising more from the tax base we have. Should we not first get our own house in order before demanding that others make change?

The fiscal strategy also contains Strategic Action No. 4, which is that government businesses will be required to deliver services to Tasmanians at the lowest sustainable cost, while also providing an appropriate financial return to the Government. What follows is a commentary that nominates Project Marinus and Battery of the Nation as, presumably, assisting us to achieve this strategy.

I will be keen to hear how these two projects will assist this noble aim. I do not want to hear about what else Marinus and Battery of the Nation might achieve, such as jobs, jobs, jobs and a return to investors. Let us stick to Strategic Action No. 4, and how that will be actually achieved. How will we lower electricity prices here, when we are now 100 per cent self-sufficient? Will Marinus drive down local prices more than the extra burden that Marinus costs? What are the expected returns to Government of these two projects, as required by Strategic Action No. 3?

It has been a while since the Government updated its fiscal strategy, so it is timely to look at the other strategic actions. There are six of them and so far, I have mentioned strategic actions numbers 3 and 4. Strategic actions 1 and 2 are also worth review.

Strategic Action No. 1 covers the need for growth in operating expenses to be lower than revenue growth. The Government gives itself a tick for this strategy, but I question whether this measure is misleading given that net debt is increasing - which means we are spending more than we are receiving. Only operating expenses are considered, which seems a little pointless given that delivering infrastructure is just as crucial and does the measure of revenue used to assess the strategic action include capital grants from the Australian Government? If



so, it would be misleading at best. The point I am making is that there is an element of self-assessment about fiscal strategy which might help to hide some of its shortcomings.

The final strategic action I wish to mention is Strategic Action No. 2, which specifies an aim to keep interest on borrowings plus employer contributions to the Government's unfunded superannuation schemes below 6 per cent of General Government cash receipts. I always comment on this, if not in my budget reply then certainly during the Estimates process. To date, the concern has always been about the unfunded superannuation requirements, but these are always fairly predictable and likely to remain so. It is the increase in the interest costs on borrowings which is now looming as a concern. I acknowledge the inclusion of some very helpful additional detail in Budget Paper No. 1, under Assets and Liabilities. I believe this may have been included in part to enhance the reader's understanding of these important matters, particularly around our debt and our borrowings.

At this point, I compliment Treasury on the new charts and supporting commentary, particularly in the area of net debt servicing costs comparison with other states and their respective gross state products, which I found to be most informative. This helpful level of detail and some of the information provided relates to questions I have been asking over the years, so I thank Treasury officials.

The idea that our net debt might be low compared to other states is always misleading. When our proportionately larger unfunded superannuation liability is added in, we do not fare as well and it will get worse as the budget papers explain. Net interest as a percentage of revenue will quadruple over the forward Estimates, from 0.5 per cent to 2 per cent. That is clearly laid out on page 135, Budget Paper No 1, and is another matter we will chase up next week. If interest rates exceed revenue growth, then this percentage will keep growing. It will grow even more if we are running cash deficits - which is all but guaranteed. We will have to borrow just to pay the interest. When do we reach the tipping point? That is the question.

I am not concerned about the debt per se, only the compounding effects of unpaid interest and the continuing cash deficits. As I mentioned in my recent response to the Premier's Address, some of the state government debt is owned by the Australian Government via its wholly owned bank, the Reserve Bank of Australia. Notwithstanding the independence of the RBA, it is still a wholly owned subsidiary of the Australian Government and should the latter wish to write off some of the debt of all states currently owned by the RBA, it would only require the stroke of a pen or, these days, the click of a mouse. That might sound like plan Z, and perhaps it is; but right now, there are no other plans on the table. Complacency is leading to delusions. Let us do something about them before they reach the epidemic stage.

I will briefly go back to infrastructure spending now. As I noted above, budgeted capital expenditure (capex) spending was, or will be, achieved for the 2021-22 year. Policy change in the capex space was negligible for the 2021 year, and the parameter changes were minimal.

I am interested to know whether this means all projects were brought in on time and on budget, or whether some projects were deferred and the funds thus saved were applied to fund cost blowout in the remaining projects. We know there have been cost blowouts, for a variety of reasons. I suspect there may be a bit of the latter, as we know how much building costs and construction costs have risen in recent times.

I also ask, with the recent federal election, and the change of government, will any of the government-funded infrastructure projects, listed on page 123 of Budget Paper No. 1, be impacted by the change of government? That is a matter I can follow up next week, if the Leader cannot address it in her reply.

Certainly, one of the most pressing projects in my electorate is the Montello Primary School upgrade. That is a matter I will comment on further. It was announced in former premier Mr Gutwein's swan song budget last year: still the same start date of 2021, and the same finish date of 2024, and the same estimated cost of \$7.1 million - even though most of the spending has been pushed back a year. How does that work? When do the rising costs get included with projects that are pushed back?

I notice on the Policy and Parameter Statement on page 64, there is \$214 million of parameter changes, including capex spending for the budget year of 2022-23, most in State Growth - that usually means road spending - and \$220 million in the year after. I ask what these are. Are they cost blowouts, or deferred projects that have been shifted? If they were deferred, will they not show up as parameter changes in the year of deferral; say, in the current 2021-22 year? Maybe the parameter reductions for deferred projects in the 2020-21 year are offset by the parameter increases for the remaining projects tackled during 2021-22. I am keen to understand what is happening - to what extent record budgeted infrastructure spending is due to deferrals, and cost blowouts. Are we getting more done, or does it just look that way?

Mr President, as I said, I will pursue these matters more fully next week, and I hope the Treasurer will have clear explanations around this important matter.

I move from Budget Paper No. 1. No-one will be surprised that I wish to comment on the first Gender Budget Statement.

I congratulate the Government for accepting the reality that we should be providing a gender impact statement. I also thank the Minister for Women, who is not in the Chamber at the moment, for her commitment to her portfolio and seeking to make a real difference. I am very happy to work with her to do just that.

One of the first things I might work on is providing a little bit more advice and constructive input into what a gender impact assessment actually looks like.

I acknowledge that the member for Rosevears, the minister for Women, only took over the role of Minister for Women a very short time ago, and would have had little time to have a great deal of influence on this process to date.

The primary objective of a gender impact statement is to promote gender equality. The European Institute for Gender Equality and the Victorian Commission for Gender Equality in the Public Sector are two of the many excellent organisations where you can find a range of resources that could be adapted and utilised to support the work of the Tasmanian Government and departments in this important work.

I do want to note the work already commenced, and we possibly all knew that the first Gender Budget Statement would not be all we had hoped. I accept that.

The purpose of a gender impact assessment, when adopted across government, enables departments, agencies and organisations to think critically about how policies, programs and services will meet the different needs of women, men and gender-diverse people, and create better and fairer outcomes, ensuring all people have equal access to opportunities and resources. It is through the assessment of well-intentioned policy that unequal gender benefits can become apparent, and more targeted funding may be identified as needed.

The reality is that the needs of men, women and gender-diverse Tasmanians can be affected differently through the same policy. If we do not consider and assess the policies that would, at first glance, appear to assist all Tasmanians, we can unintentionally reinforce inequality.

It may seem like a daunting task, but there are many countries that have fantastic tools to assist us. We do not need to reinvent the wheel. As I stated, the Victorian Commission for Gender Equality in the Public Sector, and the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) provide many tools and information that can be of assistance. The EIGE states on their website:

The central question of the gender impact assessment is: Does a law, policy or programme reduce, maintain or increase the gender inequalities between women and men?

The European Commission also notes on its website:

Gender impact assessment is the estimation of the different effects (positive, negative or neutral) of any policy or activity implemented to specific items in terms of gender equality.

Further, the EIGE notes:

The final aim of the gender impact assessment is to improve the design and the planning of the policy under consideration, in order to prevent a negative impact on gender equality and to strengthen gender equality through better designed, transformative legislation and policies.

They have a whole lot of information there, Mr President. I also encourage any of our female members in this House to attend our Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians (CWP) Conference in Brisbane in July. We will have Dr Ramona Vijayarasa speaking about her gender legislative index that she has developed, which is another amazing tool.

Mr President, there are many great resources available to guide this work, and I am pleased to see that work has begun.

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

## QUESTIONS

### School Attendance for Term 1

**Mr WILLIE question to LEADER of the GOVERNMENT in the LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL, Mrs HISCUTT**

[2.32 p.m.]

Can the state Government please provide the attendance rates for each school for term 1?

### ANSWER

I have an answer here that is very data-heavy; there is one thing I will read out and then I will seek permission. The average daily attendance rates of each Tasmanian government school as at the end of term 1 - please note as the data is input at the end of term 1 and may be updated from time to time, these rates should be treated as preliminary. Mr President, I seek leave to table this document and have it incorporated into *Hansard*.

**Leave granted.**

**See Appendix 1 for incorporated document (page 114).**

### Cressy Research Station - Funding

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

[2.33 p.m.]

Minister, regarding the funding for the research stations across the state, the Cressy Research Station has been looking for some funding to upgrade and extend their facilities at Cressy. Where is that funding request in the system and has it made it to your desk, because it certainly belonged to the former minister for primary industries?

### ANSWER

I thank the member for the question. A strong research development and extension sector is central to our target to sustainably grow the annual farmgate value of Tasmania's agriculture to \$10 billion by 2050. Our Growing Tasmanian Agriculture: Research Development and Extension for 2050 white paper sets out our approach to achieving the productivity gains and innovations that will be needed to meet this target, while our Competitiveness of Tasmanian Agriculture for 2050 white paper affirms our ongoing commitment to research and innovation. We are growing cultural research, development and extension (RD&E) which has on-farm application for our farmers through a joint venture with the Tasmanian Institute of Agriculture (TIA) through our support of research farms and through funding opportunities such as the Agricultural Innovation Fund, our Agricultural Development Fund, and the Strategic Industry Partnership Program.

On 18 March 2022 the Government announced \$1.69 million from our \$3 million Agricultural Innovation Fund to four agricultural research projects being delivered by the TIA

in partnership with local industries. The four projects will address critical research areas for the Tasmanian agricultural sector, and importantly the projects have \$2.7 million committed in co-funding from other industries and sources.

### **Cressy Research Station - Funding**

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

[2.36 p.m.]

A supplementary question. We know that is all well and good, but my specific question was around the Cressy Research Station's request for funding. I am always interested in what additional funding there is, but that was a specific question.

### **ANSWER**

I thank the member for the supplementary question. I will get further information and get back to you on that as soon as possible. I will take that on notice.

### **Independent Living Units - Levying of Rates**

**Ms ARMITAGE question to LEADER of the GOVERNMENT in the LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL, Mrs HISCUTT**

Regarding the proposed legislative changes enabling local government authorities to rate independent living units owned and managed by charitable organisations, can the Leader please advise:

- (1) what consultation has been conducted to date with the public and with stakeholders?
- (2) what themes, issues, and criticisms have been brought during the consultation process?
- (3) when can the public and stakeholders expect to have access to fiscal modelling and analysis from the Department of Premier and Cabinet, and if further consultation is planned to follow?
- (4) to this end, whether the Government will consider extending the effective date of the grandfathering arrangement from 1 January 2022 to 1 January 2023?
- (5) whether the Government will consider establishing a stakeholder reference group or similar consultation to ensure that those who will be affected by such significant legislative change will have ample means, time, and opportunity to engage with consultation processes and be able to provide feedback?

## **ANSWER**

- (1) The Government has consulted a range of stakeholders regarding the request from local government to amend the Local Government Act 1993 to allow councils to rate independent living units owned and operated by charitable organisations. Consultation has included multiple meetings with LGAT, the Tasmanian Council of Social Service, Aged and Community Services Australia, and Leading Aged Services Australia.
- (2) Key issues raised during stakeholder discussion to date focus around the themes of compassionate and equitable treatment, differential rating and liability for rates.
- (3) Once the Government has determined its policy the public and stakeholders will be consulted.
- (4) This matter has been raised during consultation to date. Any grandfathering provisions will be part of the Government's policy response.
- (5) The stakeholder reference group was established in 2021 to consider the issues prior to the Government consulting with the Tasmanian community. The membership of the reference group includes the Department of Premier and Cabinet, who is the Chair; the Local Government Association of Tasmania, Tasmanian Council of Social Service, Aged and Community Services Australia, Leading Age Services Australia, two representatives of operators and a resident group representative.

## **MOTION**

### **Budget Papers and Appropriation Bills (No. 1 and No. 2) 2022 - Noting**

**Resumed from above (page 31).**

[2.40 p.m.]

**Ms FORREST** (Murchison) - Mr President, before the lunchbreak I was talking about what a gender impact assessment or a gender budget statement should actually look like. I was providing some guidance for the minister in her role, and making sure that we actually improve on this in the future, acknowledging that it is the first one and it has to start somewhere and all of that.

I want to go back to the key question that the European Institute for Gender Equality said, that the central question of a gender impact assessment is, 'Does a law, policy or program reduce, maintain, or increase the gender inequalities between men and women?' That is the key question. I am sure the minister will make sure all policy development includes those questions and then we can report against that in the gender impact assessment.

The European Commission also stated:

It is important that assessment is structured, i.e. systematic, analytical and documented.

There is a wealth of advice and information out there to help guide this and I look forward to working with the minister and the Government broadly on seeing a really informative and well-put together gender impact assessment into the future.

Whilst on the matter of gender equality, I asked - and I can follow up again in Estimates if the Leader cannot provide detail in her response. I note in Budget Paper No. 1 related to the labour market comments, on page 25, it states:

As at March 2022, the ABS estimates that there were 261 700 persons employed in Tasmania, the second highest number on record ...

Full-time employment has grown strongly over the past year, with overall seasonally adjusted full-time employment sitting near its series high in March 2022 ...

It is 167 800 persons, good news. It goes on:

Females have accounted for around half of the increase in full-time employment since March 2020 ...

also a good thing, particularly on the back of the COVID-19 impact:

... with full-time female employment near its series high in March 2022. The series has recovered strongly from the initial impact of the pandemic, with full-time female employment growing by close to 11 per cent relative to its pre-pandemic level.

As I said, whilst this is good news, I want to see a breakdown of employment, particularly in the areas of growth in employment by gender and sector, where the increase in employment has occurred. If the growth has been in the low paid wages area, we do nothing to address the gender pay gap through this. It is a matter I will follow up next week with the Treasurer when we talk about these matters, but if it is possible to get any early indication of those figures that would be great.

While I am speaking about employment, I return to Budget Paper No. 1, where I also note a number of Tasmanian State Service wage agreements are due for renegotiation in 2022. Budget Paper No. 1, page 75 notes:

The 2022-23 Budget and Forward Estimates provides for wage indexation of 2½ per cent for the total cost of salary increases, allowances and other employment conditions for all industrial agreements. ... Any wage outcomes over and above the level of indexation provided will have a negative impact on the Budget outcome.

I know that paying people more to work does increase your spend. I absolutely get that, not a question. However, Budget Paper No. 1 also notes on page 27 that the growth in Hobart's CPI is expected to remain elevated, and year-average growth of 5.5 per cent is forecast for 2022-23. It is then predicted to reduce, or moderate as the budget papers describe it, to 3.25 per cent in 2023-24.

Has any analysis been undertaken by Treasury to determine the potential impact of keeping wage growth so far below CPI? Especially in terms of growth in the need for concessions, greater demand for Public Health services - for people who can no longer afford to pay private health insurance, for example - increased demand on public housing and other social services, to name a few. It is a false economy if people cannot afford to manage on their own with the money they get from their wages and not rely on additional government services. You have to factor that in when you look at the cost of not acting. I am not saying they should have a 5.5 per cent wage rise right up. I am saying there needs to be a full understanding of what the impact actually is of not keeping pace.

There are many Tasmanians, including those who are working, who are finding it really hard to make ends meet. It is not just people who are on unemployment benefits, for example. The costs of living pressures are enormous. The workload on so many of our State Service employees in health, education, police, prison services et cetera has been growing and particularly extraordinarily during the pandemic where all these people have worked extremely hard under extreme pressure. We have seen the result of this from increased numbers in costs of claims of psychological injuries and the reason we needed to top up the Tasmanian Risk Management Fund to the tune of \$105 million only last week.

I fear we are chasing a false economy here if we do not actually look after people. Arguments such as, 'Tasmania is a beautiful place to live and the cost of living here is less' no longer hold water. The housing prices in Tasmania, especially in Hobart, have risen almost more than all other states and cities. Being a beautiful state to live in is little help if you cannot afford to live here.

Nurses and others can get higher wages in other states for doing essentially the same work and it is often only family that keeps them here. Should they be treated inequitably because of this decision? I will pursue these matters next week, but we really need to understand the very real cost of living pressures so many Tasmanians are facing right now.

Let us return to Montello Primary School. The re-announced \$7.1 million is an insult to my community who need and deserve better. To restate my comments, because I need to ensure everyone appreciates the seriousness of my concern, this is a school located in an area of significant socio-economic disadvantage. The school community is not as empowered a community that is able to argue for what is just and fair for their children and families who rely on this school as some of the schools on the current and past list of significant upgrades. They are not as empowered as many of those parent bodies.

The school is no longer fit for purpose, it has not been for some time and a \$7.1 million bandaid will not address the issues related to accessibility or any others. I will remind you of a teacher who broke her ankle and could not return to work when she was fit to do so because she could not access her classroom. Putting a lift in might address that particular issue, but it potentially creates another bullies' haven to go with a disgusting toilet block almost under the school that is completely freezing to go into and impossible to supervise at any time because of its location.

The new toilet block, completed as part of the upgrade to the facade a few years ago to make some toilets at least accessible to children at a ground level, faces directly onto the main road, in front of the school. It still staggers me to understand how this could ever have been built and approved in terms of children's safety. It is a disgrace. Grades 5 and 6 students



remain in temporary demountable classrooms separated from the main school, and on it goes. I will not repeat all of the failures of this facility in terms of its physical building where the staff do an incredible job in really difficult circumstances.

Montello families and staff need and absolutely deserve a new school. There is room on the grounds to do this and I ask, what is proposed through the development of the master plan? I will pass these questions onto Committee B to follow up with education. I know they were developing a master plan and want to see what that is saying and how much money is going to be put into this to do what is needed to support this very vulnerable community.

I strongly suggest and support a new school and the necessary funding to do this, especially as the pub up the road, less than two kilometres away, is getting shy of a million dollars every year out of this community through the decisions of this Government, every year, year on year, through the pokies in that pub. Surely, we can do better for this community.

Another key area of the Budget, and one that has been hit very hard by COVID-19, is the education sector broadly. I appreciate how hard our teaching and ancillary staff have worked to ensure our children have access to education. It has been an extremely taxing time over the last few years. I commend the work done to provide virtual learning for children who are unable to attend due to illness or other vulnerability in their family. I thank those who have worked so hard to support our children's education.

We sadly also know some systems have failed to keep children safe in their settings over the many years. The secretary of the Department of Education, Tim Bullard, has been very clear, appearing before the commission of inquiry, that the department has fallen well short in its response to historic and some not-so-historic instances of child abuse in our educational settings. Sadly, this has also occurred in our health settings, particularly the Launceston General Hospital, and our youth justice systems. The impacts of these appalling events are lifelong for the victims. As a community and leaders in this state we will all need to ensure everything can be done to right the wrongs. The work of the commission of inquiry has been and will, no doubt, continue to be harrowing. I am sure the outcomes will be challenging for us all and heartbreaking for many; however, it will also be a much-needed acknowledgement for the victims. I am sure the recommendations made as a result of the commission of inquiry will add to the budget demands and we need to be ready to support this. It is about priorities.

I do not intend to cover all matters relating to health, mental health and wellbeing in my Budget reply, as I will have plenty of opportunity to delve into those areas next week. I welcome the announcement of \$150 million to fund an integrated digital health technology process; it is very much needed and a very important initiative. No doubt we will discuss that further in the budget Estimates.

I will make a few key comments and observations ahead of further scrutiny next week. COVID-19 is still with us, and possibly will be forever. So is influenza. Both of these diseases can be - and are often - lethal for older Tasmanians. This reality continues to put enormous pressure on our health and aged care sectors. Many other states have decided to make influenza vaccines - a tried and true effective vaccine - available free of charge to their residents. I find it hard to understand why we are not doing the same. To date - unless I have missed something in the morning session of downstairs - I do not think our Government has committed to this. I understand this season's flu is more virulent among younger people, who at this stage do not seem to be the most impacted when they get it. Many of these younger people have limited or

very low incomes and may not be able to afford it. As with our approach to the COVID-19 vaccine, we need to make it as easy as we can for Tasmanians to access timely and effective preventive care. Again, this is a matter I will take up next week. I hope we will have a positive announcement this week about the Government's decision to fund influenza vaccinations.

Whilst on the subject of vaccination, I was also informed that pharmacists in Tasmania cannot vaccinate children under 10 for influenza, despite being able to do so in New South Wales, Queensland and Western Australia. I was speaking to a pharmacist who had recently had a circumstance where the pharmacist vaccination team vaccinated four out of five members of a family against influenza - two adults and two children aged 12 and 13 - but could not vaccinate the eight-year-old child, so they had to make a GP appointment or some other mechanism to get that eight-year-old child vaccinated. That is quite inefficient. This seems at odds with our commitment to holistic care, especially when other states permit this.

Furthermore, pharmacists are able to vaccinate against COVID-19 for children aged six and older. This pharmacist has had circumstances over the past week where parents have attended with their children for a COVID-19 vaccine, but they could not also get and administer the flu vaccine. This sends very mixed messages to our families seeking to protect their whole family from these viruses for which there are now safe and effective vaccines. We need to be able to facilitate the delivery of such preventive care when our state health system cannot deliver it in a timely manner or this would put enormous pressure on it to do so, and we know how under pressure our GPs are. There are many other vaccines that could also be considered and I will follow up on those next week.

With regard to the arts, I have said many times in this place how important investment in the arts and culture is, as well as support for events and hospitality. I must say I am pleased to see a renewed focus on the arts in this Budget, with a small increase in funding for the arts industry development above last year's forward Estimates. Budget Paper No. 2 Volume 1 on page 283 states:

This Output focuses on working with Tasmanian artists and arts organisations to support this important industry. It aims to build the sustainability of arts businesses, broaden the engagement of Tasmanians in the arts and highlight the State's diverse arts and cultural sector. This result is achieved through a range of industry development programs, initiatives, and projects.

I am very pleased to note the ongoing commitment of the Government to the arts. It brings enormous benefit to all of us within our communities. I note this output also provides funding for individual arts, arts organisations, and major Tasmanian cultural institutions to plan and revitalise projects, and develop or present new work. In addition to the health and wellbeing benefit of engaging with the arts, I agree that these and other arts projects generate economic activity, and create employment opportunities and opportunities for audiences to enhance Tasmania's reputation as a cultural tourism destination. I will be passing some questions onto Committee B to look at a breakdown of programs, initiatives and projects funded under that line item.

I make a very brief point and comment on the Macquarie Point Development Corporation. I continue to be staggered by the amount of money the Macquarie Point

Development Corporation has been, and continues, to be paid. Budget Paper No. 1, page 107, informs us:

The 2022-23 Budget includes a \$37.2 million contribution to the MPDC. This funding will support the next development stage by progressing remediation works and the establishment of key enabling infrastructure.

Over the page, there is an additional \$100 million to decommission TasWater's Macquarie Point wastewater treatment plant.

There is a question here about how much they have been given over this whole time and what has actually been achieved. When are we going to see some real runs on the board from that?

While I am on the subject of infrastructure, generally, I will ask some questions, especially now as I will not be able to ask the minister next week. I will pass these on to Committee B, of course.

In relation to housing, Pattie Chugg, the CEO of Shelter Tasmania, stated in her response to the Budget, through TasCOSS, that:

Funding for the Safe Spaces in Hobart, \$3.06 million; Launceston, \$1.9 million; and Burnie, \$1.19 million, totalling \$6.9 million across the state, is very welcome, but provides operational funding for only one year. We would like to see an ongoing commitment to these services because the need for this essential safety net will not disappear in one-year's time.

This is why these things are so flawed. You savage the system that actually provides people with safe housing and then suddenly it has disappeared, and those people are completely left out in the cold, literally. I ask why is it that only one year's funding is provided for operational funding? This creates great uncertainty for those providing these services.

Ms Chugg also went on to say:

In the North West, we are pleased to see \$2.5 million operational funding for the new 8-unit Devonport Men's Shelter. The Youth to Independence centres in Burnie and Hobart will also receive \$3.2 million over two years.

I too welcome these important initiatives.

There is also the \$16 million committed to the establishment of supported accommodation facilities for older Tasmanians in the north and north-west, much needed and very welcome. Ms Chugg is absolutely right about the distressing reality of homelessness experienced by older Tasmanians, especially women. As I said earlier, we need to ensure that we consider the very real risk of homelessness for older women and women escaping family violence. I am hopeful our Minister for Women can use her influence to see many of these measures progressed in supporting particularly older women, who are one of the highest groups at risk of homelessness. Ms Chugg did state in her response to the Budget that more women than men seek assistance from specialist homeless services. Family violence is one of the number one reasons that women and their children ask for help.

**Ms Rattray** - The statistics also say that it is women over 50 now.

**Ms FORREST** - That is right. Women over 50. Single women over 50, who often do not have a lot of superannuation and that sort of stuff as well, so you cannot rely on your superannuation to help you out, can you?

Ms Chugg also said:

We know that one women's shelter is turning away 8 out of 10 women seeking assistance, which means that women who may be survivors of family violence are forced to couch surf, live in their cars or make do in hostels and short-term hotel rooms. More women live in poverty, and older women are the fastest-growing group of people facing the risk of homelessness and presenting to our member services.

It really is a major issue, and this again highlights the need for a gender impact assessment to be undertaken on our housing policy to make sure you are actually identifying that need - and not just saying, we are going to build another 1000 houses - if you do not target them in a way that actually deals with the problem.

I will make some brief comments about the Burnie Court Complex. I have been raising the issue of the inadequate and unsafe nature of the Burnie Court Complex for many years now. I was very pleased to have the Government announce, a couple of years ago now, that they would fund a new Burnie Court Complex. It has been anything but smooth sailing since then. I know my community in Burnie has been quite frustrated and felt unheard in many aspects of the decision to relocate the Burnie Court to the old UTAS campus on Mooreville Road.

I fully supported the Government's decision to deliver a new court facility. I made that very clear, as the current complex is absolutely not fit for purpose and cannot be redesigned to make it suitable. The key question here is the site. We know the Public Works Committee approved the works, albeit with two dissenting reports. This related predominantly to matters related to the lack of public consultation with key stakeholders - mainly two groups - the local residents on the Mooreville Road site and the business community in Burnie. I agree this was not handled well, but there have been varying accounts regarding the Burnie City Council's position on the move and the location. I will make no more comment about that.

The Government has now pulled back on the project to do what they should have done in the first place - fully assess all possible options for a suitable location in the Burnie CBD. If they had done that, they would not be doing it again, so clearly, they did not. I ask the Leader if she can provide an update as to where that is now, where is that expression of interest which was supposed to be short, sharp and targeted? We do need to get on with this so we have a fit-for-purpose and suitable facility.

Regardless, I am concerned the project approved by the Public Works Committee as presented - despite the availability of plenty of space at the Mooreville Road site - will not provide enough court and office space to meet the current and future needs of this region. It does not matter if it is built at Mooreville Road or whether it is built somewhere else in the CBD, whatever site is determined to be the most suitable site, but it actually needs to have greater facilities in it than provided for in the current footprint. They need an extra court and extra offices to facilitate the visiting courts like the Family Court and others. This is a matter

I will continue to observe closely, including opportunities for the future use of the Burnie Court Complex. The Burnie City Council has a strong view on this and I will be following this up and asking the Leader if she is able to respond at all.

My feedback from the Burnie City Council on this relates to matters that they are awaiting an outcome for the expression of interest process, as I have mentioned, and they have a strong view it should remain in the CBD. A secondary issue is the Burnie City Council has flagged with the state Government - I know they did this some time ago - the desire to have the current old courthouse returned to the council when it is decommissioned - acknowledging it is full of asbestos - as they want to provide pedestrian access and green space at the end of Cattley Street through to the cultural precinct. I fully endorse this proposal.

The second aspect of their discussions with the former treasurer and former premier was that in seeking support to revitalise the Burnie CBD, the Burnie City Council made a budget submission for \$5 million capital grants to assist in the current upgrade of the Burnie Arts and Function Centre. I understand there is no funding provided in the Budget and ask is that still on the table, as I have not found it at this stage?

The Alcohol and Drug Service - again, I will follow this up more in budget Estimates next week - the CO, Alison Lai, of Alcohol, Tobacco and Other Drugs Council was quite disturbed the Government is not actually acting on its own strategy. She said they were shocked at the absence of additional funding to support new initiatives for community-managed alcohol and other drug services. This was clearly a budget where they did not want to upset anybody by ensuring the community-managed organisations that are already receiving funding continue to do so; that is her opinion. She said:

Our organisation and our members have been working tirelessly with government over the past 12-24 months to progress a number of new initiatives that everyone agrees will strengthen the quality of, and access to information services across the state. This includes the introduction of peer workers to support Tasmanians who choose to seek help, and the introduction of a data sharing system that our members have been working on alongside government for the past year. These requests were exceptionally reasonable and both these projects align with the priorities of the Tasmanian Government's Reform Agenda for the Alcohol and Other Drugs Sector. ... While there is reference to peer workers in the budget papers, there is no firm commitment to the level of investment which is equally frustrating.

The Alcohol, Tobacco and Other Drugs Council is feeling quite frustrated by the Government not actually taking on board and moving on with their own reform agenda. I will ask more questions about that next week when we have the relevant minister in front of us.

There are many other important areas in this Budget that I will not comment on at this stage and know other members will cover many other areas.

I will close with a call to the Government to take a nonpartisan approach to addressing the underlying and structural budgetary challenges we face. The longer we leave it, the harder it is, the more work and potentially pain there may be in fixing it. As I and others have repeatedly said, I am happy to work with a government of any colour to address this, I am happy to engage whoever I can to provide a system that benefits all Tasmanians.

I want the Government to seriously consider - at the federal as well as the state level - using a deliberative democracy approach to open the conversation about tax reform. Deliberative democracy approaches are very good for addressing wicked problems, and if anything is a wicked problem, it is tax reform. In my view, they could dust off the Henry Tax Review, and through a professionally run, deliberative democracy framework, work to a solution that helps us all. Those in the Labor Party have done themselves a disservice in saying they are not going to have a conversation about it. Automatically, you give the Government a free kick to not talk about it either. The first step is acknowledging we have a problem and that we need to do something about it, and I am very disappointed we have not got to that point.

Mr President, let us work together to achieve a far more balanced economy and a more equitable society. Surely, we can all strive to do that in this place. I note the Budget and look forward to next week when we will be able to drill down into these key questions.

[3.06 p.m.]

**Mr DUIGAN** (Windermere) - Mr President, I am pleased to have the opportunity to address the Chamber in support of the Tasmanian Budget for 2022-23. This is the second opportunity I have had to address a state budget in this place. I am very pleased that this Budget strengthens the future of our state, not just in my part of the world, Windermere on the beautiful East Tamar, but right across Tasmania.

It is important to recognise and take some pride in the fact that our state, to this point, has weathered an extraordinary global event. For nine successive quarters Tasmania has led the nation in State of the States Reports from CommSec. Tasmanian exports are at record highs, retail trade is powering along, employment is at historic levels; this state is experiencing economic growth at twice the rate of the national economy.

I was pleased to attend a budget lunch on Friday in Launceston where the Treasurer outlined his vision. While highlighting those fantastic numbers and the stellar performance of our economy, he was quick to make the point that while governments love such numbers, they cannot necessarily take all of the credit. These numbers belong to Tasmanian businesses, large and small - the businesses that continue to invest and employ people in uncertain times, businesses that have found opportunities in the pandemic, and businesses that continue to promote, produce and drive our economy.

The role of government is to provide the environment for all to thrive. This Budget delivers for all Tasmanians and will strengthen our future. This Budget seeks to build and consolidate those that have gone before. Because of this strong economic management, the Government is investing even more in the essential areas Tasmanians across the board care about - those key areas of health, housing and education.

There is \$11.2 billion in health expenditure across the Budget and forward Estimates, which is one-third of the entire state budget operating expenditure, or 33.6 per cent. We will spend, on average, \$7.3 million every single day delivering health services to the Tasmanian community.

I have had the fortune over the past 12 months to learn a great deal about health services in our state. Above those headline numbers, I am very pleased to see one initiative, which is the \$150 million investment over the next four years to upgrade our digital health infrastructure. This is a substantial commitment and forms part of a digital health strategy. It

is anticipated that more than \$475 million will be allocated to this project over the coming 10 years. It includes the areas of patient records, connecting public and private providers, virtual care and telehealth, and streamlining appointment and referral pathways, which will give us less paper, fewer duplicate forms and fewer people in hospital who do not need to be there.

Expenditure on education, skills and training will increase to a record \$8.5 billion over the 2022-23 Budget and forward Estimates, and this includes \$250 million for new and upgraded schools, classrooms, and child and family learning centres. This initiative provides for a coordinated statewide program to renew and upgrade outdated classrooms where they focus on schools that have for too long been overlooked. Windermere has a number of those such schools and I was having a chat with Brett Hay, who is the principal of the South George Town Primary School which makes do with some fairly shabby old 1950s-style buildings. He was very pleased to report that consultation will begin next month, with this very much-needed revamp due for completion in 2024. I note Mowbray Heights Primary School, Lilydale District School and Port Dalrymple School are other schools in Windermere slated for contemporary learning environment upgrades and I applaud that.

Strengthening child safety is another notable aspect of this Budget. The Government will implement all recommendations from the commission of inquiry, and is acting now to deliver additional initiatives to help safeguard our children. The 2022-23 Budget includes an additional \$36.4 million, including new school safeguarding officers in every Tasmanian government school, additional support for students impacted by trauma and \$15.1 million for new multidisciplinary sexual violence support pilots. Education, skills, and training, as is often mentioned in this place, are the key to unlocking the potential of this state. It is the pathway to meaningful employment and one of the major determinants of a healthy, happy life. In this Budget, commitments to education and health spending represent 60 per cent of total spending. That is the biggest share of a substantially bigger budget in those two critical areas of government service.

The Budget further commits a record \$538 million of capital funding over the next four years, \$204 million this year alone, to build and acquire social and affordable dwellings to provide a hand to Tasmanians wanting to take their first step onto the property ladder, or indeed to provide affordable housing to those Tasmanians struggling for that most basic of needs, a secure roof over their heads. I watch with a great deal of personal interest as the work continues at some speed in Windermere, specifically a substantial development in George Town with 90 affordable and social lots and new homes under construction, also in Rocherlea, an imminent 80 lot development, a mix of affordable private homes and government-provided social housing. It is a big program and the Tasmanian building and construction industry is going hammer and tongs. I was pleased to see a memorandum of understanding between the Government and key building and construction industry stakeholders, paving the way for an ongoing collaboration to address the challenges in delivering the state's very substantial home building and infrastructure program.

It is worth noting it is estimated we will need another 6500 skilled workers across the building and construction disciplines by 2025, which by my calculation is three years. This Budget also continues the Government's commitment to long-term infrastructure investment; investments in the future of the state that will continue to serve the needs of Tasmanians long beyond our time in this parliament.

For roads and bridges there is \$2.7 billion, including \$731 million for the new Bridgewater bridge. As mentioned, \$578 million for human services and housing, \$654 million for health infrastructure, hugely important investments into our hospitals; \$313 million for schools, education, and training; \$297 million for ICT support and service delivery; \$222.9 million for law and order and \$205 million for tourism, recreation, and culture.

I will conclude my remarks by noting the \$305 million allocation to concession funding to make essentials like water, electricity and rates more affordable. In these times of cost of living pressure, these are important measures to ease the burden on those living on low and fixed incomes.

Mr President, I note the Budget.

[3.15 pm]

**Ms RATTRAY** (McIntyre) - Mr President, it warms my heart when members remind me of my time as the member for Apsley. Thank you. The member for Murchison has done it today, and now your good self. I am very fortunate.

I will make a few comments on the 2022-23 Budget. It has been suggested that it is not a bad budget, and I congratulate the new Treasurer on bringing down the Budget. I feel sure that he was not been able to put all of his fingerprints over the Budget as he has only briefly held the position of Treasurer; although he has been the minister for finance for some time. I congratulate him.

It has been noted by some eminent commentators that the Treasurer's budget is, surprisingly, a big spending affair. I heard the Treasurer talk on radio last week about how it is a good thing for states to be spending money on infrastructure. When you sit and reflect on that, just as an ordinary householder as I am, investing in infrastructure - whether it be your farm, or your home - always appears to be a reasonable thing to do.

For a Government to invest in infrastructure, I suggest that probably is a good way to spend the state's money and, in this case, borrow as well. I believe that problems arise when you start spending your revenue on areas that are just recurrent services, and that is something that I am sure Committee A will be drilling down into next week.

I always find this an interesting process. Time and again, since I have been here, there have been many suggestions that this process should be after we have scrutinised the budget with the fine-tooth comb, and the forensic lens that this House is known for. I am sure that there are many departmental people at this point in time making sure that they have all of their paperwork in order, because they will be ready for the education questions, the health questions, the arts questions, or community development. Whatever it might be, they will have all of that information. As we know, it comes flying across the table, from this way and that way, and from the back. We look forward to the opportunity to provide that scrutiny.

The member for Murchison encouraged us to have a look at the Saul Eslake commentary on the Budget, and I have done exactly that. We receive a lot of information after the Budget, and it comes from all quarters around the state.



The feedback received from Shelter Tasmania talked about types of housing and the fact there are 4400 Tasmanians and Tasmanian families currently on the housing waiting list - an enormous number. There will need to be many questions asked about that, because we know that if you are a single person over the age of 50, you do not necessarily need a three-bedroom home. A two-bedroom unit with a small backyard, perhaps somewhere where you can have a small vegetable patch, not much more, is the type of housing that is needed to accommodate those Tasmanians who are sitting on that waitlist.

I want to see a review of all of those 4400 people's needs, and see whether it is more two-bedroom units. You can put three, quite comfortably, on a normal block of land. Instead of having one house on a block of land, you can have three units; or more, if it is a larger block. We have seen it quite regularly in a lot of our communities where there has been a concerted effort to build more affordable housing and accommodation for those who are struggling and do not have adequate housing.

I have said many times here, that it is nothing for us to have inquiries about accommodation, and the lack of it, at least two or three times a week through our office. This is an area that we will continue to watch with interest.

Going back to Saul Eslake's commentary, it has been indicated that that big spending affair entailed new operating spending, compared with what had been projected in last year's budget, of \$753 million over the four years to 2025-26, together with revenue reductions totalling \$137 million over this period, plus an additional \$236 million in new infrastructure and other capital spending. That 'other' and that 'capital spending' are something that will always be of interest as we make our way through the budget papers. On Committee B, we leave it open for all members to ask a question about that. There are usually specific areas of interest for members, particularly relating to their own electorates, where they take the opportunity to raise matters and to follow up on areas and projects that might have been flagged for their electorates and may be funded into the future.

I noted in the budget papers that a number of projects have been restated. I note the Treasurer's Budget Speech includes in the list of \$250 million of infrastructure, new and upgraded schools around the state, including Legana and the Brighton High School, which have already been approved by the Public Works Committee. That is a re-announcement of something that is well down the track, when the Public Works Committee has already approved the plans and the allocation of funds for those projects. Obviously, when you have a good news story to tell, you want to tell it as often as you possibly can.

In regard to that particular area, I am interested in the \$24 million for the six new child and family centres. I confess right now, because I have put it on social media, that the electorate of McIntyre had no idea over the weekend that I had budget papers sitting on my side table, needing attention. They had a lot going on. I have done my best to go through a couple of the areas, and I commit to making sure that I have been through the rest of the Budget before Monday morning when we come back to this place and we are ready to start. My offering will be in regard to the two areas that I have covered at this point, and I know the Leader has put me on a bit of a time limit. That might be in preparation for the member for Launceston's motion about possibly looking at our time frames for speaking, perhaps.

**Mrs Hiscutt** - Having said that, the member should take all the time she needs.

**Ms RATTRAY** - And we always do.

There was a warning in the Treasurer's speech in regard to the being no worse off for the GST receipts back to the state of Tasmania post - I think it is 2026.

**Mr Willie** - The agreement the government signed up to.

**Ms RATTRAY** - The agreement that is in place, no worse off?

**Mr Willie** - That they signed up to.

**Ms RATTRAY** - It is obviously of concern, to note it in the Treasurer's speech and to put the federal government on notice that it needs to be extended way past that into perpetuity.

**Mr Willie** - Funny how the rhetoric has changed, because it is a change of federal government too.

**Ms RATTRAY** - Really?

**Mr Willie** - Yes.

**Ms RATTRAY** - That apparently can happen. In the interests of our state and making sure that our state does receive its entitlement, and we belong to the Commonwealth, I wholeheartedly agree with the Treasurer, expecting that that will be the case. I would not like to see the other states step away from that either because, as we know, Western Australia actually has a surplus in their budget, so they are still doing pretty well in that regard. How they ever managed to get that agreement through, well, only one knows.

The Government will be running larger underlying net operating and cash deficits in each year for the next three years, and the net debt will be more than \$1 billion higher in the next three years. That is a concern, but again, if we are spending it on infrastructure, and some of those really critical areas that the Tasmanian community expects that this Government will be spending it on, then it will certainly not be as concerning.

We know that often the figures that we receive are revised down the track. I thought it was an interesting comment made that these figures do change from time to time, and even though this is what we receive right now, it does not always go to plan. Hence, we have the opportunity to speak to the Government's bills when they come in for requests for additional funds. Again, we have that opportunity to make some comments on that.

We know that \$7.85 billion is a huge amount of money, and that is the income that this state receives and the expenditure is \$8.32 billion. Again, we are spending more than we are receiving, so we need to be watching that.

Interestingly, I thought the amount of money that is being spent on the digital health system, \$475 million, seems excessive, but if it delivers that coordinated approach in health for our state - and we know how precious time is in the health system - and if there is access for health professionals to gain information quickly about their patients requiring health services, then that has to be a positive. In this day and age, it is important to have the most up-to-date IT systems in place, although we are all quite aware that something that is current today can be

out of date tomorrow in the ITworld. If you buy a new piece of equipment one day, the next day it will have been superseded by something else. We can only hope that, with that amount of spending on the digital health system, the \$475 million delivers the outcome expected by the Tasmanian community and supports our health professionals, to whom we have to take off our hat for the work they have done through the pandemic and continue to do in our communities.

Mr President, sadly, we need to allocate \$12.5 million for family violence - a real blight on our society, but it is a fact of life. I am sure many of us know of, or have seen, the results of family violence and the impact it has, so whatever we need to spend and allocate on behalf of the community for that area is well positioned.

**Ms Howlett** - Mr President, that funding is very important. I note the member for Murchison was speaking last week about a book by Jane Caro called *The Mother*. I read that over the weekend and it was incredibly powerful. That funding is extremely important.

**Ms RATTRAY** - Unfortunately, too many of our community live with or are in fear of family violence issues.

There is \$26.1 million for safeguarding officers, which is important for the wellbeing of our community. It will be something that will receive attention as we go through the budget papers next week.

On the \$40 million for the Ashley Youth Detention Centre, I am interested to have some understanding where the Government sees these two new centres for youth detention to be in our state. My understanding is that there are only two local government areas that have the appropriate zoning to accommodate a detention facility: the Clarence City Council and the Meander Valley Council. Is it an expectation that there will be youth detention centres in those LGAs, or is it the intention that they will be outside those areas and that a rezoning will be required to facilitate building those facilities? I am very interested in where we are going with this.

**Mrs Hiscutt** - Mr President, is that a question for me or is that a question for the Estimates committee?

**Ms RATTRAY** - It is a question for anyone who would like to answer it, Leader. It is something we will discuss next week, but it is on my radar and it is certainly on the radar of the people who currently live around the existing Ashley Youth Detention Centre. I feel sure most Tasmanians will be interested to see what the Government is intending to do with this. Is there going to be some consultation about that? I sincerely hope that the consultation about these two new centres, north and south, which the Government has indicated is its intention - that there will be the appropriate consultation with all Tasmanians and where they see that particular matter going.

I will follow it up next week, but I know there will be a number of questions relating to that, when we get to it.

Mr President, \$2.7 billion for roads and bridges, that infrastructure I spoke of, and we know how important that type of infrastructure is to our community. There will be an

opportunity to discuss and ask questions about those, and they will be fleshed out more through the detail in the Budget itself.

I look forward to what is provided for the electorate that I represent. I note that there is a continuation of the upgrades to the Great Eastern Drive - tick, tick - but let us get on with it. There does not seem to be much happening in the northern end of the Great Eastern Drive at this point, although there is the stage outside of St Helens that appears to have had its line markings and is pretty much done and dusted, although I still have some adjoining landowners who feel that some of the commitments by State Growth have not been honoured. I will continue to work with those constituents.

Everyone benefits from the Midland Highway 10-year Action Plan, and I would very much like to see the end of that work, but I know that it is ongoing and over 10 years. I will probably be still travelling on it in six years time. It will be an ongoing funding commitment of \$565 million.

I know the people of Scottsdale will be very pleased to see that they made the budget papers with a \$650 000 redevelopment of Victoria Street, the home of Cottage Bakery and another café, Loud Iron, and a number of other businesses as well, and good old Woolworths. It is a pretty popular street and somebody told me that they are going to plant more trees. We have gone through the tree planting. We took them out because they were a nuisance, so if we are going to replant them, I am thinking, what are we doing? I will wait to see what is planned for that before I make too much comment on that.

I have touched on the importance of health, and to reinforce the need for our small rural communities to continue to have their health facilities well and truly entrenched in their communities. We know what a wonderful job our major hospitals do, but at the end of the day, you still need to have a medical hospital facility close by in some of those smaller areas.

Certainly, Campbell Town services a lot of that northern part in the central area of the electorate of McIntyre. You have the Deloraine Hospital that services that area towards Meander Valley surrounds, and then you also have the Scottsdale Hospital which services the north-east, and then you go across to St Helens Hospital that services the east coast. It is very important that we continue to have those facilities in our community. Let any health minister dare who thinks they might like to wind down any of those services. There will be war.

Unfortunately, no school in the McIntyre electorate is receiving any major funding over the next budget period. It would be up to me to make some contact with those schools and see which are on the priority list for next year's budget. I know that we all must wait our turn, and dare I say anything should come before Montello Primary School, because it appears that is well overdue for refurbishment. We all have plenty of those schools in our electorates, and the member for Windermere talked about the South George Town school.

**Mr Duigan** - Long overdue.

**Ms RATTRAY** - We all have those, but we cannot all have them immediately addressed. I asked about the six new child and family learning centres, and that will be one that we will follow up next week.

**Mr Willie** - One is about to start construction in Elwick, which I am happy about.

**Ms RATTRAY** - That is terrific, you have been working on that for quite some time.

**Mr Willie** - I have.

**Ms RATTRAY** - Obviously, the people of Elwick realised that and decided that you needed to see the finished project and elected you back here.

I have already touched on the AYDC facility, but there is \$90.7 million in the Budget to continue the \$270 million northern correctional facility, whatever that might look like. I will not rehash what I have said time and time again here - but there will be some questions around that next week as well, because we are not certain where the Government is putting its focus and energy, and are interested in a time frame.

I was very pleased to see that there was no funding for a \$750 million stadium in Hobart, because in my mind, that is an infrastructure project -

**Ms Armitage** - There is something in the Budget.

**Ms RATTRAY** - No, there is a task force.

**Ms Armitage** - There was something in the Budget Speech.

**Ms RATTRAY** - Are you sure?

**Mr Duigan** - There is money allocated for a feasibility study.

**Ms RATTRAY** - Mr President, I am stunned. I read AFL team task force, and I have missed seeing stadium. There is a real problem, in my mind, because it does not have the broad support of the Tasmanian community. It is a shame if they are going to spend \$1.25 million on a feasibility study to find that out, because there would be a lot of sporting facilities - like the Elphin Sports Centre and many others around the state - that could use that \$1.25 million. I am absolutely certain that there is not broad support for that floating facility to be built in Hobart. You can see I read this fairly late at night and missed the stadium.

A tick for the commitment to the St Helens Police Station upgrade along with three others. No complaints there. I, like the member for Elwick, have spent years standing at this lectern pleading with the government of the day to provide some funding. This will be a relocation, a new build. It is a greenfield site, and they are the way to go. Well done on that.

I was interested in the \$10.3 million to complete the \$24.6 million, large offshore police patrol vessel to replace the PV *Van Diemen*. That seems an extraordinary amount of money. I know these vessels do not come cheaply, but \$24.6 million is big money. The member for Windermere would probably be all over what you need for a large offshore police patrol vessel, but we will be pleased to see the back of that and hope that we do not have to revisit any PV *Fortescue* horrors of the past.

I note \$3.3 million for upgrades to police housing in regional communities and expect that is something to do with the fact there is a policy in place needing two officers when they go out on a call to do their policing work. It is probably not always possible to have towns close by where officers can team up and do the work they need to do.

I am not surprised there seems to have been a lack of focus on maintenance and the Police department is certainly putting some focus back into police housing. If you do not have decent housing in some of the more outlying areas it is difficult to hold people, particularly with families, in those communities. They do not want to be living in cold houses not fit for purpose and we need to make sure the housing is appropriate. Putting investment into those areas is certainly good work.

It is always great to see money put into volunteer organisations, and the volunteer fire brigade is no exception. Congratulations to the Government for \$1.8 million for volunteer fire brigade equipment upgrades because without that appropriate equipment, you cannot fulfil your duties. So well done.

Mr President, \$400 000 for the St Helens pump track. It is certainly pumping at St Helens and is becoming a go-to place in the McIntyre electorate. Every second person I meet on the road has bikes on top or on the back of them and that is continuing the good work happening there, which is well supported by the Break O'Day Council and the east coast community.

Flinders Island has a guernsey when it comes to camping upgrades and RV access. The islands have been very popular with a lot of visitors, particularly during COVID-19 when you could not travel overseas, but you were able, once the borders around our states opened, to travel to the islands. That would certainly be well received on the island.

There is \$9.25 million to extend the Private Rental Incentive Scheme. The National Rental Affordability Scheme has some concerns on Commonwealth funding for the rental assistance and I have a couple of follow-up areas I am going to talk to the minister about next week and see what is happening in regard to this. We have six units at Perth and there is much concern on how those tenants might be able to remain in those rental facilities should that subsidy be taken away.

As we know, cost of living is certainly of concern and we have been provided with some estimates of around \$305 million in concessions over four years, a combination of water and sewerage, rates remissions for councils and also some other areas the government assists with when it comes to the cost of living. They certainly do make a difference to those in our community who access those concessions and keeping that on focus is where it needs to be.

Mr President, there is \$440 000 for the extension of Volunteering Tasmania's Safeguarding Volunteering Project. I would like some detail on that. What will that \$440 000 commitment do? Does that assist with sourcing the appropriate paperwork that you need to volunteer? I am interested in what that might look like. I am not sure whether Committee B gets to cover that area or not. I will have to -

**Mrs Hiscutt** - I will see if I can get something.

**Ms RATTRAY** - If that is possible, I would appreciate it. If there is time.

There is some commitment to do with veterans, another very important area. We make sure that we look out for those who have served our country and served our community.

Committee B has the Minister for Veterans' Affairs, so there will be an opportunity to drill down into some of those areas of community funding for RSLs and for the minister to

apprise the committee about how some of our RSL clubs are tracking. We know there have been some challenges in recent years.

The \$7 million for alcohol and drug sector reform agenda will certainly be of interest as well. We know how important it is to get the help that you need. As we are well aware, often a lot of crime relates to the habits of an alcoholic or a drug-dependent person. This can be when they are trying to find money to fund their habit, if you like. So, that is really important.

Mental health has been really high on the Government's agenda, and it certainly is high on the community's agenda as well. I feel sure that the money that has been allocated to mental health support is in response to the concerns that have been put forward by the community in regard to mental health and access to the appropriate help that is required when people are in a dark place.

Sadly, there is \$5.2 million allocated for bullying in schools. Again, it is like family violence. What a shame that this state, and I expect, right across the country - I doubt we are unique in this area - that we need to look at the funding allocation of such a significant amount of money for bullying in our schools. It talks about a \$6.3 million upgrade to safer bathrooms at 42 high schools and district school sites. Obviously, that is where a lot of that bullying takes place, in those areas where there is no supervision.

**Mrs Hiscutt** - That was mentioned in my contribution. The older style of toilet blocks were a catch-all type of thing for that sort of activity. A lot of that is new design of, I do not want to say, bully-free toilet blocks, but making it harder to bully students.

**Ms RATTRAY** - It is a sad situation.

**Mr Willie** - Investing in people would be a better approach. More support staff in schools. Psychologists, social workers.

**Ms RATTRAY** - How often we ask about the numbers for each -

**Mr Willie** - Every year.

**Ms RATTRAY** - region, and each year we get back that there are many positions, but they are still waiting on them to be filled, and it goes on and on.

The member for Elwick is right. It is about education and engaging with our students, that bullying is not acceptable. Then we would not need to be having that amount of money allocated for bullying in schools.

There is a significant amount of money, \$1.3 million, to strengthen biosecurity on the Bass Strait islands. We know how important biosecurity is to our state. We should increase the fees. We know it costs \$300 to bring a banana into New Zealand, so why does it not cost the same to bring items that do not meet our biosecurity requirements into our state? We are about a third of that cost - about \$120 for doing the wrong thing in coming to Tasmania. It is time to lift those fees, in my view. I still have not got over that \$300 banana. That \$1.3 million is to support full-time biosecurity officers. That will mean that there are some new families living on the islands, and that can only be a good thing. It will also enable construction of some purpose-built wash down facilities. That is a fantastic initiative. I am still looking for a couple

of new truck washes around the state as well. I may well ask my new colleague, Mr Harriss, the member for Huon, to follow that up with the minister for agriculture next week, because we have two in the state. There is money in the pot, but they have not been able to secure at least another one or two facilities around the state for those extra truck wash facilities. It is important for our biosecurity measures.

There is some more money allocated to the upgrade to the Tasman Highway between Scottsdale and Launceston; that is the Sideling section. It would be good to see the works start on the first stage before we worry too much about allocating money to the second stage. That has also gone through the Public Works scrutiny process and been approved. All I see is pink flags flying around, nothing else. I know we are heading into winter and you might say, 'Well, what are you going to get done in the winter?' My word, close that Sideling, put a couple of big D10 dozers in there, and look out, you will get a fair bit of work done in a short space of time.

**Mrs Hiscutt** - Through you, Mr President, I am told that tarmac and water do not mix really well.

**Ms RATTRAY** - I was not asking to seal it - just get the works done. You can leave the sealing until the warmer weather. Mind you, you have to be careful now, because if it is too hot - you know what happened to the stretch of road along the Powranna straight there, it came up.

**Mr PRESIDENT** - It would almost be easier to put a railway line there.

**Ms RATTRAY** - Mr President, never an opportunity lost. You are absolutely right, everywhere I go across the electorate, people still talk about the missed opportunity with rail. The missed opportunity for this state to pick up and go with what we already knew worked really well in the past. No, we do not want to live in the past, but we have to make sure that we use the past as a way of making our future better.

My offering has been less than 83 minutes, I feel sure, and I expect that there will be plenty more offerings in this House. I am always interested to hear what other members see as some positives and some negatives in the budget of this state. We appreciate the opportunity, and I look forward to next week's process where we can really drill down into those line items and output groups. I can say members of Committee B were almost fighting over line items this morning. Not quite; but it was terrific to see people put their hand up and want to take a lead on a question. That proves that the process works, and it is a great opportunity for us to spend that time and nine hours is quite a lot of time. Hopefully, we will be like Committee A and we will use our time well.

[4.00 p.m.]

**Ms LOVELL** (Rumney) - Mr President, the Treasurer has handed down his first budget and we are looking at where this leads us as a state and what we will face in the years ahead. Budgets are probably not the most interesting aspect of politics for many people, but they are one of the most important. The Budget determines where the government will direct funding for the year ahead and beyond; it outlines the priorities of the government. They are complicated and boring for many people and it is easy to tire of talk of debt, deficit, surplus, forward Estimates, capital spending, recurrent spending, fiscal strategy, and all the other budget terms that get thrown around at this time of year.



I would love to find a way to encourage more members of the community to engage with the budget, because it is so important. I am not really a numbers person and I do not think I had ever looked at a budget before I was elected to this place. If I did, it would not have been for very long. I do not think I am unusual. In fact, I would be very surprised if most of the people in my electorate had ever glanced at budget papers.

I am a people person. I have always been driven by policies that impact people and I believe that the government's first priority has to always be its population. I believe a society and indeed a government should be judged by how it treats its most vulnerable members. I believe in public services, public housing, education, health, among some of these. My priorities are people and that is why I am a member of the Labor party.

So, when I look at this Budget I am bitterly disappointed. I am frustrated and angry. At a time when we know the cost of living is increasing at a far greater rate than wages - we know this and there is extensive data to show it - there is only one possible way that this goes: more people with less. More people relying on the delivery of good public services. I hear it all the time, and I am sure we all do; our constituents are feeling the increased cost of living and feeling the lack of wage growth. They are feeling it at the petrol bowser, they are feeling it at the supermarket, they are feeling it every time they pay a bill. This is what we are facing, we know this, it is logical.

There are a couple of ways a government can deal with this if they want to support those people who will be trying to do more with less. The first option would be to take action to encourage wage growth. As the biggest employer in the state, the government can set the scene for wage growth or otherwise in the state across both the public and private sector. The signal the government sends the private sector through its own wage policy is strong and any worker, any unionist, can tell you that.

That is option one. Let us have a look at whether this Government, this Treasurer, and this Premier, as head of the State Service, have chosen this option. This Budget provides for a maximum 2.5 per cent pay increase for the public sector workers. You can call it a wage increase, but with cost of living and the cost of everything we need to spend those wages on increasing at a rate of 5.8 per cent, more than double the amount the Treasurer has budgeted for wage increases, this is not a wage increase. You might get paid more than you did last month, but your money has to go further than it did last month, at a much higher rate. Treasury has noted in the budget papers that any wage outcome over and above the level of indexation provided will have a negative impact on the Budget outcome.

First of all, let us translate that out of budget-speak. What Treasury is saying here, and the Leader is welcome to correct me if I am wrong, is that any wage increase negotiated by workers in the public sector that is higher than the 2.5 per cent allowed for in the Budget will take money from somewhere else in the Budget. The Treasurer has attempted to send a thinly veiled warning to workers about this pay not-increase by saying in *The Examiner* on the very day the Budget was handed down, 'It's not a word of warning, it's a reality check'.

Public sector workers hold this state together each and every day, and never more so than they have throughout the last couple of years. Teachers and school staff - all school staff - working around the clock to ensure children can keep learning safely at home during lockdown and at school in a completely new, uncertain, and ever-changing environment. Child safety workers working with some of the state's most vulnerable children in the most difficult

circumstances. Emergency services workers, police and firefighters keeping us safe, working in environments and situations that the rest of us are taught to run from. Healthcare workers in our hospitals and around the state in our communities, working in a system that is more and more under pressure each day - a system that was at breaking point long before anyone had heard of COVID-19, and then a system that had to support the state through a global pandemic. The Premier himself said this morning that the greatest asset to our health system is our people. When will he take action that matches his words? How many times did we hear the former premier - or the current premier as Health minister - thank our healthcare workers over the last two years? Well, thanks do not pay the bills. All the thanks in the world mean nothing if you are signing off on a real wage cut at the same time.

What do you think these workers are thinking about when they are standing at the supermarket check-out doing mental calculations to make sure they can cover the cost of everything they have in their trolley? Or when they are putting on extra jumpers or going to bed early because they are worried about their electricity bill and they do not want to turn up their heaters. Or when they are counting every dollar, every cent they spend, checking their balance every day to make sure there is enough money in the bank to cover their mortgage payment or their rent. When they are cancelling their health or pet insurance because they cannot afford it anymore, or cutting back on their home insurance, what are they thinking? 'At least they said thank you'? Is that it? I doubt it. I use the example of healthcare workers because at least they got thanks, but there are hundreds of public sector workers across the state who are facing this.

We can confidently say that no, the Government has not chosen the option of increasing wages - nope, not option one.

That leaves us option two, coming back to the situation we are in with more people relying on good public services. It seems sensible, does it not, if you know more people will be relying on services that you would make sure those services can be delivered? Yes, that is logical. Especially if the services you are talking about are things like housing, health care, education, food relief - pretty basic stuff; that is logical. That is what the Government must be doing, right? If it is not planning to pay people more, it must plan to make sure those services that people will be relying on are there for them.

In Tasmania, as we know, public services are delivered by agencies, and agencies have a budget allocated to them to deliver these services. Agency budgets this year are increasing by 2.5 per cent - the magic number. Remember, costs incurred by these agencies are also increasing, and are increasing more in line with the cost of living, or the CPI increase of 5.8 per cent. There is more going out than there is going in; it does not take an economist to work out that equation is not balanced. There is no way possible those agencies will be able to deliver more services with less. Like the wage not-increase, an increase to agency budgets that does not keep up with inflation is not an increase; it is a cut. It means cuts to the services that more and more people will be relying on.

That is where we are with that: not option one and not option two. Where does that leave Tasmanians who are faced every day with the challenge of making ends meet when the ends are getting further apart?

I want to talk more about some of those critical services that people are relying on. As a spoiler alert, there will not be any surprises. There will not be any surprises because we are

still talking about the same failure to deliver the same services that we have all been talking about for years now. I am sure members will remember when we first started seeing and hearing reports about people sleeping rough at the showgrounds here in Hobart. I had a look back through news reports to see when that started, and the first reporting of it that I found was in February 2018. I remember the outrage, the despair. I know homelessness was nothing new at that stage, but for many people this was the first time they had started to actually see the reality of people living with homelessness, and what that meant. Children going to school from a tent, doing their homework in a shed at the showgrounds. Whole families living in cars. Working people leaving work at the end of the day and going home to a shelter, if they were lucky. People were horrified, outraged.

At the time, responsibility for the housing portfolio sat with Mrs Petrusma, and she said that the Liberals had come to government in 2014 with a plan to develop more affordable housing. Now, the data is hard to align, but in the September 2018 quarter, so six months later, there were 3249 applicants on the housing waiting list. The average time to house priority applicants was 56 weeks, which is over a year, and I remember that was an outrage too. However, it was okay. The government had a plan to develop more affordable housing, and remember this was back in 2018, so more than four years ago now. So where are we now? At the end of April this year, there were 4382 applicants on the housing waiting list, and the average time for a priority applicant to be housed is 90.3 weeks. That is more than a year and a half.

What happened to the Government's plan? Why do we have more people waiting longer for social housing, and why does the Government seem to think that we accept this? I do not accept it. There is almost nothing as heartbreaking in this job than facing someone who has no safe place to live, knowing winter is around the corner, and telling them that they are highly likely to be waiting for more than 90 weeks before they have a house to live in. It is bitterly cold out there and we are not even in winter yet. I hear myself saying these words, and I feel like a broken record because we say it every year. In these weeks leading up to winter, we talk about how cold it is and how people are living in this cold. It is not okay.

This Government has had the same plan, year on year, to build more houses. Every year brings a new minister with a more unrealistic target number. A number even bigger than the number they failed to deliver the year before.

Remember when the housing debt was waived? What have we got to show for that? I have no faith that we will see any improvement because for the last eight years, we have seen the opposite. Different minister, same plan, delivering worse results.

I am angry about this and I know that I am not the only one. We are leaving people, our constituents, members of our community, to literally freeze. It is inhumane.

Another one, which will not be a surprise either, is health. The last two years has been extraordinary. As I mentioned earlier, our health system supported the state through a global pandemic, but let us not kid ourselves. Things were bad long before COVID-19 was around, and things are not getting any better.

Yes, the Government has budgeted more for Health this year than they did last year, but let us be real. It would be ludicrous if they did not. The question is whether the system is keeping up with demand and whether it is keeping up with inflation. You can budget \$1 more

than previous years, and it would still be a record investment. I do not really put much stead in that language, although I know we hear it ad nauseam. However, what the Government has done here, and I am sure they have done it in previous years as well, is budget more than they did in last year's budget, but less than was actually spent in Health, with supplementary appropriation bills appearing throughout the year. So it is actually not record investment anyway. And that is only in the first year. Things get worse over the forward Estimates.

Again, the real question is whether or not the system is delivering the services that Tasmanians so desperately need. It is pretty clear, on any measure, that this is not the case. Health outcomes are among the worst in the country. Thousands of Tasmanians are waiting for necessary surgery, and tens of thousands are waiting to see a specialist, to find out if they even need surgery - the waitlist to get on the waitlist.

Thousands of Tasmanians are waiting for dental care, and just try to get a GP appointment in a hurry, if at all. Tasmanians do not want to be sick, they do not want to need surgery, they do not want to need to be in hospital; and the Treasurer should not want that either, because that costs a lot of money. The Health minister should be prioritising people's health, not treatment for their illnesses. That would make more sense. It is better for people and it is better for the economy. Where is the vision for a health system that could support people to stay well? Again, the same bandaid solution, surgery blitzes and the like. Short term solutions that help a small group of people rather than reform that could help an entire population.

One of the other matters that is most concerning for me is the Government's plan to abolish the Department of Communities Tasmania. At a time when more people will be relying on public services, it is absolutely illogical to abolish the very department responsible for the delivery of many of those services - unless your aim is to make it harder to access those services, in which case it makes perfect sense. The Department of Communities Tasmania was only established in 2018, just four years ago. Those workers have already been through an enormous change process, and all while trying to do some of the hardest, most important jobs in the public sector. This department is responsible for family violence policy, child safety, and housing.

The decision to shift the responsibility for child safety into the Department of Education is particularly concerning. South Australia did this, and it was such a disaster that it resulted in a royal commission with some 400 recommendations. We have our own commission of inquiry underway. It makes no sense at all to push ahead with this thought bubble idea without any evidence to base it on, when there is a very real chance that the commission could recommend a very different plan. The Premier has committed to implement the recommendations of the commission, so what would happen if that required an unraveling of this proposal? Why not wait to allow the commission to complete its work and make an assessment then, with the recommendations and evidence of the commission to support any action? I implore the Government to reconsider, and instead spend the time listening to child safety workers who are crying out for support.

If anyone has seen the work environment of the child safety officers, you would be shocked to know that our Government expects those workers to work in such an environment. The building floods regularly, there is mould visible on the walls, it is damp, cold, and uncomfortable. If anyone has not seen those images, it was reported by the ABC just a couple of weeks ago. You will find them online, and it is worth taking a look. Imagine the message that sends to those workers about what their government thinks of them. Not only are they

working in an unsafe and uncomfortable environment, but they are working in one of the most difficult jobs in the state. They are under-resourced.

I have been told there are as many as 60 vacancies in child safety. It is not uncommon for a worker to receive a notification in the late afternoon on a Friday, and have to make a choice about going home to their own family or staying to try to find support for this child. They can work hours of unpaid overtime, only to have to leave much later in the night - 9, 10, 11 p.m. or later - most of the time without being able to reach an outcome. Imagine leaving at the end of every day knowing there are children potentially at great risk and you have not been able to respond to them. How do you go home and forget that? You cannot. What are we doing to people when we put them in that position time and again, day after day. It is no wonder that workers will sometimes walk away from their desk in the middle of the day and not come back. We are losing good people all the time, because this Government is breaking them.

Who suffers? Other than the workers, which should be unacceptable on its own, it is the children, at-risk children, some of the most vulnerable members of the community. The latest department of Communities dashboard indicates there are 61 children in active transition. This means children who have been identified as needing further investigation but have not been allocated a case worker within priority time frames; children who have been reported to be at risk but cannot be investigated in the time they should be. This number is not improving.

The Government should be judged on how it treats its most vulnerable citizens. On every measure, when we look at this Budget and this Government, the most vulnerable members of our community are being let down - and I have only spoken about some of them.

This Government is failing them. They have been failing them for eight years, and this Budget keeps failing them for another four years. Debt does not have to be a bad thing. I know there has been lots of talk about debt, but debt when you have nothing to show for it is a waste. Ballooning debt when you are leaving people to languish on housing, hospital, and child safety waitlists is a shameful waste.

Estimates will give us a chance to interrogate this further, and I hope that the Treasurer will be getting a reality check of his own.

[4.21 p.m.]

**Mr WILLIE** (Elwick) - Prudent financial management, or a hole in the Liberal's bucket, Mr President. I say that in jest, after the relentless negative advertising of the federal Liberal Party during the recent federal election. They, too, were not the budget managers they pretended to be, and on any objective analysis, this current Tasmanian Liberal Government repeats a similar ad nauseam rhetoric that does not match reality.

On any measure, the Budget numbers reveal a concerning situation. On the Government's preferred measure, the net operating balance - that is the difference between total revenue, including capital grants, and operational expenditure, excluding capital expenditure - will include a deficit at the end of this financial year of \$456.3 million. There is a budgeted deficit for the 2022-23 year of \$474.6 million, and then a miraculous recovery to modest budget surpluses across the remaining years, starting with a \$19.1 million supposed surplus in 2023-24.

The so-called return to surplus is a \$544.5 million turnaround in one year and simply cannot be believed. One of the reasons is because the Treasurer's expenditure growth projections are unrealistically low. For the life of this Government, expenditure growth has averaged 8 per cent. In the 2022-23 year, expenditure growth is 15 per cent. Without much explanation, the Government projects the next budgeted year to be negative 0.1 per cent, and in the following year, negative 1.4 per cent.

What planet is the Treasurer on, presenting these figures as somehow credible? Does he really think anyone believes he will limit expenditure growth to these projected figures, or that he will deliver a net operating balance surplus next year? These unrealistic figures will be a reality check for the Treasurer over the coming year. I know he has been saying the Budget is a reality check for workers - the very people who got us through the pandemic.

The Budget assumes that wages and salaries will be indexed at 2.5 per cent. That is a real wage cut for nurses, police, paramedics, emergency personnel and teachers. The Treasurer has started an argument with the public sector workforce, and the public will not be on his side. It might be a reality check for him. There is the very real prospect of industrial action if he is not willing to negotiate, and this most certainly will impact recruitment and retention of key workers across our public service.

The Budget shows that the Government supplies and consumables cost will be \$130 million a year lower than they were estimated to be now. This item includes things like costs of medicines, drugs and other consumables in hospitals. In the face of increasing cost inflation, particularly in the health sector, these assumptions appear unrealistic. There are also questions regarding projected interest costs. Total borrowing costs are projected to be \$207 million by the end of the forward Estimates, and that is per year. Again, that is a lot of nurses, teachers and emergency service personnel. When the Liberals took office, these costs were just \$11 million per year.

The Government assumes the interest rate on its new borrowings will be 3.4 per cent, rising to 4.03 per cent in the 2025-26 year. Borrowing costs are very likely to be substantially higher, not necessarily because of the risk of further interest rate rises - which are very real - but because of the optimistic assumptions for both revenue and expenditure.

It is very likely the Government will need to borrow more because of the compounding effect on the annual cash deficit from its unrealistic assumptions. Tasmanians will already be spending \$611 million over the next four years on interest payments, enough to fund the entire redevelopment of the Launceston General Hospital with money still left over, stage one of the northern suburbs light rail, or close to a floating stadium. Perhaps just the floating bit.

The budget position has deteriorated by almost \$2 billion from the Revised Estimates Report in February of this year. The underlying net operating balance is the only true measure of a net operating deficit. The net operating balance figure treats Commonwealth capital grants as revenue but does not include the expenditure of these funds and continues to be substantially negative across every year, with the deficit averaging \$574 million per annum.

The deterioration in these figures from those budgeted last year and in this year is because the Treasurer, Mr Ferguson, has unleashed the state credit card for an additional spend of \$957 million. This includes \$120 million for Health, \$126 million to State Growth, and an

additional \$100 million in the Treasurer's Reserve for unexpected COVID-19 pandemic and other costs, which could not be reasonably foreseen at the time of developing the Budget.

There is also a get-out-of-jail \$180 million for the continuation of time-limited programs in Finance-General, which says that funding will be allocated to agencies where needed. I can already identify significant amounts that will need to go to Children and Youth Services as well as other budget black holes in other agencies. I do not know if that provision is a response to the Labor Party pointing out these black holes over a number of years, particularly in Child Safety Services. You see the funding allocation for saving the Intensive Family Engagement Service for one year, then none in the remaining three years. We all know they are going to have to fund it for the next three years. Potentially, it is an attempt to try to manipulate the figures to try to get a net operating surplus in the out-years but we are all onto these games.

There are other explanations for the deterioration in the Policy and Parameters Statement which reduces revenues by \$173 million. The vast majority of this was attributed to the land tax changes implemented by the former treasurer, Peter Gutwein. There was not an insignificant offset for these policy decisions in the parameter variations with revised upwards revenues of \$1.24 billion across the forward Estimates, including revenue from stamp duty, land tax, payroll tax and in specific purpose grants from the Commonwealth. I will unpack some of those in a moment.

In summary, on this point, the revised figures in this year's Budget continue a trend that this Government has never returned a budget surplus. Not only are we seeing large underlying net operating deficits, we are seeing extremely large annual cash deficits and ballooning net debt across the budget year and forward Estimates.

As I have highlighted, the actual outcomes are likely to be much worse than what is budgeted in the Estimates, because the Government's expenditure growth projections are unrealistically low and its revenue assumptions raise many questions too. I will turn to that point now.

In terms of revenue, the Budget assumes that the total tax revenue will be \$320 million a year more in 2025-26 than it is estimated to be in 2021-22, when in 2021-22 the state is already receiving record levels in areas such as conveyance duty.

Is it realistic to project a continuation of the very high levels of state taxation growth in recent years of the pandemic when the state's borders were closed, when the international borders were closed, and it distorted our economy? I would say to project these sorts of figures is exceptionally optimistic, especially when we are facing rising interest rates and inflation, which could impact the state's housing market transactions. We are already seeing that in the real estate data - housing prices and, potentially, economic activity.

These overly optimistic revenue projections also mean that net debt will be inevitably higher than has been forecast. For example, if total tax revenue increased by 3 per cent a year from its 2020 base, revenue by the end of the forward Estimates would be \$300 million lower per annum than is assumed in the Budget. This would increase the annual cash deficit by this amount and result in the state's net debt being up to \$800 million higher by the end of the forward Estimates, approaching \$6 billion.

When the Liberals came to power in 2014, Labor left them \$200 million in the bank. Now, on the Government's flimsy assumptions, Tasmania's debt will reach a record \$5.2 billion by 2026, with the accumulation of debt showing little sign of slowing after that point either. On that point, all we have in terms of corrective action is some ambiguous reference in Budget Paper No. 1, page 1, which states:

The Government will ... rebuild the fiscal buffers crucial to provide the budget flexibility to respond to future shocks in a measured way over time, which does not impact on the provision of essential Government services.

That is an ambiguous way to say something quite obvious: corrective action can only mean more taxes or budget cuts. Without corrections, and as a result of this budget mess, it is now a fact that the Rockliff-Ferguson government breaks the former Treasurer's fiscal strategy in the year 2025-26. That is because the combined cost of debt servicing and the defined benefit superannuation liability costs will reach 6.3 per cent of cash receipts in the 2025-26 Estimates year, exceeding the Government's fiscal strategy limit of 6 per cent.

This massive deterioration in the state's financial position continues a pattern of this Government showing no resolve to prudently manage the state's finances. It has made no hard budget decisions, has no policies to deliver services better, and has given higher priority to a range of special interest projects and handouts rather than adequately investing in and reforming essential services, such as health and education. In other words, there is nothing to show for all of this spending. Do not get me wrong, I have no problem with spending when the budget is in a net debt position, but it needs to be transformational spending, and changing systems for the better is important progress and worth the interest repayments if necessary. However, this Government has kept kicking the can down the road on major issues with the state recording declining educational and health outcomes.

If Tasmanians fully understood how bad the state's financial position is, they would feel very concerned about the future. I am concerned. We are charting a similar path to that stated in the Treasury's Fiscal Sustainability Report - the worst-case scenario, the high expenditure projection. If we continue, it will result in \$29.786 billion of net debt by 2034-35. Heaven forbid should we start to combine that with low revenue projections, and there are risks to that, like the GST deal Peter Gutwein signed up to, which will see the 'no worse off' guarantee being removed in 2026-27. That will give Western Australia a much larger share of the revenue from the GST than it was otherwise entitled to under longstanding horizontal fiscal equalisation principles.

There is essentially nothing new in the Budget to help Tasmanians with the cost of living, and many of their policies, real wage cuts, cuts to concessions, cost of living supports and new taxes on households, like the bin tax, will make it worse.

Tasmanians could accept a deteriorating budget position if they could see improvements in their lives, but the fact is even on the most basic provisions, this Government is failing. Last week, it was revealed Tasmanians in most urgent need, priority applicants for housing, will need to wait 90 weeks to be homed. They are also doing very little to help the 1200 Tasmanian families who will be forced to exit the National Rental Affordability Scheme as it winds up, despite the Government knowing for many years that the scheme was coming to an end.



Gallingly, there are already efforts by the minister, Mr Barnett, to try to pass the buck to the newly minted federal Labor government, despite the federal Labor party not being in power for three terms. Let us hope Mr Barnett takes greater responsibility and these people, these 1200 families, are not added to the 4400 families languishing on the public housing waiting list.

In health, the Rockliff-Ferguson government's economic management is not delivering for Tasmanians either. New figures released the other day show that 9600 Tasmanians requiring necessary surgery are languishing on the elective surgery waiting list with the most urgent patients forced to wait for up to three months; of those people more than 4000 are waiting for treatment at the Launceston General Hospital and more than 3700 at the Royal Hobart Hospital.

Over 57 900 Tasmanians are waiting to see a specialist just to get a referral; this is the hidden elective surgery waiting list. I am sure all of us have constituents languishing on these lists. The number of Tasmanians requiring dental care remains at over 15 000. It is a fact the Rockliff-Ferguson government's first budget will in fact make cuts to total spending over the next two years, with the already critically underfunded health system taking a hit of more than \$126 million next year. There is no more transformative spend here and no plan to better deliver health services.

When I look at the Education portfolio, I also see no plan to better deliver education, there is no transformative spend or significant reform agenda. The most significant key delivery in this year's Budget is to deliver safer education with school safeguarding officers. However, there is a footnote in this commitment - it will be funded within the Department of Education's existing resources. There are many questions I have for budget Estimates in this area, in particular, how it will be implemented.

When it comes to education outcomes, we see concerning declines in the Kindergarten Development Check in recent years and declining NAPLAN standards across the life of this Government. As a benchmarked result, it is a fact that Tasmanian students are doing worse now than they were in 2008 when NAPLAN started. This is despite the now Premier, and former minister for Education, promising in the lead-up to the 2018 election Tasmanian students would be at, or above, the national average in reading, writing and maths.

Another reality check came for the Government in 2021, with our results being the worst of any state across every age group in reading, the second worst in every age group in writing, the worst in every age group in spelling, the worst in every age group in grammar and punctuation and the worst in years 5, 7 and 9 in numeracy. An analysis by respected academic and demographer, Dr. Lisa Denny, last year showed the Tasmanian education system produces considerably lower levels of educational attainment compared with the national average and that Tasmanian results are in crisis with further declines. The report revealed a substantial gender gap exists between higher and lower SES grade 9 students. Dr Denny's analysis showed that the literacy and numeracy knowledge and skills of Tasmanian students declined as they progressed from lower primary through to secondary schooling. Low literacy and numeracy skills will impact kids throughout their lives and have a devastating effect on their ability to sustain meaningful employment.

Tasmanian economist, Saul Eslake, has previously said that fixing Tasmania's underperforming education system is the only way for Tasmania to grasp the opportunities

presently before us. Why would this Government not take on this issue? I would love to be leading the charge. The key findings of Dr Denny's report included that in the 2021 grade 9 cohort, 28.5 per cent could not read above the level expected to engage with the wider curriculum, 41.5 per cent could not express themselves in written form and 23.4 per cent were not numerate. Very concerning statistics.

I have said it before. Our students of today are working in our health service. They are working in our aged care service. They will be our business leaders. They will be community leaders. They will be political leaders. This issue impacts all of us. Within the DPAC pages we find an allocation for the continuation of the Literacy Advisory Panel to develop a community-wide framework to improve literacy in Tasmania. The outcomes of that process offer some hope but I remain sceptical given the current Government's track record.

There are plenty of line items I could highlight here but I will leave most of that to budget Estimates next week.

I will throw in one positive before I finish with some more critical feedback. I am pleased about the community basketball courts in Elwick. That is a growing sport in my community and the Moonah Sports Centre is a run-down facility that leaks in the rain and it is over capacity. To have more community courts and more capacity for kids to play basketball is a good thing.

I know we have a briefing this week. I will finish by saying that things I am hearing from TasTAFE employees regarding the transition are concerning. The last thing we need to do is to create a period of inertia, bad morale and an unfair industrial system in an organisation that is critical to our economy and addressing skills shortages. I look forward to hearing the management's perspective this week in the briefings and I thank Committee B for giving me the line allocation this morning on this one. I will certainly be holding the Government to account next week.

**Mr Valentine** - That is one of those ones that had to be wrestled.

**Mr PRESIDENT** - Honourable member for Launceston. It is just that I am aware I do not want to cause that injury to come back and the member for Nelson was very generous then, so thank you. We will all have a chance, except me.

[4.43 p.m.]

**Ms ARMITAGE** (Launceston) - You probably could have a chance, Mr President. You could come down to the Floor.

**Mr PRESIDENT** - That is fine, thank you.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - I welcome the opportunity to provide my input into the 2022-23 Budget and all fiscal and policy measures it contains. This is the first budget handed down by Tasmania's new Treasurer, Michael Ferguson, and we are in a very different world than we were in two to three years ago. Adapting to these changing conditions within the state, across the country and around the entire world has taken a collective effort and has required detailed and at times difficult decision-making.

Tasmania has been in an undeniably advantageous position since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. I cannot believe we are still talking about it now in 2022. However, its

effects are continuing to reverberate and will continue to do so for some time. Sadly, the pandemic was not without its costs and I pause here to acknowledge the 73 Tasmanians who have died as a result of the virus.

We saw business activity halt, people forced to stay at home and people's lives put on hold. As we ensured that people would not be left without their jobs and without the basic services that it is up to our public sector to provide, the costs mounted. The result of low interest rates significantly heated up our property and rental markets, and now that we are looking at interest rates beginning to rise again, and inflation increasing, we are faced with a number of difficulties.

People are struggling to pay for a basket of groceries that was much more affordable only a few months ago. I am pleased to read in the Treasurer's budget that the Budget does provide over \$305 million in concessions to support vulnerable Tasmanians to meet essential costs of living, including the cost of water and sewerage, electricity and council rates. We know that they are considerable costs that do not go away. Whether they are deferred or whatever might happen, they are still there and need to be paid. We certainly do not need more people to be homeless because they cannot afford to pay their bills.

People are finding their rents increasing, and the utilities and basic necessities far less affordable than they once were. I worry for young people in these conditions, as with less money to put towards things like a house deposit, the less better off they will be than the generations before them - and I consider we are a very lucky generation.

Those who are in a position to purchase a property are finding themselves competing in an extraordinarily hostile property market. Those who are building are waiting years and years for construction to start, owing to blown-out waiting lists, inability to find available construction companies, and supply and resource shortages - not to mention the resources increasing in cost.

Places like Hobart and Launceston are becoming extraordinarily appealing for families looking for a relaxed and good quality of life, and they are providing opportunities for skilled people wanting a change of pace.

We want to see the dividends from everything we sacrificed during the COVID-19 pandemic go to everyone. After all, every Tasmanian, during the past three or so years, has had to sacrifice something, and many drastically altered the way they worked, parented their children and received their education. We cannot let anyone be left behind now - not when we have so much potential as a state to become one of the best places to live in Australia and the world.

Despite the economy's strong performance over the past couple of years, we are seeing our net debt rise to \$5.23 billion in 2026. The prospect of servicing increases in net debt is also uncertain. I understand that the bulk of these borrowings reflect the significant infrastructure projects that are slated over the next few years. The notion that this debt equates to \$5400 owed per person is quite stark. Ideally, we would see these infrastructure projects worked on and completed in time, and without any blowouts. I hope that the Government will exercise appropriate oversight to ensure that these significant investments represent a good return for the Tasmanian people, and good multipliers across supporting businesses and services throughout the community.

I know that it is easy to be startled by numbers such as these, and I do not want to come across as being overly cynical. The state and the economy have been in such an enviable position over the past few years, particularly when you look at assessments like the CommSec State of the States report. I want Tasmanians to be rewarded for their efforts and sacrifices, and not be left with a big bill at the end of it all.

I will speak briefly about some of the bigger picture parts of the Budget, and then turn to what they mean for my electorate of Launceston.

This year, in addition to the Budget itself, we saw a gender budget statement included, a first for Tasmania. This statement highlights how the Budget targets inequality experienced by women, men and gender-diverse Tasmanians. Members here may recall discussing a motion on gender responsive budgeting, only back in March. On this motion, I stated:

Policymakers who fail to consider the interests of half the population cannot possibly hope to adequately represent them, nor lawmakers to properly legislate for them.

This gender budget statement is a good start to ensuring that Tasmanian women are respected, represented and supported from childhood, to adulthood, through to retirement. The Budget further makes good on implementing one of the Premier's Economic and Social Recovery Advisory Council (PESRAC) key recommendations.

The Government should support further industry programs to enhance workplace development pipelines for women. I understand that \$800 000 has been allocated in this Budget over the next four years, to implement the Tasmanian Women's Strategy 2022-27.

Also, \$740 000 additional funding has been allocated to develop and implement a women and girls in sports strategy. I have noticed obviously in football where they have women's teams but, in soccer, the number of females taking up the sport is quite incredible. Sometimes, they tend to be overshadowed by AFL, but the number of people playing soccer, particularly young women, is quite extraordinary.

Moreover, funding has been provided to develop Tasmania's third family and sexual violence action plan, a focus on not just ensuring that women are equipped with basic levels of support - budget measures that assist women to thrive are also important. To this end, the women's workforce participation strategy and Women on Boards will be vital to ensure women will be able to meaningfully participate in the direction of this state and to properly represent the interest of our population.

I commend the Government and the Treasurer for the inclusion of this important statement to the Budget this year and hope it heralds ongoing progress toward equity and equality for Tasmanian women in the years ahead. Hopefully, with detailed analysis, clear targets and measurable benchmarks to assess our progress as we go.

I am privileged to represent the interests of the Launceston electorate. It is the diverse groups of people and projects about which they are passionate which make my job so interesting and satisfying. Launceston is home to thousands of families, a thriving business community, significant educational institutions, a vibrant community and non-government

sector. It is therefore important to ensure the interests of Launceston are taken seriously by the Government and funded adequately.

In this Budget, a lot of funding has been provided to Launceston health facilities including \$38.24 million to the LGH stage one redevelopment over the next three years and \$50 million towards the LGH stage two redevelopment, including the mental health over the next four years. Also, over the next four years, \$7 million for operational funding for additional paramedic crews at Launceston. I do hope there will be additional funding, also, to staff the other developments. It is great to have capital works and to be building, but you really do need to have ongoing funding to actually be able to employ the nurses and the doctors needed to work there. I will be watching with interest to see how this might ameliorate waiting times for those in Launceston and the outer urban areas it will service.

In Kings Meadows, the Government allocated \$9 million towards the acute care facility at the Kings Meadows Community Health Centre over the next two years and that apparently includes federal funding. I assume that is still going to happen with the Labor government, I am sure that was part of the Labor government's funding commitment if I recall.

In the more immediate future, \$2.5 million was allocated to improve the LGH's respiratory unit capacity. Funding health facilities and services are always popular, and I always support additional funding for our hospitals, community health workers, and preventive health initiatives. The LGH is an integral asset to the northern community and everyone who works there - from the CEO's office, to the nursing staff, to the ancillary staff, to the cleaners, orderlies, and the list goes on, including volunteers - deserves support and needs to be listened to.

I am hoping that the waiting list will go down, but I am also aware while there is a waiting list, there is also a waiting list to go on the waiting list. It is quite concerning many people get their referral from their GP to go, and the first thing they actually get back is a notification they are waiting to go on the waiting list. It is unfortunate that many people believe they are on the waiting list, when in fact they are not. They are simply waiting to get a spot on the waiting list. We really cannot understate the importance of health.

On education, I note the Budget indicates \$250 million has been allocated for new and upgraded schools, classrooms, child and family learning centres over the budget and forward Estimates, which is a significant figure.

A lot of money, particularly by way of capital investment funding, is going towards the construction of six new child and family learning centres, with \$28 million being committed to centres in Sorell, Kingborough, Glenorchy, East Tamar, West Ulverstone and Waratah-Wynyard, a measure which I am very hopeful will ease families and children into early leaning, connection with others, socialisation and provide access to support.

While on education, I could have mentioned earlier, with regard to the COVID-19 pandemic, it was very pleasing to see in the Treasurer's Budget Speech about the learning from home throughout the pandemic and the fact that the Budget provides \$4 million for laptops and tablets for students, which is in addition to the \$1 million already invested in this technology. That is very important for the students who cannot actually go to school, who need to study from home, so that they are not disadvantaged by being at home.

**Mr Valentine** - What was that figure again?

**Ms ARMITAGE** - It was \$4 million on top of the \$1 million that has already been in the past. I also note that over two years \$1.95 million has been allocated towards upgrading the Glen Dhu Pool, an asset that services a large part of the Launceston community and which is in need of refreshing and updating.

I was very pleased to recently see at Summerdale Primary School, where I volunteer for the breakfast club from time to time, that they were installing new ovens and stoves. The other equipment was very outdated. It is important for our education system to have an approach which not only teaches our children reading, writing and arithmetic, but also how to develop and maintain good habits, like nutritious home cooking, gardening and other life skills. Summerdale Primary School does have a great little vegetable garden where the children go out and grow and then learn to cook from the produce they have provided in their garden.

In the Delivering for Bass budget fact sheet, I note that over the next four years \$6.95 million has been allocated to go towards upgrading outdated classrooms statewide, including Mowbray Heights Primary and Glen Dhu Primary. The budget papers named 12 schools across the state with a funding allocation of \$10 million over the next five years to be given renewed and upgraded classrooms, with a focus on schools in low socio-economic areas.

I do wonder, given the expanded functionality and flexibility these upgraded facilities will have, whether this initiative will be extended beyond these 12 schools, and funding of more than \$10 million will be provided in the future. Right now, \$10 million does not go very far when we are considering works of this nature. Given the importance of having good facilities, particularly in low socio-economic schools, I would question whether this initial five-year allocation will be enough for the commitment.

I say this because the \$7 million allocated to upgrade the 43-year-old Launceston Police Station I believe is going towards installing a new reception area, elevators and toilets, which is not very much at all considering it is several million dollars. I do need to ask - and I am assuming, I did not have the last budget with me - I know it is at \$6 million, so I am assuming \$1 million had already been allocated in the previous budget papers, which I have not got here. Looking at the investment at the police station, I am concerned when it says - in the Budget Speech - refurbishing the Launceston Police Station, and I did read that it was to make it a nicer place to work for the police. I know initially when it was built there were 120 people there but if you are only looking at reception area, elevators and toilets - and I spend quite a lot of time at the police station -

**Madam ACTING PRESIDENT** - We do not need to reveal too much

**Ms Rattray** - As an Independent person.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - As an Independent person, but I know what their rooms are like, and I know what the charge room is like. I know what the interview rooms are like, and they are terrible. They are old and they are shabby. If you go up the lift - I accept that they are having a new lift - but if you actually go up into the police station into any of the offices - particularly the interview rooms - they are small, awful, little boxes. That is the only way I can describe them.

The charge room has never changed in the 27 or 28 years I have been an Independent person. It has never improved. I am surprised that we are talking about improving the police station for those who work there, because my understanding is, from officers I have spoken to, that all the \$7 million will provide is the reception area, the toilets, and the elevators.

I would be interested to hear from the Leader, if you believe it is going to provide more than that, because those at the station have told me that is what it is going to cover.

**Mrs Hiscutt** - I cannot give an opinion on that.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - That is all right. I am not sure that we have this time in Estimates, but it did not gel with what I was reading, having been there. If you are looking from the outside you might think that is okay, but when you spend time inside the police station you understand how old and awful it is, and you see that \$7 million is only going to do the reception area, elevators and toilets. You start to question the amount of money, and how that is going to improve the lot for the officers who work there. As I have said, I do not believe it is such a bad investment.

Turning to community, Madam Acting President. I further note that the Government has provided \$1.9 million to Launceston to continue to provide Safe Spaces. Launceston, like other cities across the state has not been immune to the significant issues surrounding access to affordable housing. Initiatives to help vulnerable people who are sleeping rough without secure access to housing and necessities, and are perhaps influenced by issues like addiction or mental health issues, are essential. I acknowledge that continued support of a Launceston Safe Space is a positive step. However, I encourage the Government to continue working with our local councils and organisations that work at the front lines with people experiencing homelessness.

Strike It Out, for example, is working towards providing access to safe, mobile bedding and storage lockers for those sleeping rough in the Launceston area. This is in addition to the work they do every day, providing food, clothes, toiletries and other necessities to vulnerable people who deserve safety and dignity. Recently, at about 6.30-7 p.m, Strike It Out and some of the other service providers had their food vans in Civic Square. It was not a party, by any means; it was to enable members of the public to get to know and see who are homeless, and to talk to homeless people. We also purchased some of the food to see what the food was like - and it was good food. They have a van which has been provided to them by a very kind donor in Launceston. It is a big van, so they can work, and cook the food, like you would if were somewhere like Agfest.

It was great to go along. It opens your eyes to actually be there and talk to people in the community who are homeless, and who are sleeping rough. I cannot imagine it now, when it is so cold. We can go home to a warm bed, we can turn on the electric blanket and, if you get really cold, you can have a hot shower. It is great that they are trying to provide even the showers for them to be able to get warm.

I know that the council was locking some of the toilets in Launceston at night. That was really unfortunate, because those who are disadvantaged were going in and using the hand warmers, trying to stay warm. I cannot imagine what that would be like - to have a rainy night, get your clothes wet, not be able to get dry, and the next day try to get up and spend the day with still nowhere to sleep.

Sometimes we forget, and it was really good to have Strike It Out in Civic Square so people could see that there were a lot of homeless people, and a lot of children were there too. A lot of volunteers also had children with them, and were working hard to help these people.

I also visited City Mission, and I have been there in the past. As well, the Salvation Army has been doing their street walk. I would suggest it to anyone. There are a lot of forms to fill out, I have to admit, and I am still on my final forms. It is not a simple thing.

It is a good thing to go along at night to see the people who are out there between 11 p.m. in the evening and 2 a.m. and 3 a.m. in the morning. It does tend to open your eyes.

I must admit, I have not seen it since my boys were younger when I used to pick them up at 5 a.m. in the morning when they would phone me, and you would see many people out there. Sometimes we need to - not shock ourselves, but have a realisation that we are very lucky and there are a lot of people out there who are not so lucky, and sometimes it is through no fault of their own, and to get out of that situation, anything that we can put towards helping vulnerable people. It is a terrible development that in this day and age, in this safe part of the country and world, we have so many people who struggle to find somewhere safe to sleep or have access to hot, nutritious food. Keeping our community engaged and including people who have few options for social interaction is important.

Recently, the YMCA in Kings Meadows has signalled its dire financial position, and will likely close its doors this Saturday. I have been over there several times. I have done three different classes on a Monday, Wednesday and a Friday to actually meet some of the participants. The groups that I have been to are for the senior health classes. The sadness that is there from people aged from 60 up to over 90 and one lady, I think she was 92, told me that she believes these classes keep her fit and they keep her out of hospital. It costs \$7.50, they go along, but not only do they do the class for an hour, it is a social outing, they have a cup of tea beforehand, they have a cup of tea afterwards, they meet up with their friends. It was so sad that a couple of the ladies were crying because of the fact that this was not going to continue. The staff out there were in a very sad state as well. Some of them had been there - one lady I think 35 years, another 14 years. They had absolutely no idea what was going to happen to them after Saturday. A very sad situation there.

I have facilitated stakeholder meetings in an attempt to devise a solution, unfortunately to no avail. It is a terrible shame to lose a Launceston institution that many have called home for the past 142 years, but I must say - and I do not want it to be taken that either federal or state government had let them down, when I am saying I organised stakeholder meetings I totally accept that it is very hard for the federal government or the state government to put substantial funds in when the organisation has lost a lot of money over the last few years, a lot of money. I can understand that.

At our last meeting, there was a representative from the federal government, Bridget Archer, a representative from the state government, one of the members of the board, and my understanding is that it is now operating as Y Tasmania under a three-member interstate board. One of the members from the interstate board from the Y was asked if they could provide some money to keep the Y going for six months. Bridget's thought was if they could show they could be sustainable for six months, then perhaps the federal government could look at some grants, if there was some way. Unfortunately, Dr McMillan from Y Victoria was very clear when he said no, that he could not provide that. As I said, I wanted to point out that I am not actually



saying that it was a shame that we could not get a solution. We have talked to many different groups, and it certainly was not on the state or federal government, they had come up with a number of different plans.

Unfortunately, Y Tasmania at this stage - unless they surprise us with something next week - did not seem to have any plan in place to keep the Y going. It is a terrible shame to lose it after 142 years. It is my fervent hope that another organisation will be able to come in and continue to offer a safe place for the people to go to exercise, catch up and feel safe and accepted.

I have written to the Launceston City Council and suggested to them that perhaps the PCYC would be a good fit. We are quite aware that the PCYC into the future will be moving out to the northern suburbs and it would be really good to have a PCYC at both ends of town, one at Kings Meadows and one in the northern suburbs. They did not mention that in the response they provided to me, but I intend to raise it with them yet again, and perhaps with PCYC.

**Mr Willie** - Running out of time, though. Is it this week it closes?

**Ms ARMITAGE** - It closes this week, but in an interim capacity, the council will have basketball and netball operating there at night. Daytime will not have any of these classes. However, perhaps they can keep it going. I have to commend Bridget Archer in the week before the election, when I asked her for a meeting, she did give an hour and a half to the group to sit down with Lindsay McMillan from the mainland who was one of the three board members, and other stakeholders, so I cannot say they did not actually try.

I do accept what you are saying, however. Yes, Saturday is the last day, but even if it had a hiatus for a period of time, many of the older people who are doing the exercise classes said if it does not go for a few weeks as long as they know it is coming back. I am aware one of the teachers of the class operates in one of the fitness facilities and they are arranging for these people to actually go down there and pay the same amount in the interim to keep them going until perhaps something can happen again at the YMCA, because it is a great facility.

The saddest part, apart from the other stuff, is they have a child care facility for special needs children. That was the really difficult thing. When I was talking to the instructor, Deb, who had been there for 35 years, she said some of the children she has are not accepted anywhere else because they are considered to be disruptive in other playgroups and child cares. The concerning question is where do they go, because about five children go there and it gives their parents respite. No-one else will take them because they are disruptive and I found that really sad. These little kids were playing and having a great time, but where do they go when they cannot go there, when that door shuts during the day?

I know the basketball and netball will be using it of a night and that will bring some income to cover some areas of cost, but it does need to be more utilised during the day.

It is very sad. I acknowledge the work of the staff who have given their all to ensuring people see a friendly smile and get a warm hello when they walk through their doors. As sad as they feel, they put on a happy face and you never see the tears until you talk to them later and they tell you how worried they are about what they are going to do. A terrible situation.

Traffic and infrastructure: I was pleased to see \$75 million allocated to the Launceston and Tamar Valley Traffic Vision including improvements to Invermay junctions, upgrades to the Batman Highway, Frankford and Berrilee roads and planning for a new Tamar River crossing. I am hoping the \$75 million includes some actual works as opposed to just reports, but I know how much reports can cost, which is very unfortunate. While this policy spans across Launceston, Windermere, and Rosevears electorates, I hope to see some outcomes from this traffic vision that will ease congested traffic in the city, improve safety outcomes for drivers, cyclists and pedestrians, and provide good quality roads for our transport sector.

I have spoken before about how the need for improved traffic solutions in and around Launceston has become more and more urgent. We have in fact been speaking about concepts like a Launceston ring-road for several decades now. Getting around Launceston, especially over our bridges, seems to be getting harder, not easier.

One of the centrepieces of this Budget has been the progress on the Bridgewater bridge and I am pleased to see this moving along. It is needed and it will, hopefully, improve traffic flow and safety in the south of the state. Hopefully, in the next budget or two we will see similar flair and alacrity around the construction of a new Tamar River crossing, not simply commissioning more and more reports that tell us the same things over and over again.

I was also pleased to see money in the Budget to do with the Workers Memorial Garden. Every year on 28 April, we go to the Workers Memorial Garden at Inveresk and every year the families of those who died at work plead for it to be completed and finished. It is a very sad place to go, but they go along there to celebrate the lives of their loved ones. It is usually their children - the people who I have seen there, it is generally their children who have died at work. One man I see every year brings his son's work boots along, sets his work boots there. They let balloons go, the little children who are there let the balloons fly. They have a prayer and talk about it, and every year they say, 'When is this going to be finished?' It has been promised for years to be finished. I do not know whether \$150 000 will finish it, but I am really hoping that it goes a long way towards doing some more work on the Tasmanian Workers Memorial Park in Elizabeth Gardens in Invermay.

The things that make Launceston so special are things that are done by our communities for our communities. Our markets, our libraries, our migrant groups putting on events for our families and getting people out and active are the special little features that make living in Launceston such a gift. Over the past weeks, like many other members, I have spent a lot of time at presentation events for bowls clubs, and team nights, lots of other sporting clubs, and cricket clubs. I have several cricket clubs in my electorate that have all gone very well and won a number of flags this year. The Northern Tasmania Softball Association put on a terrific finals weekend a couple of months ago, and I was absolutely delighted when they asked me to return for another year as their patron. We all know it is great to be the patron of these great clubs and go along and support them and help them out where we can.

It is fantastic to see so many kids and families involved with sport and developing teamwork skills that will serve them well throughout their lives. As I have said, one of the growth sports that I really noticed was soccer. Going up to soccer one night, they were short of someone working in the bar, so my son and I went up and worked. I have got my RSA, and he was free that night - so we worked in the bar for one of the games. It is interesting when you are actually up there. First of all, I must say, he did think it was probably an hour and a half. I did not realise that it was going from 5.30 p.m. to about 10.30 p.m., because there were

several games, but in fairness to him, he did stay and assist in cleaning out the fridge and doing all sorts of things as someone who works in a bar all the time does.

It was amazing to see the number of children and young people who were there playing soccer. It is a huge sport, and I am always amazed at the difference in funding, and I know it has been explained when I have asked why there is a variation. They try to tell me that they get the same amount per person as AFL, but I really do not believe they do. The numbers really just do not stack up, because there seem to be huge numbers playing soccer. I would realistically like to see soccer given a little more funding when you consider that sport is so good for keeping healthy and keeping kids off the streets and doing things they love.

**Mr Gaffney** - It is 34 000 people who play or are involved with soccer. Football - from my recollection - is 23 000. There is about an 11 000 difference in participants.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - I know when I have asked for the comparison I have been told, 'Oh, no, when you look at this,' and there is always some excuse to say there is some way of reconciling that they are getting as much, but it is very hard to actually see that. I certainly agree that it is a sport that is worth funding.

We had Western United come to Launceston for two games. That was really great because they were either top of the ladder or second on the ladder, and in the grand final. It was really good for them to come down. I know that Launceston City got to play a game at UTAS Stadium. They were so delighted to be there in front of the crowds. It gave them such a boost, which is what we all want for our kids, to enjoy it and be spurred on to continue.

The biggest part of my job is not necessarily what I do here in the Chamber; it is doing my best to represent the feelings and views of the people of Launceston. I cannot do that unless I stay in touch with the people and organisations in the community which make things happen. I call them the 'doers', not the people or groups you might necessarily see in the paper every week, but the quiet ones who keep their heads down, work hard and get things done. The people whose work brings benefit to the community, establishes a sense of pride and makes Launceston feel like home.

This Budget, like those before it, and those that will come, contains impressive numbers, and I am sure it will enliven our health and education sectors, assist our community development organisations, and keep our economy ticking along through infrastructure and capital works. We have seen plenty of analysis this week on those numbers and what outcomes they will have.

I have some questions that the Leader might be able to answer for me, regarding electric vehicles and the electric vehicle fleet. I have a constituent who regularly brings up issues and concerns with me. We all know how important climate change is, but we have to be sure that we do things properly and steadily.

In this Budget Speech, it says:

We will invest a further \$2.3 million towards transitioning the Government fleet to electric vehicles by 2030, reducing our dependence on imported fuels, increasing demand for our renewable energy and reducing emissions and

operating costs. This has the added benefit of bringing more electric vehicles to the Tasmanian used car market.

This was raised with me with regard to the Tasmanian used car market. I assume that the government fleet would be retired at around 60 000 kilometres. However, if you read up on electric vehicles, they need a new battery at around 100 000 kilometres, and batteries are extremely expensive. I wondered about the cost of that.

**Mr Valentine** - Through you, Madam Acting President, I believe there is at least 10 years life for a battery.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - If you look on the internet, it says 10 years or 100 000 kilometres, whichever one comes first.

**Mr Valentine** - It does not mean that they just stop working. They just gradually decrease in their capacity.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - I wondered whether they would be hybrid. I know that the member for Hobart has a hybrid, and that must work well because you have that dual power source.

Then I looked at the charging stations, and that is where I was confused. The member for Hobart might be able to answer the questions, as well as the Leader. I am concerned that when you read about all the charging stations around the state, they seem to be different.

The one at Brighton is a 350 kilowatt. Is that for trucks? Is that why it is 350 kilowatts? The majority are only 50 kilowatts. There are some that are 11 kilowatts. That is only for Tesla in Hobart. There is another one that is only 22 kilowatts.

**Mr Valentine** - Through you, Madam Acting President, it varies according to the speed at which they charge the vehicle. If it is a fully electric vehicle like a Tesla, a 350 kilowatt charger might charge it within the space of 20 minutes.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - It is not going to blow your car up if you use a 350 kilowatt, as opposed to the 50 kilowatt?

**Mr Valentine** - No, but some would say that sometimes the life of the battery might decrease more. It is the difference in speed in which they charge. Some vehicles could not possibly take the 350 kilowatt. Mine would not take that.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - I was interested that there are not just two different ones. There is 14 kilowatts, there is 22 kilowatts, there is 11 kilowatts, there is 7 kilowatts at all of these different charging stations.

**Mr Valentine** - Basically, it changes the speed at which they charge.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - So, when you go to a charging station, you are not really going to know how long it is going to take you to charge. I had not realised they were all different until I looked it up.

**Mr Valentine** - The app would tell you what the likely charge rate is.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - I was interested that they had all different kilowattages for different ones. I know if I was driving a car, and I thought I was going to a charging station, I would not be aware that they are all charging at different times. I would have thought they were all the same.

**Mrs Hiscutt** - Through you, Madam Acting President. The member for Hobart is very much across that sort of stuff, and thank you for those comments.

**Mr Valentine** - Sometimes it is older information, but it is mainly a rate at which it charges. The app that you get, which tells you where these things are, would indicate what level of charge rate it was.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - I wondered how long you had to be there if you only had one that was 7 kilowatts, as opposed one that was 50 kilowatts, or 350 kilowatts, because they are not all together and all in different parts of the state. Thank you, it was an interesting thing I had noticed when looking them up.

As we move into a post-COVID-19 world and the somewhat extreme circumstances we have experienced recently, we have moved into a more stable and predictable rhythm. I hope we get a chance to do more with our community groups. Our successes in recent years have come off the back of a strong volunteering sector and through the tireless work done by community groups who work for free and expect nothing in return for what they give. Obviously, if we had to pay the volunteers we have in our state the budget would be a great deal higher.

**Ms Webb** - It has been costed at \$4 billion a year.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - I hope these people can continue to volunteer because it is getting harder and harder because more people have to work longer hours. If you are working longer hours, you have to find the time to be able to volunteer as well, particularly if you have a family to go home to and look after and, in those cases, it is not always getting easier.

In the months and years to come, I will continue working with them and see what we can actually provide them with so they can thrive and continue to make places like Launceston the wonderful places they are.

Madam Acting President, I note the Budget.

[5.26 p.m.]

**Ms SIEJKA** (Pembroke) - Madam Acting President, for this reply, I have focused on the shadow portfolios I have a personal responsibility for, although there is much that could be said in the Budget. These portfolios of youth, older people, disability, and community services are areas I care deeply about. Ensuring people can participate in their community and achieve their goals has long been an area in which I enjoy working.

In many ways, these are rewarding and inspiring areas to focus on. There are stories of determination, resilience and compassion you hear of good people doing wonderful things. However, with this also comes despair, sadness, and worry, terrible things happen to many people. People often have the cards stacked against them with complex and wicked problems which exist that cause real-life barriers and problems for real Tasmanians.

Some members of our community are doing it very tough. Sadly, it seems more and more Tasmanians fall into this category, what with the increase in the cost of living, housing crisis, demand for food relief, and social services. For older Tasmanians, loneliness and social isolation continue to be a significant and concerning problem.

The COTA Federation's State of the (Older) Nation reports state the shocking figures that 21 per cent of older Tasmanians say they have felt lonely in the past few weeks, and 3 per cent had no contact with anyone in the preceding week. One of the ways we can support this group and address loneliness and social isolation is through supporting access to the online world. However, the need to increase digital literacy for older Tasmanians remains a problem. It is dependent upon the elderly to have access to support services or a foundation of digital and regular literacy skills, which many Tasmanians, elderly or otherwise, do not possess.

Furthermore, often they do not have access to devices or are trying to make use of outdated technology. So much of the information we need is online, many of the services we need to access are online. Think, for example, how much information regarding COVID-19 was, and continues to be, online.

Stakeholders have been calling for a greater investment in digital literacy and wanting more information on digital literacy and inclusion funding and I will be following this up during Estimates.

Elder abuse is an abhorrent problem in our society. The royal commission into aged care highlighted the prevalence of elder abuse within the aged care sector, but of course it also occurs in other settings as well, such as the home. It may involve physical or sexual abuse, taking an older person's money or possessions, neglecting them, making threats or stopping their social contacts.

COTA reports that 3 per cent have personally experienced elder abuse and 10 per cent know someone else who has experienced it. Additionally, they report it remains a significantly under-reported issue in Tasmania. Given these numbers, it would come as no surprise that COTA is seeking an increase in investment to continue their important work in this area. They are seeking a commitment to the ongoing funding in the forward Estimates to deliver their elder abuse prevention program at an increased rate.

Another problem in need of an appropriate response is the need for emergency housing for older Tasmanians escaping elder abuse, similar to the response approach taken for those leaving situations of family violence. This seems to be a need that is difficult to disagree with, and needs to be addressed urgently. Clearly, housing options should be prioritised for anyone leaving an abusive situation. COTA has called for the development of an appropriate response in their budget submission. Whether this investment need has been considered and funding allocated within the Budget is something I will be prosecuting during Estimates.

More generally, older women are the fastest growing cohort experiencing homelessness. COTA Tasmania has previously highlighted the risk of poor health outcomes for older women due to greater financial and housing insecurities, particularly in the rental market. I also have questions about work being undertaken to address this problem during Estimates. It is pleasing to see the continued investment in Seniors Week. However, it remains an issue for the sector that this is not a recurrent commitment and needs to be negotiated regularly.

As I have highlighted before, Tasmania has the highest rate of disability of any state in Australia. This includes the highest rates of autism, cerebral palsy, epilepsy and multiple sclerosis. In fact, we have one in four Tasmanians living with a disability. While we have more than 11 000 people who are eligible for support for the NDIS in Tasmania, that leaves upwards of 80 000 to 90 000 Tasmanians living with disabilities who are not eligible for the NDIS and who rely on services provided by Tasmanian disability support service organisations. Whilst the NDIS has proven to be life-changing for some, there are many more in our community who are not eligible, or who, despite being eligible, are finding the system simply does not work for them. Tasmanians living with disability but who are eligible for the NDIS still require support and assistance for their daily living to participate in the community, social and economic life.

As has been highlighted in this place and through the disability services inquiry, there is much to be done to improve access to supports and services for Tasmanians living with disability. This particular cohort is reliant on the state for their support services. Unfortunately, as raised previously, and as a strong theme of the inquiry, many Tasmanian disability support services have had their funding reduced or cut entirely, leaving some without any form of support. In recent times, the state government has chosen to cut the funding of a number of these services that provide vital support for people living with a disability, their families and carers.

These specialist organisations service people right across Tasmania. Many of these organisations relied on core funding from the state government to operate. They include the Brain Injury Association and Adards. They are resigned to having to exist on hand-to-mouth piecemeal project funding barely able to meet their overheads. Many of the people who these organisations service are not eligible for other support, as I have mentioned, because of the nature of their disability.

By not funding key service organisations fully or at all, the choice and control for people is diminished. It is a decision that impacts on the lives of people and creates further hardship and becomes a barrier to their quality of life. Currently, these people are falling through the gaps.

Further impacting people living with a disability is their very ability to access allied health support. I would hope to see considerable investment towards addressing the thin markets in Tasmania. There is also no commitment to disability employment initiatives, something that the sector peak body, NDS, has been calling for over a number of years.

I am keen to know what the state Government has committed towards procurement from ADEs and social enterprises, and how they are prepared to aid disability employment. In the budget papers, the Government notes its ongoing responsibility to people living with a disability reliant on state services. Why then have these cuts occurred and why have these things not been reversed? These decisions also place further burdens on other areas of our service system, including mainstream government services and our greater economy.

I note there is a further allocation of \$400 000 for the new disability services commissioner. This seems a very small amount of funding for what is very important work, another area I am keen to follow.

As I have already highlighted, the state has a responsibility to ensure people living with disability have their needs met. Through Estimates, I am keen to see how well their needs are being met in a number of other areas, including transport options, policy development, the interface with government services and workforce development.

Community sector peak bodies perform an invaluable role in advocating and supporting the industries and cohorts that they represent. The Youth Network of Tasmania (YNOT) represents the needs and interests of young people aged 12 to 25. For as long as I have been aware of them, and I should note I am the former CEO, they have not been sufficiently funded to perform the work that they do. I would go so far as to say that they are chronically underfunded.

The funding they do receive has been further compromised with complex grant deed arrangements and time-limited projects that require continual negotiations. A strong peak body can improve outcomes across many policy areas. They can help inform and provide direction for early intervention and prevention service delivery, for example.

As with disability funding, there is the trend towards project funding and away from core funding. Peak bodies need adequate core funding to conduct their work. YNOT is not alone, and investment in this area is urgently needed.

I will also make a point about the type of investment and the conditions often imposed on funding. When it comes to community sector funding, it is very common for there to be an expectation of an in-kind contribution to be made by community organisations. I find this quite offensive, that community organisations have to effectively donate an element of their work and work for free when, let us face it, they generally receive very little funding in the first place.

The community sector contributes significantly to our economy and to supporting our most vulnerable people. Expectations and demand are always very high for the sector, for any funding, and they do achieve a lot with very little. Why is their work not valued enough to pay for it? Why should they have to offer to work for free just to be eligible for a grant, given most core, or even grant funding, only allows money to be used for their intended purpose? The Government knows that there is no other means for this work to be paid for. To me, this is something that needs to be changed and it is simply unfair and unreasonable, and I will be asking questions about the very nature of grants.

As with older people and people living with a disability, young people are a vulnerable cohort. Currently there is little service provision and support that is specifically tailored to meet the needs of those in the older young people cohort, the 18 to 25 year-olds. Young people aged 18 to 25 are in a transition stage of life, as they transition from adolescence to adulthood. These young people are no longer fully dependent, but are not yet fully independent. They are no longer a part of the youth service system, but they do not yet understand or have the ability to access the adult service system. These young people are navigating housing, education, high unemployment, income support, mental and physical health needs, and family and relationship issues.

It is crucial that support is provided to those in this in-between stage of emerging adulthood. YNOT has called for funding to develop a youth transitions plan for action to inform a whole-of-government approach that supports these young people as they transition to adulthood. The need to support this stage of life is recognised within the youth health and



wellbeing strategy, and we will support this. It is pleasing to see a commitment this week, albeit in the form of, yet again, project funding.

Another commitment worth exploring further is the funding for youth housing, in particular, the dispersed Youth Foyer models, also known as potential share houses. Supported youth accommodation is very effective when done well, and I am keen to see what this investment will achieve.

With the increases in costs of living, even more people are living in poverty. These phrases 'cost of living' and 'living in poverty' are said so often that it is easy to forget what it actually means. It can mean having to make choices about whether you eat or whether you heat your home. It can mean living in pain because you cannot afford to go to the doctor or purchase essential medication. It can mean not leaving your house because you cannot afford the cost of transport, leaving you isolated and alone.

Sadly, for many Tasmanians, these are very real experiences and very real choices. The No Interest Loan Scheme, or NILS, has also reportedly experienced an increase in demand in recent times. There are many reasons why people may access this program, and the increase of cost of living has seen a spike in the need for these services. The adequacy of funding to this scheme is something that I wish to follow up in Estimates.

When somebody has to go to NILS to purchase blankets to stay warm in their car, it is very sad that they have to access a loan for that. It is also very hard to argue that it is not an area of the government that needs greater investment.

Neighbourhood houses form an important part of our community fabric. As I have mentioned previously, they have also experienced unprecedented demand for service. To help alleviate poverty, Neighbourhood Houses Tasmania (NHT) has sought investment from the Government in a number of areas. Part of the need they have identified is in regard to the collection and distribution of food to decrease the wastage and expand the use of donated food items. They also seek to work on reducing food relief dependency through food literacy and access to support. There is a commitment in the Budget towards a food relief place-based pilot program. How this looks and what it will achieve are areas I wish to pursue further.

Previously, I have raised the need for investment in several neighbourhood houses that are no longer considered fit for purpose. One of these homes, the East Devonport Neighbourhood House, has had half of its building cordoned off as it presents a danger, and now has to attempt to deliver services from the second storey of the building, which severely limits access to many.

Whilst the capital improvement program will assist NHT to perform necessary upgrades, there is not sufficient funding for new builds.

NHT has also sought funding for their Community Care Adviser pilot program. This involves a specific worker who serves the role of connecting people with available supports within their community. This has long been an issue. I would not be able to tell you how many times people have said, 'Wouldn't it be good if X service existed', or a website that has information on this. All too often the service does exist, or the information is already out there, but the person does not know about it or how to access it.

I see this as an opportunity to increase the value of services across the board and to improve access for so many. It would also potentially save money as more people are able to seek help. I am keen to hear to detail during Estimates about the prospects for this program.

The disbandment of the department of Communities has been creating some confusion within the community sector, with some organisations unsure where responsibility for their area will fit in the future. Additionally, questions remain about how issues will be dealt with that sit across multiple areas. For example, children with disability or disability housing. Concerns remain that some areas will be lost in the Budget.

I also note that there is a decrease in the funding for community development, policy advice and ongoing community development across the forward Estimates, apparently due to the completion of initiatives. What these initiatives achieved and what need remains in these areas is another area that will need to be examined.

More broadly, there has been commentary regarding the level of debt that this Budget takes us into. There is much more that I could cover in this response. However, I will leave it to Estimates as that will provide us with the opportunity to examine further whether this spending is wasteful or helpful in making a difference to Tasmania.

[5.42 p.m.]

**Mr GAFFNEY** (Mersey) - Mr President, I rise to make a contribution to the Government's 2022-23 Budget.

I really appreciate the varied approaches undertaken by members when presenting their response to the Treasurer's Budget Speech. I also take this opportunity to acknowledge the sound work by ex-premier and treasurer, Peter Gutwein, and also the efforts of Sarah Courtney.

It would be remiss of me not to welcome the new Premier, Jeremy Rockliff, who claimed to be from the north-west coast, indeed the Mersey electorate. Mr Rockliff is highly regarded on the north-west coast, and as an aside, his father, Rick Rockliff served as deputy mayor of the Latrobe council for 12 years, while I was the mayor. Rick and Geraldine instilled very compassionate and grounded values in their son, and I believe that these sensitivities augur well in his role as Tasmania's Premier. I congratulate Jeremy on his success.

Many members have already touched on a number of statewide funding packages or opportunities. I will confine my contribution primarily to the Mersey electorate.

I contacted a number of members of the Mersey electorate offering the opportunity for them to provide feedback or to highlight issues they may have in regard to the Budget and/or Estimates. I thank all of those who responded. A number forwarded me important information I have been able to reflect in this speech.

I wish to keep this speech at an appropriate length, so I am unable to mention all of their concerns and positives that they raised. A number of the following I have mentioned in recent speeches and seek not to repeat myself, such as COVID-19, *Spirit of Tasmania*, the TT-Line, climate change, the housing market, the Living City and Paranapple Centre, voluntary assisted dying, sport and recreation facilities, the justice system, the gateway to Cradle Mountain and local tourism.

As I rise to share my thoughts on the budget papers and Appropriation Bills (No. 1) and (No. 2) 2022, I begin with education, a subject close to my heart and an essential part of helping the next generation to be the very best they can be.

I welcome the idea of a student safeguarding officer in every school, and it would be good to know that when selecting suitably qualified people for these roles that they might also have a role in supporting the general wellbeing of all students and staff. For those school communities that would prefer a truly secular option, this could be a way that they can replace the need for chaplains from religious organisations. I raise this as I know many people in my electorate have strong concerns with chaplaincy and other faith-based programs currently operating in our public schools.

There is also the potential to enhance the role of the safeguarding officers while still utilising the extensive and now permanent federal government funding provisions for chaplaincy. I have to ask if this is something the Tasmanian Government can take up with the new Australian Government, especially as negotiations develop for the replacement of the National School Reform Agreements that are due to expire at the end of 2023.

As members are aware, I have been a strong supporter of the establishment and ongoing work of TANA - or to give it its full name, the Trauma Awareness Network Australia - proudly established in the north-west coast a few years ago. The impact of trauma on the ability of students to thrive in our schools is increasingly understood. Full credit to the Premier, in his then role as minister for Education, when he negotiated provision for this within the 2018 National School Reform Agreement between Tasmania and the Australian Government, a unique nation-leading first.

In subsequent budgets, the Government has expanded its provision for supporting students impacted by trauma, and trauma-informed professional development. This Budget has again seen another welcome boost with an additional \$24 million allocated to this essential work, the impact of which goes far beyond the classroom to make a positive difference to the lives of those students, their families and their place in the community. An example of this is the work of Elspeth Stephenson, who is a lecturer and teacher of professional learning at UTAS. She is increasingly well known across Tasmania, as she specialises in trauma-informed practice and is qualified as a practitioner in trust-based relational intervention, or TBRI. It is her passion and that of those around her that now sees every UTAS teaching student being educated in the impact of trauma on students and how best to support and work with them to help them to thrive in school and the community.

The department has also delivered a series of highly regarded professional learning workshops on trauma-informed practice for in-service teachers led by Elspeth and others. I trust that this additional funding can allow an expansion in the scope and the availability of these workshops for the benefit of both teachers and their students.

In this Budget there has been some provision for cost of living pressure on families with school age children, most notably the gentle expansion of the cohort that will not have to pay school fees and levies for attending our public schools. This perhaps needs to be looked at again, as for many nations around the world the thought of having to pay to attend a state school is absurd, an anathema to common sense. It is one that is only second to those private schools, of which there are many, that get more taxpayer funding per student than their less-advantaged public school neighbours.

Maybe fees and levies are an historical vestige from our distant past, where local schools were established and funded by their communities before being taken over by the state. It is something we can change for the benefit of our families, as they raise and educate our next generation in times of growing financial challenges. Public education that is open to all and actively engages with its families is a common good for everyone in this state and one that, for many people, is their only route out of disadvantage and into greater opportunity. It has to be right for them and their families who support them, as there are almost no second chances for such students or family wealth to help them out on their way.

On a similar note, I was disappointed to see no action has been taken on student transport. As members will recall, it is something I have raised in questions to the Leader and in briefings from the minister and the department and is something that is still to be resolved. Currently, we have an arbitrary system where your postcode and the crossing of a line on a map can trigger the need to pay a fare or not for a child to get to their local school. With current student bus fare income of about \$2 million on total bus services that cost close to \$100 million a year, there is surely some scope to rationalise this.

Fare-free travel to the nearest public school could well give a net cost benefit to the Government, together with creating increased attendance, years 11 and 12 completion and reducing congestion in urban centres.

Given the apparent largesse within the Budget, it could also be one of the few cash-positive initiatives the Government could take that would also help meet other Government policy goals. Latrobe High School and the Don College in my electorate are an example. With booming enrolments, parents and students have been campaigning on this issue for many years. As one parent said, it seems crazy and totally unfair that for our kids to get to our nearest school, we have to pay for the privilege, and yet for other rural schools, there is no charge.

School infrastructure is an ongoing issue with many of our schools and colleges requiring work to keep them up to a standard and cope with increasing enrolments. One point that is of concern comes with the Government's focus on expanding years 11 and 12 into every high school.

In my electorate, Don College is still the largest school in the north-west and its centre of excellence is the focal point for its coalition of local high schools. However, there has been no significant capital investment there for many years. As a 46-year-old building, it has fixtures and fittings from that date that are failing, and a significant number of temporary classrooms that are in urgent need of refurbishment. Whilst the uniquely patterned and locally made carpets fitted when it was built are still going strong - and I can remember those because it was my first year - there needs to be urgent remedial action to restore much of the college into a proper state that does justice to the quality of education delivered there.

The cost pressures of delivering education with a team of dedicated teachers in a brutalist concrete building that is no friend of modern technology or mobile networks is an ongoing challenge. As one student said to me, the poor wi-fi coverage can be disruptive and makes school work difficult. Many useful websites and news outlets are unnecessarily restricted, leading students to rely on VPNs while at school. A VPN is virtual private network which allows them to bypass central Department of Education network controls.

It is sad to see a lack of funding result in popular classes not being taught. Some of the subjects I have been looking forward to most are, at this stage, unavailable at Don. Finding a place to park can be pretty challenging towards the end of the school year. Most students are parking out on the street and getting out to re-park between lessons and during lessons, to avoid a fine.

I was pleased to hear of the planning and funding for new schools statewide at Legana and Brighton and the future north-west school development support school in Devonport. It is pleasing to see the Government is preparing for new and growing communities, schools community centres and infrastructure being established as Tasmania's population continues to climb. It is predicted by some researchers to be 526 386 people by the end of June this year.

I am interested to understand how that planning occurs, and no doubt some questions in next week's Estimates by the members in Committee B will be beneficial in understanding that process.

There has been recent significant funding for an upgrade to Devonport High School and even in 2016-17, there was a total of \$13 million spent to upgrade Latrobe High School to cater for 600 students. That was money well spent. On the north-west coast, the Latrobe municipality which includes Port Sorell is continuing to grow. This is reflected in our school populations. However, there are always issues with expansion in some schools and downward trends in others.

In 2017, at the time of redevelopment for 600 students, Latrobe High School had 461 students. In 2018 it had 473. In 2019, 521; in 2020, 579; in 2021, 598; and this year, 626, so it has already passed its maximum of 600. This year's grade cohort is the smallest of the four year groups and for those who have been involved in schooling, it means that if the grade 10 is the smallest, more than likely the grade 6 students coming to grade 7 will be a larger cohort which means the school population is more than likely to go up but that will not be known until October. Whilst numbers for year 7 are not currently known for 2023, their feeder schools are Port Sorell, Sassafra, Andrews Creek, Latrobe and St Patrick's, as well as students from Spreyton, East Devonport and Railton. You can see that the school population is going up again.

It stands to reason that with continued population growth in the increasing townships of Port Sorell and Latrobe, how does the Education department and Government plan for schooling needs in the future? One minor, but important, matter I will mention in this place is the funding of the parliamentary education services which provide a wonderful opportunity for us to assist schools and visitor experiences and being more informed about the role of parliament and respective Chambers. I would think that all members in this place have been very impressed and grateful for the expert assistance we have received from the education staff in this parliament. They are welcoming and obliging, organising tools, information and resources. I believe a large percentage of the funding of the educational officers and their work comes from the House of Assembly coffers, and I congratulate them on that. It has been proved a popular thing for our schools, especially those from outside the Hobart region.

In that same vein, I also make a positive comment supporting Youth Parliament week, and the financial support of that experience. A number of MLCs assist with Youth Parliament week, and I encourage and financially support year 10, 11 and 12 students from the six schools and colleges within my electorate. For the record, as a percentage I believe many more MLCs

volunteer their services for Youth Parliament. It is a pity that a few more MHAs are not involved. I look forward to being involved again this year, and it would be appreciated if the Leader can confirm those dates for this year's Youth Parliament week.

Health care is an ongoing concern and whilst larger hospital-based investment initiatives have been flagged and are especially welcome, for me the investment in the Mersey Community Hospital, after so many years of doubt over its future, are especially welcome. This will provide a certain element of reassurance to the rapidly growing community in my electorate and surrounding areas. However, the ongoing issue of madly busy GPs that are striving to cope with patient demands still needs urgent attention.

The fact that many people now present at accident and emergency, or seek support from other healthcare professionals, because they can struggle to get a timely appointment with their GP - if they can actually register with a practice - is perhaps a key indicator that we have a problem in accessing local primary healthcare services. The implication of this, when added to the unrelenting pressure on our health system from COVID-19-related issues is, as one young person in my electorate observed, chronic understaffing for the health system in the north-west, and this feels mostly unaddressed by the state Budget.

On the back of this, and something that has been exacerbated by the last couple years of the COVID-19 pandemic, has been the blowout in waiting times for elective surgeries. Whilst there have been intended strategies in place to help manage this issue, it is gratifying to see renewed Government focus on reducing the often intolerable wait for assessment and surgeries. Additional funding that now can initiate long-planned additional support programs for those waiting assessment or surgery is a vital step as we hopefully transition back to more normal levels of waiting for essential surgeries.

I know that there are healthcare professionals managing these lists and patient triage who will welcome these changes. With an ageing population that will be having increasing healthcare demands, it is self-evident that this will be an ongoing issue that will require our diligent attention. Our community deserves the very best health care, and I have to ask the Government, are we doing enough to support people who are currently putting their lives on hold and living in pain with these unacceptable delays? Can, and should we, do more?

I welcome the Premier retaining the Health portfolio. It is never going to be a popular ministerial responsibility; however, I believe is the correct move by the Premier. In the Budget speech the Treasurer stated:

The health of every Tasmanian continues to be our highest priority. We continue to allocate more funding for health than any previous government.

That being the case, it is incumbent that any spending within health must try to get the greatest bang for the buck. I believe there is steady progress to look for effective measures to improve Tasmanians' health. Indeed, the acknowledgement in relatively recent times by the Government actively encouraging pharmacists, paramedics and perhaps even nurse practitioners to work to their full scope, as they can in other states and our New Zealand neighbours, encourages me to think that the outdated pieces of legislation restricting that scope of work will be taken on board by the Government. One only has to look closely at the very positive and proactive nurse practitioner service model in the Cygnet community to realise how advantageous that model could be in many other towns and regions.

I am pleased that the slogan 'Healthy State by 2025' was indeed unreasonable and is gone, as it is an unachievable nonsense. Tasmanians are realistic about their health needs and the difficulties we have in attracting qualified health practitioners, and putting systems into place to support, protect and look after our wonderful health workers. The need for greater focus on preventative health is particularly necessary on the north-west coast.

As mentioned previously, it is pleasing that the Government is continuing to advance the role that Mersey Hospital can play in our health system, and is financially supporting Mersey as an integral piece of the health puzzle. There was another piece of the health puzzle in the Budget speech, with the Treasurer highlighting more than \$12 million for public and private partnerships to meet the demand, and the Government's \$196 million statewide four-year elective surgery plan to deliver more surgery, sooner.

As an aside, I have been impressed with the number of private health services which have informed me that they have been supported by various THS staff as a way and means of facilitating better health services, especially in the more remote and probably rural sectors. For instance, in Devonport there is an opportunity, as detailed by Jane Haybittel, Director and Practice Manager of the Devonport Eye Hospital, in keeping patients out of accident and emergency.

It may assist members and listeners if in dot point form I use Ms Haybittel's words. Jane stated:

Due to the growing demand of public patients and as the only full-time provider of ophthalmology services on the north-west coast, funding for additional consulting rooms, procedure rooms would be beneficial to the public services. Devonport Eye Hospital service, both in Accident and Emergency at Mersey and Burnie, as a public outpatient clinic as well, as every general practitioner and optometrist emergencies immediately requested.

Consulting room additions were planned and approved by the Devonport City Council. However, these plans have been put on hold due to the cost of \$1 million. This would exclude equipment. Expansion of consulting rooms would enable Devonport Eye Hospital to treat more patients in an efficient, timely manner with urgent intravitreal injections, five different types of lasers, often used to treat emergencies and prevent loss of vision.

At times, due to emergencies, our services run two to three hours late.

Jane goes on to explain:

Currently, due to penetrating eye injuries, macular holes or tears, close angle glaucoma, central vein occlusions, over 100 paediatric patients public monthly, and neonates born prematurely at 24 weeks, can be discharged home to Devonport from Hobart on condition that north-west eye surgeons agree to follow their progress, because retinopathy of prematurity causes blindness if untreated in neonates.

UTAS medical students rotate through the facility on a weekly basis. This ongoing education is much appreciated by medical students and the Rural Clinical School. The training service is, and always has been, without remuneration from the state or federal governments. This includes regular lectures to medical students, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders are treated without any out-of-pocket costs, and Jane concludes by stating:

Public funding would ensure an ongoing vital service to public patients on the north-west coast, and would also help alleviate pressures on other sections of the health system.

It is a good example of a private entity helping out as much as they can. Hopefully, with some cooperation from the THS, that service will be able to expand for, not only the north-west coast, but people across the state.

It seems that it is a natural progression to go from the important needs of our health system to, perhaps, the not-so important needs for an AFL stadium. There are many different public opinions about the role and future of Australian Rules Football in the state. Countless reports and reviews have been undertaken across the decades regarding Tasmania's own AFL team. Different approaches have been supported with both the Hawthorn and North Melbourne franchises playing in either Launceston or Hobart. Personally, I enjoy the current situation of having AFL games at both ends of the state in good stadiums. It seems to have a good variety of teams and have created supporter bases both north and south.

Currently, a number of ex-AFL players, coaches, notable Tasmanians and future generations are being used through an extensive media campaign to promote the 'own-team Tasmania' cause. Whilst a number of members of parliament and leaders of parties have jumped on popularity of the state's own-team AFL cause, fuelled by a variety of media genre and outlets, I am one of those politicians who does not believe Tasmania needs its own team. Quickly and importantly, I explain that my opinion is probably no more valid than any other persons, but in this place, I am able to echo and vocalise the opinions of a significant number of Tasmanians in my electorate who are also not supportive or question the need or advantage to Tasmania's own AFL team, especially with a very expensive stadium.

Indeed, originally I was a member of the Legislative Council AFL committee of inquiry, which I believe was no longer needed when the Government stepped in to create its own review processes. I resigned from that committee. I felt that it was a waste of parliamentary resources then, and I still do now.

Some members in this place, and a number of community members, would appreciate the significant role sports have played in my life. Football is one of the sports I have participated at both statewide and state level. I enjoy most sports and am a staunch supporter of sporting clubs and organisations. However, on behalf of the Tasmanians who may fall into the following categories, I do not believe that there needs to be an AFL stadium of that magnitude.

Some people are totally ambivalent to AFL football and do not view having our own AFL football team as a priority. There are some who are supportive of the current arrangements, with games being played in both Launceston and Hobart. There are those who do not believe an AFL team should be even be part of any government's agenda, and should not be prioritised. And there are those who dislike football intensely and would never go to



watch, especially a sport which is being challenged by other codes. I also voice my opposition to the look and feel of the skyline and future of our capital city being left in the hands of an AFL subcommittee, able to grant - or not - an AFL licence. While it is probably not a popular view, nevertheless it is a view that also needs to receive an airing in this place.

Mr President, in the greater scheme of things, we have heard for some time, and from a number of commentators, about the economic inflationary pressures building in today's 'living with COVID-19' world. Those pressures have been inflamed by Russia's repugnant, reprehensible and ongoing attack on Ukraine. There are no words that can adequately describe the horror that its proud citizens have to contend with in this travesty to our world order and common decency. The wider impact of this war has seen inflationary pressures brought to a head with our cost of living expenses seemingly rising on a daily basis. It is causing real damage to our community sense of wellbeing and hope for the future, with Tasmania starting with an increasing lack of affordable housing, now amplified with a fuel price bull market where prices seem to rise on an hourly basis.

There has been some criticism of the expanding debt load to our state arising from this Budget - something the Treasurer assures us is within normal bounds. I am not sure how many of our younger generations will be convinced by this, when it comes the time to start paying back this debt. Again, we will need to keep a watching brief on this point to ensure that it does not necessarily become the norm for future budgets. What these inflationary pressures do highlight is that we are likely to see higher interest rates in an attempt to slow inflation that will bring further pressure onto many family budgets. That is a point that worker representatives will be keenly aware of and have already indicated as an issue in future wage negotiations. As a state, Tasmania often has to compete for critical staff attracted to mainland states that can offer higher salaries.

In saying that, there have been a number of initiatives that look to help those Tasmanians who need additional support. Investment in the new eight-unit Devonport Men's Shelter, the expansion of the Youth2Independence, or Y21, initiative and facilities, and the two new supported accommodation facilities for older Tasmanians in the north and north-west are to be commended as dignified ways of helping people get back on track in difficult circumstances.

Neighbourhood houses play a vital role within communities, and really stretch every dollar they receive, accounting for every cent. I am always very impressed, as many of us would be, when we attend occasions at our local community house. The Devonport Community House manager is always complimentary and congratulatory of the funding commitments and support received from governments, particularly the state government. The concerns raised by the manager, Kate Beer, are always focused on the needs of the community. Kate stated a major concern is housing, and it is great to see the funds going towards this need.

As outlined in the Treasurer's Budget Speech, the Government has closely looked at and invested significant funds into our housing challenge. As a number of members have mentioned housing, I will not dwell on further explanation. Kate also said:

We are concerned about the number of people presenting without food, and my idea is to provide more fruit and veg, cheaply or at no cost.

A model for food procurement for neighbourhood houses will, I feel, provide an amazing value for money, and especially if it was professed with

providing fruit and veg donation, and not just giving away or selling ready-made meals.

Most people are after the social experience of interacting with others who will listen and chat with them. Giving them ideas on what they can do with veggies, etc.

So, coming in for a frozen or a take-away meal negates this, I feel. It makes them beholden to the provider, rather than a more dignified way of giving to receive.

There is a place for this. Gran's Van, Heaven's Kitchen, and Paul's Kitchen that I know of in Devonport, are fabulous places for more than just food, or for receiving a handout.

I received correspondence from Devonport City Council, regarding some identified traffic issues at the following road locations. I will possibly raise this with Committee B:

- Mersey Main Road and Sheffield Road intersection upgrade
- Mill Road and Bass Highway interface upgrade
- Mersey Main Road and Kelcey Tier Road intersection upgrade

As I put these in the speech, I imagine there might be some answers readily available during Estimates. I need to make certain I have chosen the right minister. To cover all the bases, I have the correspondence for both the Chair of Committee B to raise the issue and I also may raise it with the appropriate minister in Committee A.

The final matter of concern from the Devonport City Council is a little more difficult to work out:

Council received advice that a financial commitment from the Department of State Growth to fund a much-needed shared pathway on the northern side of the Stony Rise Road hill has now been withdrawn. This is a real concern however for the Devonport City Council, as the council was assured that the project would be funded and has advised the community that the project is proceeding.

They are in a bit of a dilemma. Unfortunately, that is not the case and it puts them in an unenviable position. It also puts me in a difficult position as I have no idea which minister is now responsible for the decision that was made by the department, because the Department of State Growth has been split all over the place.

In closing, in light of contributions of other members, I have not focused so much on other important issues such as salmon farms in the Bass Strait and climate change. The salmon farm issue in the Bass Strait is one which no doubt will receive community and hopefully media attention.

Climate change is the greatest challenge for us and for future generations. Tasmania's next Climate Change Action Plan must identify practical actions to reduce emissions and be

based on what is best for the environment - not what economic return there could be for the state.

Both issues, that is the Bass Strait fish farms - for those who live on the north-west coast - and climate change, for all Tasmanians, will need greater attention by all elected members in and across each of the three spheres of government in the not too distant future.

I note the 2022-23 Budget speech and I seek an adjournment for a meal break.

**Debate adjourned.**

## **SUSPENSION OF SITTING**

[6.12 p.m.]

**Mrs HISCUTT** (Montgomery - Leader of the Government in the Legislative Council) - Mr President, I move -

That the sitting be suspended until the ringing of the division bells

This for the purposes of the dinner break.

**Sitting suspended from 6.10 p.m. to 7.22 p.m.**

## **MOTION**

**Budget Papers and Appropriation Bills (No. 1 and No. 2) 2022 - Noting**

**Resumed from above.**

[7.24 p.m.]

**Ms PALMER** (Rosevears - Minister for Primary Industries and Water) - I am pleased to respond to this year's state Budget which the Treasurer handed down last week.

There has been significant investment in my specific areas of responsibility as a minister and also in my electorate of Rosevears, so it is with great pride that I have the opportunity to discuss some of those initiatives in further detail. This Budget is a clear investment into securing Tasmania's future and outlines measures to help us deliver on our plan. I am proud this is a budget with heart which focuses firmly on what everyday Tasmanians need most: health, education, housing and building safe, inclusive, thriving communities. We will invest a record \$11.2 billion into our health system and the health and wellbeing of Tasmanians. A record \$8.5 billion will be invested in education, skills, and training to enable Tasmanians to get jobs with local employers which will support and drive our economy forward. While our economy is strong, we also know many Tasmanians are doing it tough and there is certainly more work to be done. That is why this Government is implementing the most comprehensive and ambitious affordable housing strategy in Tasmania's history, investing up to \$538 million into social and affordable housing and initiatives to address homelessness with \$204 million allocated in the 2022-23 year alone.

We are also on track to build 1500 homes in June next year, rising to a total of 10 000 new homes by 2032 as part of our 10-year \$1.5 billion housing package. This Budget is a winner, and it certainly has the support of a range of experts and stakeholders; the Tasmanian Chamber of Commerce and Industry's Michael Bailey said:

After two years of Covid chaos it's terrific to see not just a way out of Covid but also how well the economy is travelling.

Our state is stronger and more prosperous when we support all Tasmanians to achieve their full potential.

We are continuing our strong focus on reducing barriers to women's economic participation, and increasing opportunities for leadership and advancement, particularly in industries in which women are traditionally under-represented. Our work to achieve gender equality in Tasmania is guided by the Tasmanian Women's Strategy 2022-2027. The focus of this strategy is government-led cultural change. Initiatives proposed under the strategy include development of a gender impact assessment process, so the Government can assess the gender impact of initiatives and policies. We propose these initiatives will include training and resources and be publicly available to other organisations to adopt these processes. In the 2022-23 Tasmanian Budget we have committed \$800 000 over four years to implement the Tasmanian Women's Strategy to support cultural change.

I am pleased, as Minister for Women, to welcome the Tasmanian Government's first gender budget statement. The statement highlights our policies and the actions we are taking to create a more inclusive Tasmania. This is an important first step and it will be built on in future years. I thank those in this place in particular who have already come forward to ask to be part of that conversation and to help to build on that first important step. I certainly look forward to working with them in the coming months, before we move on to our second statement.

I am also very pleased to say in the 2022-23 Tasmanian Budget, as part of the \$12.5 million funding for the third Family and Sexual Violence Action Plan there will be an increase in core funding for our specialist counselling services throughout Tasmania. This includes Yemaya Women's Support Service, which provides an important outreach service in northern Tasmania, specifically to a community in my electorate, Beaconsfield. I have heard firsthand how terribly important it is to have this service actually out in our regions, to make sure we are reducing and breaking down any barriers for any woman who needs support.

I acknowledge the honourable Jane Howlett MLC, former minister for women and thank her for her work and oversight in developing the Tasmanian Women's Strategy 2022-2027. As Minister for Women, I welcome initiatives right across the 2022-23 Tasmanian Budget that increase opportunities for leadership and participation for Tasmanian women and girls. This includes the continuation of funding for women's workforce participation through the \$700 000 Supporting Women to Succeed Grant Program; \$450 000 to support increased gender and cultural diversity across our resources sector; and continuing the Women's Leadership Board Diversity Scholarships. These commitments are helping to increase opportunities for women in the workforce and in leadership positions, and to promote and recognise the contribution of Tasmanian women across all aspects of our economy and communities. Importantly, they are the foundation for meaningful change for Tasmanian women and girls.

I am pleased to acknowledge that we are committing a further \$400 000 to support the establishment of a new Tasmanian disability commissioner. This is in addition to the \$1.2 million committed to this initiative in the 2021-22 year. Over the past year, we have been conducting extensive consultation with the disability community about this really important role, and we are about to commence work on setting up the legislative framework. While this work is underway, we will be recruiting an interim commissioner who will undertake the roles and responsibilities of the office.

I am also pleased to note that the Government is providing high-quality inclusive education for students with disability through the needs-based funding model. The Government will commission an independent evaluation of the model next year, and engage with the new federal government on our longstanding concerns about funding distribution. I also note the report from the Legislative Council inquiry into disability services that was tabled this morning by the chair of that committee, the member for Pembroke. I am looking forward to considering that report and the findings and the recommendations. I believe they will play quite a role in how we move forward.

Our agricultural sector is showing strong growth, and recently exceeded \$2 billion for the first time. I acknowledge our farmers, our fishers and food producers who work very hard every day to produce premium goods that are sought after the world over, and as we know, Tasmania produces what the world wants.

The Budget announces new support for our primary industries, including \$1.9 million over four years to resource the implementation of the Wild Fallow Deer Management Plan and support our balanced approach to deer management. There is \$535 000 allocated for the National Water Grid Authority science program to support the Tasmanian Rural Water Use Strategy, to encourage the environmentally conscious, sustainable use of water, and promote new opportunities for innovation and growth.

This investment will complement Australian Government funding, taking the total joint funding to more than \$1.8 million. We will continue to work with the Australian Government and farmers to progress the next six projects of tranche three, including the Don, Northern Midlands, Sassafras/Wesley Vale, Tamar, South East Integration and the Southern Midlands. We are passionate about supporting Tasmanian businesses, families and communities and providing the platform to help build a bright future for Tasmania.

The Tasmanian Liberal Government is the strongest supporter of our iconic seafood industry. As a result of COVID-19 we provided an unprecedented \$5.5 million package to support the sector. We followed this with further relief of \$663 000 to support wild fisheries, in particular the rock lobster fisheries that have been affected by both COVID-19 and then the China trade situation. Of course, there is more work to do and that is why we are continuing to invest \$3 million to deliver our Wild Fisheries Action Plan with industry. The 2022-23 Budget includes \$400 000 for the ShellMAP industry market access program, to continue to support delivery of the program and enhance Tasmania's reputation for quality seafood. Duncan Spender, the CEO of Oysters Tasmania, the peak body representing Tasmania's oyster farmers, praised the \$400 000 injection into the shellfish market access program, known as ShellMAP, as a smart investment in the state's seafood industry, and unique natural environment. Duncan said:

ShellMAP is a program reflecting a genuine partnership between oyster farmers and the state government. By ensuring that Tasmanian oysters are always safe to eat, the ShellMAP program underpins the growth of an industry that all Tasmanians can be proud of.

The injection of funds will support more effective program management, sophisticated scientific testing of our oyster meats and the state's waters they grow in, not only to ensure that Tasmanian oysters are always safe to eat, but to ensure that other Tasmanian seafood is always safe to eat too.

The investment will ensure we better understand our state waters where we naturally grow our oysters so we can protect these waters and Tasmania's clean, green brand for the long term.

I thank Mr Spender for those comments.

This Government supports our farmers and their sustainable practices, and we will continue to ensure the industry is transparently managed according to science and due process. We focused on continuous improvement across all of our productive industries and this includes salmon farming, which is Tasmania's largest primary industry having surpassed \$1 billion in value. That is why, in this Budget, we are investing \$377 000 towards the development of a new 10-year salmon plan, allowing industry and the community to identify new, long-term actions that support a vision for a sustainable industry which can continue to support Tasmanian jobs, businesses and communities. Tasmanians should be very proud of our world-class fisheries and our aquaculture sectors.

The Government has a strong record on supporting traditional recreational activities such as fishing. Recreational fishing is part of the Tasmanian way of life and we are continuing to invest \$350 000 to support Tasmania's first ever 10-year Recreational Sea Fishing Strategy. Importantly, this includes funding for the improved sustainability of the flathead resource, which is a most popular fish for most Tasmanian fishers in terms of take and accessibility.

I am also particularly proud that this includes \$100 000 to make fishing easier for young people, women and people with disabilities. Initiatives include accessing fishing infrastructure to ensure it is accessible; establishing a buddy-style fishing program to support people living with disability or those who may have limited mobility; and developing new fish care programs that target young people, women and girls, people living with disability or who may have limited mobility.

These initiatives are complemented by our continued support of the recreational peak fishing body, TARfish, with \$400 000 provided over three years and our ongoing support for the East Coast Rock Lobster Translocation Program.

I want to see more opportunities for people to go fishing and to ensure fishing is an opportunity that is here for all generations and for all people. This is why we have been delivering a \$2 million grant fund for new and upgraded facilities and amenities for recreational sea fishing and \$1 million over four years for new and upgraded facilities for inland fishing and improved access. We are encouraging the next generation of inland fishers with free licences for the next three years and we are increasing the funding for the popular tagged trout promotions.

As the representative for Rosevears, I am pleased to say this Budget delivers significant investment which will benefit the people of Rosevears. We are investing \$667 million towards the Launceston General Hospital stage 1 and 2 redevelopment over four years and investing a further \$7 million for operational funding for additional paramedic crews at Launceston over four years. This Government is continuing to invest \$100 million for upgrades to the East and West Tamar highways and a further \$75 million for the Launceston and Tamar Valley Traffic Vision, including upgrades to the Batman Highway and Birralea Road and planning for a new Tamar River crossing.

West Tamar residents have been calling for investments to ease traffic congestion, especially between Legana and Launceston. The Tasmanian Liberal Government has listened to these calls and we are building the necessary infrastructure. This Budget invests \$11 million for the Exeter High School redevelopment and \$24 million for the construction of the new Legana Primary School over the next three years.

The Budget also provides \$2.8 million for the Tamar Island Wetlands boardwalk placement beyond forward Estimates. The upgrades will provide even more reason to visit this most beautiful part of Tasmania which I adore calling home.

These are a few initiatives that will support the electorate of Rosevears and, indeed, all Tasmanians. Mr President, I note the Budget.

[7.39 p.m.]

**Ms WEBB** (Nelson) - Mr President, I rise to provide my response to the state Budget 2022-23. A lot has certainly changed since we last stood here responding to the previous state budget which was barely nine months ago, as it was slightly delayed again last year.

We now have before us a new Premier, a new Treasurer and a couple of elections have occurred in the meantime including in this place and federally. It is fair to say the 2022-23 Budget has been delivered within a very difficult political landscape more so than last year's.

The political tectonic plates have well and truly shifted. That shift has come into sharp focus with the recent federal election and its results. It has been interesting to see pundits and commentators alike now seeking to make sense of this fairly extraordinary result through, perhaps belatedly, recognising the community lens brought to that election which very much prioritised climate change action, integrity, gender equality and inclusion as key themes.

Here at a local level, new Premier Mr Rockliff, in a media release on 8 April undertook:

... to lead a government with integrity, a government that is courageous, accountable, delivers on its commitments, but above all, I will lead a government with heart.

Importantly in that same media release the Premier stated a vision for Tasmania that it was to be a place where everyone feels valued, included, encouraged and supported to be the best they can be. Very pleasing statements to hear from the new Premier, given the overlap between the federal election we have had and its themes, the resignation of former premier

Gutwein, the change to current Premier Rockliff and the finalisation of this state Budget, all underway during that period.

The budget papers before us provide the first opportunity to examine the synergies between the community's priorities and Premier Rockliff's stated objectives. Also to assess whether and how well the 2022-23 state Budget reflects the acknowledged need to improve a respectful relationship between community and government and between the executive of parliament, while delivering a coherent plan to place Tasmania on a sound fiscal footing.

However, for all intents and purposes, it appears this state Budget, despite having its bags packed, has missed the zeitgeist train. It lacked the agility to jump aboard the compassionate, the cost of living, climate action, integrity and gender quality carriages as they left the station.

We know the state Budget, whether national or sub-national, is more than a mere set of numbers. It is not just a ledger tracking incoming and outgoing monies. It is also a significant statement and expression of a government's public policy prioritisation.

In addition, it must be acknowledged that since 2020, national and state governments and treasurers have faced extreme challenges. There was no pandemic budget blueprint for treasurers to follow, nor for others to evaluate those pandemic-constrained efforts.

However, the recent announcement that by 30 June the Government intends to lift all COVID-19-related Public Health directions, means Tasmania will be formally no longer in a pandemic. The removal of that pandemic status and hopefully, an equivalent reduction in our overuse of the word 'unprecedented', perhaps.

The end of this financial year means, in effect, that this is the first post-pandemic transitional budget for the state. I say transitional, as the budget papers still make backup or emergency provisions, for example the additional money provided in the 2022-23 Treasurer's Reserve allocation - which, according to its footnote, is for the purpose of 'unexpected COVID-19 pandemic and other costs which could not be reasonably foreseen at the time of developing 2022-23 Budget'.

In a hopeful post-pandemic context, this Budget will be a crucial test of the rubber hitting the road. How well have the post-pandemic foundations been set over previous financial years? Are we entrenching social and economic intergeneration disadvantage, or have we seized opportunities to reorientate to restructure, to tackle head-on those inequities and divisions? How do we get back on to that zeitgeist train while ensuring it stays on its fiscal tracks?

Let me start by talking about state tax reform, a good place to start. As we formally move out of a pandemic status we need to ensure we leave nobody behind when we do so. As warned during and since 2020, we must ensure the pre-pandemic social and economic fault lines are not allowed to calcify and worsen. Cost of living challenges pose vicious and compounding cycles. Static and suppressed wage rates exacerbate rental and housing pressures, power and heating pressures, food insecurity and corresponding increases in health and mental health challenges. With reduced money circulating, local economies stagnate or shrink which risks further turning of the screw when it comes to unemployment, underemployment and wage rates.



This is not a hypothetical scenario. It is the description of the real-life experience of many Tasmanians, and I will talk a little later more about the cost of living. There may be a cautious welcome of the larger than projected new operating expenditure in this Budget over the forward Estimates through until 2025-26. However, there is an understandable concern over the lack of a plan, other than an indicative and movable time frame, identifying strategies to manage and reduce the expected larger cash deficits and the increase in net debt to \$4.9 billion by the end of the 2026 financial year. According to Saul Eslake, this net debt figure, and I quote from him from 26 May, 'is equivalent to about 11.3 per cent of forecast growth state product, the highest this percentage has been since 1998-99'.

Sometime down the track debts will need to be serviced, as will interest on that debt, while community services and support will still need to be provided. In this context it is also worth noting the recent policy decisions such as reduction in land tax, which will see the state revenue reduced by \$173 million over the four years through to 2025-26 without any objective or rigorous mechanism by which to evaluate the benefit of this policy change for the broader community. This was a giveaway of state revenue, targeted to achieve no social or equity outcomes - simply a gift, extra money into the pockets of those whose are least likely to need it.

The member for Murchison also pointed to this and to the other gift - the loss of state revenue that we have projected with the reforms coming through the gambling bill that was passed here last year. We will see half a billion dollars of revenue to this state lost as a gift through heavily and unnecessarily discounted tax rates in casinos applied to poker machines and to Keno. Shame on this place, shame on us for passing that and depriving our state of the nurses, teachers and social services that could have been delivered with half a billion dollars over the licence period.

However, moving on to that other elephant in the Budget, the state's ongoing reliance on GST revenue as well as Commonwealth grants. As Budget Paper No. 1 on page 83 tells us, the previous horizontal fiscal equalisation (HFE) strategy has been amended with the new distribution methodology expected to reduce our GST revenue over the forward Estimates. However, the budget papers quickly reassure us that due to the federal:

... temporary no-worse-off guarantee ensures that no state will be worse off in total under the new distribution arrangements during the transition period up to 2026-27.

The key phrase there is 'the transition period'. That grace period is set to terminate in three financial years. What happens then? As Saul Eslake summarised last week:

... unless it is extended, or the GST revenue sharing formulae reverts to its previous form, Tasmania in particular (given its greater reliance on its share of GST revenue than any other jurisdiction except the Northern Territory) stands to be considerably adversely affected.

That was from 26 May.

Presuming the GST distribution formula does not revert to its previous form by the end of the transition period of 2026-27, we could see this source of income adversely affected just as the budget papers tell us we will have reached cash deficits of over \$4 billion. The combined

cost of debt service payments and defined benefit superannuation costs will reach 6.3 per cent of cash receipts in 2025-26, exceeding the government's fiscal strategy limit of 6 per cent. Although those same papers state the government will take remedial action to deliver all stated fiscal strategic actions over the medium term, details of exactly what such action might look like is not provided, nor is there a time frame for such action. Clearly, any remedial action will involve changes to spending and revenue raising.

During my budget reply speech last year, I called for an independent expert review of Tasmania's taxation and revenue system. It is a call made by others here in this place, and in the wider community, and I reiterate that call now. This is work that must be done. We have had years of circular debates about regressive taxes versus progressive taxes. We need some form of circuit-breaker which is also devoid of ideological imperatives.

To break the current impasse on meaningful and effective structural reform of Tasmania's state taxation and revenue financial system, we need an independent inquiry into structural reform of the state's taxation and revenue system. Such a review would do the following things: review the state's recognised narrow taxation and revenue base and seek potential modern, equitable and efficient means to broaden that base; review whether the current mix and emphasis of the state tax and revenue base provides the stability and certainty necessary to deliver important community services; review whether the current taxation and revenue mix supports, or risks undermining, modern public policy direction and demand - for example, the potential impact of reducing or removing taxes on positives such as employment, while redirecting tax focus onto damaging practices, such as pollution; and other incentivising taxes that encourage social and sustainable reforms.

It would review any current revenue forgone options formalised within our current state tax and revenue mix, and identify any required transitional time frames and support, including funding to assist those most affected by any proposed reforms. We have had other suggestions. The member for Murchison put forward the idea of a deliberative democracy approach to this sort of review and reform. That is certainly a laudable option, and one that we could also consider.

I believe it would be appropriate, as another option, for the parliament to commission and set the terms of reference for an independent panel of experts with appropriate fiscal reform expertise. As some members are aware, former parliaments have attempted taxation reform, such as the 2011 tripartite State Tax Review panel consisting of then Labor premier and treasurer, Lara Giddings, the shadow treasurer, Peter Gutwein, the Greens treasury spokesperson, Tim Morris, and the member for Murchison, Ruth Forrest, MLC.

Despite undertaking public consultation, including public forums in late 2011, the State Tax Review panel announced its decision to discontinue that formal review. To quote from their statement issued in November 2011, that decision was made 'due to the perceived limited ability to reform state taxation in the current, post-GFC economic environment'. Prior to the discontinuation of the review, the panel did acknowledge that many of the submissions received 'involved broadening the tax base in order to reduce tax rates or remove less efficient forms of taxation'. However, they were unable to forge ahead and develop alternative options within that process.

An independent panel of experts, or another mechanism to achieve similar ends, would not be as constrained by political ideology and should be able to provide rigorous and credible options brought back to this parliament for open debate.

Timing-wise, we have that GST transition period expiry date of 2026-27 to provide us with an imperative. Tasmanians deserve a transparent and accountable plan A, and even a plan B for the state, as well as something to take to the Commonwealth for consideration. I noted last week at the budget breakfast in Hobart that the Treasurer expressed a willingness to contemplate a review and reform of state taxation. Unfortunately, he confirmed that neither increased nor new taxes would be considered as acceptable by the Government, which effectively gives lie to that expressed willingness.

As already mentioned, the 2022-23 budget papers are very clear that we are moving out of a pandemic situation - according to the Government - and that the focus is now on strengthening essential services to support living with COVID-19. That is in Budget Paper No. 1, page 4. A key failing of these budget papers is the lack of integration of and reporting back on the COVID-19 support-related line items identified by the Premier's Economic and Social Recovery Advisory Council (PESRAC). As members will recall, PESRAC was charged with developing Tasmania's COVID-19 response and recovery plan. In March last year, the Government accepted all 52 recommendations of the PESRAC final report, additional to the 64 recommendations contained in the July 2020 interim report; a total of 116 PESRAC COVID-19 response and recovery recommendations.

I recognise that not all 116 of those recommendations would have budgetary implications or implementations, but the majority did. Not all would continue across the forward Estimates, and some of those which do are probably included in the budget output group 90, which in places still appears in these budget papers before us. However, during last year's budget Estimates committee hearings, I raised and received an undertaking from the then premier and treasurer to investigate requiring the budget papers to clearly identify which departments were responsible for which PESRAC recommendations and also how those recommendations correlated with budget output group and line items.

Further, that not only would the papers present any remaining PESRAC-related expenditure for the current financial year and/or forward Estimates, but detail the impact and effectiveness or otherwise of that initiative already delivered. For example, to pluck one random PESRAC recommendation, the July 2020 interim report recommendation number 39 states:

The State Government should implement and fund the Community Arts and Cultural Development strategy.

That is from page 57 of the PESRAC interim report. However, if we search in the budget papers for the arts allocation, Budget Paper No. 2 Volume 1, Department of State Growth, it does not identify such a strategy. But, table 11.2 in a footnote 9 does state:

The decrease in Arts Industry Development in 2022-23 reflects the funding profile for the Community Arts and Cultural Development Fund, Creative and Cultural Recovery Support, and Arts and Cultural Grants Fund.

That is page 276 of Budget Paper No. 2, Volume 1. Is that it? Is that the fate, the final resting place of PESRAC COVID-19 response and recovery recommendation number 39 from the interim report? Is the decrease in funding there specified from just over \$13 million down to about \$9.5 million in 2022-23 because the sector has determined the strategy is implemented in full and further assistance is unnecessary? If the Community Arts and Cultural Development Fund was a mechanism of implementing this particular PESRAC recommendation, what impact did it have? Was it effective? Did it deliver as it was intended?

These questions may be explored in Estimates, but without a clear presentation of all PESRAC recommendations in the budget papers following up on them with appropriate scrutiny is very challenging. This data should be collated financial year by financial year, allowing people to track and follow each of the 116 PESRAC recommendations that have either been funded by state coffers or have impacted budgetary priorities and fiscal policy, their implementation time frames and their evaluated effectiveness. It should not require Sherlock Holmesesque detective work and processes of elimination to find them.

Further, we have been told the Government intends to declare at the end of this month we are officially no longer in a COVID-19 pandemic condition, so it would be absolutely responsible and accountable to provide a comprehensive progress and evaluation report of the PESRAC plan, which was intended to drive our COVID-19 response and recovery. How effective were the PESRAC recommendations? Wholly, partly, not at all? In what way were they effective? Why were they effective? What are the short-, medium-, and long-term impacts? Where is our collective debrief on this, Mr President?

This is an issue of good, basic, accountability. To clarify, I am not disputing at all the need to provide COVID-19 and pandemic-related economic and social support in my comments here, and they should not be construed as such. I am saying that before the debt ramifications of that support are used to potentially justify a later slash and burn fiscal tightening of belts mantra, we should be able to clearly identify and evaluate the effectiveness or otherwise of those COVID-19 measures. It would make good public policy sense also.

As previously recognised, there was no how to cope with a protracted pandemic crisis blueprint for governments or treasurers. However, we have been developing a de facto blueprint on the run. If future need arises and future governments and parliaments need to contend with similar challenges, how will they evaluate our COVID-19 response? A proper detailed benchmark and indicator budgetary framework would be responsible and invaluable corporate knowledge.

While on the subject of benchmarking, I do want to note and acknowledge the inclusion of strategic actions detailed in the Fiscal Strategy progress papers against which the 2022-23 Budget process is reported. That is in table 3.1, Budget Paper No.1 pages 32 to 37. This is a form of clear and measurable progress indicators, which ideally can be compared from one budget to the next. Table 3.1 of Budget Paper No. 1, is a good start. It shows evaluating and measuring budgetary deliverables against intent and goals can be done, and has a place in budget papers. We need to see such systematic articulation of concrete strategy actions with respective measurable performance and delivery indicators applied more rigorously through the budget and other public policy deliverables. Before the PESRAC-free zone in the current budget papers, it is worth noting the Tasmanian Government's [coronavirus.tas.gov.au](https://www.coronavirus.tas.gov.au) website states the following, and I quote:

In 2020, the Government accepted all 116 recommendations from the two reports produced by PESRAC.

Progress on the delivery of PESRAC interim recommendations will be publicly reported in the first half of 2022.

Well, we are now concluding the first half of 2022, and this is news to me. It also appears to be news to Treasury and those working on the budget papers. I would welcome such a progress report on the delivery of PESRAC recommendations, but I would have thought much of the relevant data would have been financial and therefore could have been incorporated into these budget papers to facilitate this reporting back. I would appreciate an update from the Government, if possible, detailing when we can expect this publicly promoted progress report for the implementation of the PESRAC interim recommendations.

Where to even start on whether and how the 2022-23 budget papers incorporate and plan for the greatest global public policy challenge - climate change action. Sadly, I am not even at risk of pre-empting an order of the day here. Despite being tabled downstairs, we do not have a clear timetable from the Government as to when they are going to prioritise debate on the long-stalled Climate Change (State Actions) Amendment Bill 2021.

Anyone waiting for any indication from the Treasurer during his speech was sorely disappointed. Despite climate change and the new Renewables, Climate and Future Industries Tasmania (RECFIT) being shared across the output groups of both Natural Resources and Environment Tasmania, and Treasury and Finance, progress on the long overdue climate change bill is literally relegated to a footnote in these budget papers - footnote number 6 of table 12.6 Budget Paper No. 2, Volume 1 to be exact. I quote from that.

The Government's next climate change action plan is under development pending the passage of the *Climate Change (State Action) Amendment Bill 2021*.

That is page 319, Budget Paper No. 2, Volume 1. Therefore, the corresponding table can only indicate an intention of more than \$90 000 to be required should the bill be passed by the parliament sometime during the next financial year.

Given the urgency expressed by many sectors and individuals in the community for comprehensive climate change action, and also a very keen awareness for compliance monitoring and reporting, I would be very surprised if this indicative amount in the Budget footnote is sufficient. It is also worth noting that it does not appear any new money has been allocated to the Climate Change Action Plan. Instead, we are relying on the funding provided in the 2021-22 Budget to continue implementing what is described as the 'whole-of-government plan to guide the Government's activity on climate change'. That is from Budget Paper No. 2, Volume 1, page 309.

The Budget speech - delivered barely five days following a federal election that was christened The Climate Election - was a missed opportunity. It was an opportunity which should have been seized to clarify and commit to prioritising Tasmania's climate change action legislative and regulatory framework. That is was not, is quite mind-boggling. The lack of urgency exhibited by the Government on this critical matter, which has clear synergies with

the current cost of living crisis as well as human rights considerations, reveals a worrying and unwarranted complacency.

The least an engaged and responsive Government should have provided in its budget papers is a clear time frame for parliamentary debate on the Climate Change (State Action) Amendment Bill 2021 to commence. This should have included an intention to commence debate in a timely manner to ensure the parliament has dealt with the bill prior to the November 2022 United Nations Climate Change Conference (UN COP 27) meeting, so that Tasmania's regulatory regime could be included in Australia's report to that global meeting. Additionally, implementation allocations for that bill based on modelling could have been allocated across the forward Estimates.

I now move on to discuss the long-promised, long-overdue state political donations disclosure reforms.

Surprisingly, this morning the Attorney-General tabled the Electoral Disclosure and Funding Bill 2022 in the other place. I say surprise, as it coincides with growing consternation that on the one hand the Government is touting the need to make our local government here more democratically robust and, at the same time, it has left this inexplicable, gaping hole in the fabric of our democratic accountability and governance for the past four years.

In turn, that has left a gaping chasm on which public trust in our system of governance teeters. We all know why this legislation is a no-brainer. Voters deserve to know before they go to the ballot box who has paid what to whom, who is bankrolling and seeking to influence the outcome of an election or government policy. It is as simple as that.

I have not had the time or opportunity to examine closely the long-awaited bill tabled this morning, but at a swift glance, alarm bells are beginning to sound. This bill will serve as a defining test of how genuine the Premier, Mr Rockliff is, when he claims he intends to lead a government of integrity and accountability. Will his premiership be defined by the fact he presided over ushering in the nation's most robust and thorough political donations disclosure regime, or will he again allow Tasmania to languish in the embarrassing position of having the nation's worst and weakest political donations allowed regime?

Currently, there are deeply concerning indications that the undemocratic habits are going to remain entrenched no matter who is at the helm in this Government. The Government is happy to leapfrog its own remaining legislative priority agenda by bringing in other legislation under the guise of urgency, which impacts on democracy and people's capacity to participate in it. We have seen the re-emergence of controversial anti-protester laws, which goes to show how determined the Government can be when they decide something is important, either to them or to particular stakeholder groups.

What a shame we did not see similar responsiveness to the broader electorate demands for political donation reforms over these past four years.

Suddenly, we were told last week that local government voting reforms are an absolute must. I agree that standardising compulsory voting would strengthen our democracy, but I am not convinced it is so time-sensitive that it needs to take precedence over the state Budget scrutiny process.

There is a bizarre tone-deafness to this sudden and determined top-down, non-inclusive meddling with people's democratic rights and election processes, which seems to suit the Government, while the grassroots call for rigorous and realtime political donations disclosure reforms was essentially fobbed off by this Government for four years.

One cannot help but think that if concerns about strengthening this democracy in the local government elections was genuine and altruistic, also introducing rigorous, realtime political donations disclosure laws in time for the local government October elections would be an equally important democratic reform to make.

However, it appears the Government's sudden local council election changes took the Treasury by surprise too, as there is no provision that I could find anywhere in the budget papers, or in the Treasurer's Budget Speech for funding any additional education or implementation requirements of this mooted reform.

There is an allocation of \$1.6 million for the current local government review which is underway, which according to the Treasurer's speech is examining, and I quote:

The future role, functions and design of local government, and the structural and legislative reforms required to meet these objectives.

But this review was apparently excluded from the current decision on local council compulsory voting, and changes to the voting method.

Staying on the topic of democracy for a short while longer, another sudden policy on the run - albeit a welcome one - was the recent announcement by the Premier to move on restoring Assembly numbers and to have legislation introduced by the end of this calendar year. This will clearly be an investment in both the robustness of our parliamentary democracy, and encouraging improved diversity and inclusion.

Again, clearly an announcement outside this budget process, with no provision made, that I can see, across the forward Estimates in these papers, for any planned education, or implementation costs between debate and potential passage of that proposed bill and the next general election, when it is planned to come into effect.

Clearly restoring the numbers, as they were in the other place, with five electorates of seven members, would also restore the integrity of the Hare-Clark quota while minimising any costs or potential voter confusion associated with electorate boundary changes.

I also urge that serious consideration is given to the potential for including dedicated Tasmanian Aboriginal seats in that reform process, additional to the straightforward restoration of those five electorates to their pre-1998 numbers. I cannot help but wonder that if there was a continual representation of the Tasmanian Aboriginal community in this parliament, whether we would see a more prominent representation of their needs reflected in budget papers, such as the ones we have before us.

While it is good to see the ongoing investment in the important, and federally shared, Closing the Gap program, I note that after its slight increase in allocation in 2022-23, the funding has fluctuated across the forward Estimates. The 2022-23 \$500 000 allocated to the implementation of the 24 recommendations made in the 2020-21 Pathway to Truth-Telling and

Treaty report is good to see here, and I welcome it. That really is a minimal down payment on such a crucial ongoing process. I consider it odd there is nothing further allocated across the forward Estimates. It would be useful to see a breakdown of exactly how those 24 recommendations would have been benchmarked, implemented and evaluated. A task for Estimates, perhaps.

Further, while I appreciate that the Truth-Telling and Treaty discussions will be an evolving process, it would be prudent forward planning to recognise that resources will be needed for future uses and redress. We are seeing the Government do that in light of other mechanisms, such as the Commission of Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse.

Before I leave the issue of what these budget papers tell us about ongoing commitment to strengthening our democratic and governance systems, I take this opportunity to quickly highlight that we are still sorely in need of a Tasmanian human rights act as previously recommended by the Tasmania Law Reform Institute. The need to invest in our human rights protections framework is becoming increasingly evident within the budgetary process.

As the primary policy expression of Government priorities, the budget process presents significant implications and ramifications for so many human rights considerations such as our approach to and recognition of cost of living challenges, and access to a safe and secure roof over people's heads. The Premier is reported as saying people have a 'fundamental right to social and affordable housing'. That is reported in *The Examiner* in April this year.

Human rights considerations also include the recognition and inclusion of our First Nations people, which created diversity and inclusion across the board; the establishment of a new Tasmanian disability commissioner; provision of a liveable wage and gender pay parity; and the emerging recognition of human rights impacts of climate change. This list goes on. These are all things that we currently have in our budget process and are considering here in these papers, which would appropriately link to a legislative framework provided by a Tasmanian human rights act.

So much of the budget process - what it includes and what it omits - speaks volumes about our collective attitude towards human rights. It is appropriate and necessary to point out that a Tasmanian human rights act is a crucial plank to be included in any plan to strengthen our governance, our democracy and accountability foundations.

I come now to the 2022-23 budget papers inaugural Gender Budget Statement. I say at the outset that we would never have expected the first iteration of such a mechanism to be perfect or entirely comprehensive. There would always have been a willingness to embrace a genuine effort, one that perhaps clearly pointed the way to intended improvements and developments in future years. However, what was delivered unfortunately fell short of even that, which is a genuine shame as there had been a real sense of hope following the commitment to produce this statement.

The unanimous support for the debate that occurred in this place on International Women's Day this year on the need for genuine, gender-responsive budgeting and a rigorous gender budget impact statement, and the subsequent commitment from the Government, fuelled that sense of hope. People felt there was a shared and common understanding of what was required to meet the intent of a gender budget impact statement, and that we were on the same page. However, we were presented with that which we had explicitly stated would not



meet those clearly expressed expectations. Put simply, and as a range of expert commentators in this space has stressed over recent years, a glossy shopping list of specific women-oriented election commitments and other gender-oriented election commitments and funding initiatives is not an example of a best practice analytical gender budget impact statement, informed by analytical gender responsive budgeting processes. It is not just a list of such items which could fall beneath women's support or girls or boys or men or LGBTQI+ Tasmanian-supported headings that are collated to hang off the side of the 'real' budget papers, such as we were presented with, I believe, last week.

As an aside, the inaugural gender budget statement was not even made available on the Treasury website with the budget papers at the same time the other documents were there. I am happy to say it is there now, though.

I wish to stress that my criticism of the fact that the Government has tried to present such a collation of expenditure items as a gender budget impact statement when it does not qualify for that status is not a criticism of the individual items which are listed in that document, which are all laudable initiatives and programs. I am happy to see them included amongst the government spending and investment priorities. However, the fact that remains is their immediate and/or long-term effectiveness in addressing entrenched gender inequalities may be undermined by other measures contained in the budget and fiscal strategy - as any other competing assumptions, challenges, and priorities have not been assessed holistically through that gender process.

As QCOSS, Queensland's version of TasCOSS, put it:

... Gender Responsive Budgeting is broader than contemporary versions of Women's Budget Statements: it casts the lens of analysis even more broadly across *all* policy measures contained in the budget. Further, it is not confined to expenditure announcements, but also considers the impact of transfers and taxation settings that are also part of every government's budget.

That is from a paper by Leonora Risse for QCOSS, July 2021 page 6. That last point is important. That gender responsive budgeting worthy of that name also includes taxation policy. It assesses the impact of all fiscal strategies, including revenue and taxation as well as expenditure.

To move forward in a constructive manner to invest in ensuring that the 2023-24 gender budget impact statement mark II is closer to meeting expectations, I would point to a quick step-by-step breakdown of a simplified, typical gender-responsive assessment model that can be adapted for use from departmental internal assessment through to integrated budget planning and production processes. This process can be found readily on Women in Tasmania's website. It is laid out there in eight clear points, well described. I also would point to the Women in Tasmania website, which provides links to other jurisdictions that implement gender-based analysis. Some of that might be a little out of date. I do note that the OECD and the IMF as well as the Victorian government have more exhaustive and current lists than that available on our website, but we have a really good start there. There are ample and accessible examples of effective and comprehensive gender-responsive budgeting practices, culminating in meaningful gender budget impact statements.

I am pleased to hear the Minister for Women, in her contribution today, speak about an intention to continue down that track in the future. There is certainly no reason for us to reinvent the wheel here, but I want to see a more genuine effort.

Members may also be interested to know that not long after the gender-responsive debate held in this place in March, the Victorian Public Accounts and Estimates parliamentary committee tabled its inquiry into gender-responsive budgeting report. It was tabled in March, and one would have thought available for every jurisdiction that was serious about developing its own credible and rigorous processes. This report is extremely thorough and makes a range of recommendations, many of which are pertinent for the ongoing development of a meaningful gender-responsive budgeting process here in Tasmania. I will not take up further time now discussing its findings and recommendations but I would draw it to the Government's attention and to that of other members.

I certainly in all fairness do want to reiterate and acknowledge that even with all the other examples available to provide a head start on tailor-making an appropriate, incredible gender-responsive budgeting process, the first iteration was certainly not expected to be perfect. I do not think any member in this place would have expected it to be so. But it was and it remains a fair expectation that the inaugural gender budget impact statement would have provided an initial framework, processes and time frames by which the Government intended to develop effective, analytical, structural gender-responsive budgeting models.

I will move on and return to the cost of living, which I note many other members here have also addressed in their contributions. One of the things I find really distasteful at budget time is the inane catchphrase used by the Government over and over again, which is that the budget contains a 'record spend' on health, education, justice, infrastructure or whatever you care to poke a stick at. A completely inane comment. Given inflation, in order to invest the same value as last year, you have to spend more. Just because you are spending more does not mean you are delivering more. A record spend could be a smidgen more than last year and yet fall short of inflation in that particular area and in fact be a cut in what is able to be delivered.

The other offensive thing about this Government crowing of record spends at every turn is that every single household in Tasmania is spending record amounts on a whole range of fundamentals in their budgets. Tasmanians themselves are in the midst of a record spend on rent, groceries, petrol, insurance and on other staples. Let us talk about the record spend of struggling Tasmanian households in relation to this Budget. One of the most topical issues both at the recent federal election and at the state level has been the cost of living pressures being felt by our communities. Inflation is at a very high level, while wage growth has been very low, if not stagnant. Global economic pressures and global events, including supply chain disruptions, have certainly contributed to this situation. We know Tasmanians on low incomes - especially those on income support payments and those in private rental accommodation - are really feeling the pain of these increased costs and are suffering detriment to their health and their wellbeing.

A more granular look at inflation shows some of the costs that have risen are the ones that really bite, especially for low income households in our state. For example, while overall inflation has been - I believe - 5.8 per cent, we know that some common items and costs have been much higher than that. Beef 13.1 per cent, vegetables 9.2 per cent, petrol 45.6 per cent, house prices 18.7 per cent, tertiary education 7.4 per cent, pet costs 6.6 per cent, insurance 9.6 per cent and those are a few examples which are really core costs in many households. The

impacts of these steeply rising costs are a vicious spiral downwards for those who are in poverty or at risk of poverty.

At this time of year, we are particularly mindful of energy costs. While Tasmania has amongst the lowest regulated electricity prices in the country - which the Government loves to tell us - we are amongst the highest users of electricity primarily due to our climate, which means that energy costs are a larger proportion of our household budgets. In addition to our climate, energy costs are unnecessarily higher because our housing stock is typically so poor when it comes to energy efficiency; old or inappropriate heating appliances or equipment, an absence of insulation, insufficient window coverings and virtually no double or triple glazing in this state, means the impact of this is tens of thousands of Tasmanians are experiencing energy poverty. Those are households that ration energy use at this time of year.

What is the Government doing looking at this Budget? Unfortunately, they are mostly continuing existing investments and initiatives, nothing that will provide significant difference to those affected by these costs. The Government points to things like the concessions it provides to water, sewerage, electricity and council rates. It points to the fact that this is indexed to maintain its value over time and that is fine, but it is not transformative, does not solve this issue and keeps us ticking along as we are now. It points to the lowest vehicle registration premiums of all states and territories, again, excellent, but not transformative, just keeps us ticking along as we are now. It is good we have switched to allowing quarterly rego payments for example, car registrations, so that people can have bill-smoothing benefits from that. That is great. It is not transformative, but keeps us ticking along as we are now.

Where are the policies and initiatives that tackle these cost of living issues at the source? The energy poverty issue is incontrovertible: longstanding, well understood, with tangible solutions immediately available to a government that cares to engage with them. Where are the government programs to incentivise and/or subsidise improvements to energy efficiency and heating options of our housing stock, not just in public and social housing but in the private rental sector and for low-income homeowners?

These kinds of initiatives are not a handout. They are transformative support which improves the housing stock of our state overall. They not only address the energy poverty and alleviate the harm it causes for that household, but they create jobs in doing energy assessments and audits and in the work generated by installation and maintenance of the appliances and the other measures that would be funded through that program. This is not new. We have done it before in limited ways, but we could do it again right now, this winter.

Ironically, this Government seems more inclined to provide a handout, for example through increased funding to emergency food providers, than to design and fund readily available initiatives that would be a hand up for both those directly benefiting and for our economy overall. In that, I certainly do not disparage the additional funding for emergency food providers. It is the only thing keeping some families going.

I have heard trite pronouncements from members in this place claiming to support the philosophy of 'a hand up, not a handout'. These claims are shown to be hollow indeed when we look at many of the actual decisions in this Budget and the policies pursued by this Government. I would challenge any members who have made such pronouncements in the past to do an honest audit of your Government's policies and funding decisions, including those handouts provided, for example, through the land tax cuts that I spoke about earlier.

I also have to wonder whether there is a genuine interest from this Government in seeking good policy solutions to cost of living pressures on low-income households. Are we even making the most of learning from the opportunities that are arising around us? One quick example, recently, when petrol prices spiked, the Government - laudably - decided to offer free buses for five weeks. This was a wonderful opportunity to test and learn what impact that policy would have on the Tasmanian people, their access to transport and their ability to manage cost of living pressures, as well as their engagement with their community, education and employment. What did the Government do to evaluate the full impact of that temporary policy to inform our understanding and be able to consider its potential value as a permanent policy, for example? How have we captured and fully reported on the social and economic impacts of what was essentially a policy pilot of free public transport in this state? For clarity, in asking that, I do not just mean the documentation of patron numbers on buses, but a more nuanced analysis of the social and economic effect during that five-week period. What a shame it would be if we had wasted that opportunity to inform ourselves on what may well have been a game-changing policy worthy of being pursued more permanently.

A key part of the cost of living equations in this state is housing, so I will move on to that area. We know that things are looking grim, especially for those Tasmanians in the private rental market, although we know also that, as interest rates are expected to begin rising for the first time in a decade, we will see homeowners also begin to feel the pressure, especially those with large mortgages due to having purchased during sharply rising house prices. I note, as others have noted here today, that we are facing a situation where we have around 4400 people on our social housing waitlist and that priority applicants on that list are waiting for 90 weeks. I have worked in the community sector for 20 years before coming to this place and I do not remember a situation quite like that in my time - certainly not during the time I was focused on social policy in the decade leading up to being elected.

This is an appalling situation and a dramatic expression of the need in the community. We also know that the NRAS scheme is ending and people are facing a homelessness cliff as their subsidised rents that have been in place under that scheme that has been in place for a decade are about to disappear. As others here have said, I do not believe that it is good enough for our current housing minister to say that he is writing to the federal minister about it. It should not be a buck that is passed. I also do not believe it is good enough for the housing minister to say that those who are affected can ring Housing Connect and seek support. We know that the result of that will be that they will end up being 4401 on the waiting list, and they will wait 90 weeks and in the meantime they will face homelessness.

This situation has been known for a very long time. The state Government has had time to come up with a targeted response for these NRAS tenants. I began asking questions in the first budget I participated in this place in 2019 - what is going to happen when the NRAS comes to an end? What will we do with those tenants? It is cruel that they are now at the eleventh hour and facing homelessness, many of them in their elderly years. Even if they secure new affordable tenancies, the impact on their health and wellbeing of going through the uncertainty and the trauma of this process is unacceptable.

The budget papers indicated a \$538 million investment into social and affordable housing and homelessness initiatives, with \$204 million of that in 2022-23. The Government claims we are on track to build 1500 homes by June next year. I hope that is true. That would be a small dent in the overwhelming need that is currently there. The Government also states it plans to build 10 000 homes by 2032; but the really simple question is, how can we believe

this? I note today analysis by the Greens claiming that over the past eight years we have seen a net gain of only 578 new social housing properties in Tasmania from this Government. That is 72 per year. According to their analysis, 941 new homes were promised by the state Government in 2016-17, but only 186 were built. In 2017-18 the promise was a total of 900, but, in fact, public housing stock went down in net terms by 212 properties. In 2018-19, 1500 new homes were promised, but 697 have been reported built so far.

Despite impressive sounding promises announced, and often re-announced to milk maximum kudos, it appears we see very little delivered by this Government. No wonder that we have seen no tangible improvement on the ground in those services that are trying to support the ever-escalating number of Tasmanians struggling to find an affordable home to live in. No wonder we are seeing eye-watering waitlists, and waiting times. Given this history, it is hardly surprising that the commitment to build 10 000 homes by 2032 sounds like a pipe dream from this Government, especially when we see in the budget papers that the investment allocated to this initiative is largely pushed out to future years. The Government may dispute the analysis put forward by the Greens today, but to do so it should present accurate data that shows the additions and subtractions from our public and social housing supply and not default to grandstanding re-announcements.

The budget papers outline funding to progress the establishment of the housing authority, as part of the disappearing of the Department of Communities Tasmania. I remain highly sceptical about the breaking up of this department, including the costly and complex process of creating a housing authority with yet another skills-based board and bureaucratic framework. And of course, the removal of responsibility and accountability somewhat from the minister, putting it at arm's length, where any political heat will be felt much milder by the executive government. The housing authority will be tasked, we are told, with building and acquiring the promised homes and partnering with the community housing organisations to increase supply. As I noted earlier this year in my reply to the Premier's Address, the proposal is to align the new authority with Infrastructure and State Growth, but of course, the remit of the current Housing Tasmania covers much more than just building things.

The planning, provision and management of public and social housing is not just property development. It is community building and shaping; it is social services, to support individuals and families in their capacity to access a safe and secure home. Housing Tasmania currently covers the planning, funding and oversight of the full suite of Housing Connect services, including homelessness services and rental supports. This is embedded currently in the community sector, intrinsically connected with a range of other social and health services. I ask again, what happens to these connections and the provision of integrated, effective services when Housing Tasmania is taken out of a department focused on communities, and reconfigured as a statutory authority situated in a department focused on infrastructure, with the undoubted primacy that gives to property development as a standalone activity? Will the full spread of the current Housing Tasmania responsibilities, and the skills, experience, and accountability required to plan and administer them, be successfully undertaken by an independent statutory authority under a skills-based board? These are questions that remain unanswered. I will be very interested to see this proposed authority in its detail, including the proposed skills mix of the board that will be put in place to run it, and how we go about delivering the services that are currently covered in the Department of Communities Tasmania.

I note in the budget papers the funding provided to support the development of ancillary dwellings. We are given to understand 185 dwellings are being developed now, I presume, and

a further \$2.5 million is being provided for 250 further dwellings. These ancillary dwellings - essentially granny flats - are described as 'new long-term rental stock'. Let us be really clear, there is only a requirement that these dwellings be offered as affordable rentals for a period of two years, I believe, and by no stretch of the imagination is that long term. We are in the midst of seeing the cessation - as we have discussed - of the NRAS scheme, which locked in reduced rents for a period of 10 years. Now that it is coming to a close, we are seeing tenants exiting into homelessness. Two years is not a long-term rental, and we risk pushing this problem down the road. What is the Government's expectation of what will occur at the end of a two-year lease period, I wonder? Sadly, my expectation is that we will be here in a couple of years' time talking about Tasmanians becoming homeless after their two-year stretch in these properties comes to an end.

Similarly, we see the Private Rental Incentives Program provided with a further \$9 million over three years to encourage property owners to make their properties available to low-income households and subsidised rents. This is described in the budget papers as 'stable housing for Tasmanians renting in the private market with two year lease terms designed to support families and reduce housing stress'. However, I note in the papers there is investment in this scheme which seems to fall away in the forward Estimates. Is funding for this scheme not budgeted to continue through the forward Estimates to 2025-26? I will not have a chance to interrogate this in Estimates but I encourage those in the other committee to do so. How many tenancies are in this program now? How many more are expected in each year that it is funded? Are current leases expected to be renewed with the subsidy remaining? Are leases that will be signed in 2022-23 and 2023-24 expected to be renewed with the subsidy remaining when they first expire after their first two years?

Mr President, I also note the \$36 million outlined in the Budget for specialist homelessness services. Some of the investments include the Safe Spaces across the three regions; Youth2Independence homes; the expansion of Magnolia Place for homeless women and children; the Launceston Youth at Risk Centre and Thyne House; and the Devonport Men's Shelter. Let us be very clear, the need for this additional investment for homelessness crisis services is an indictment on this Government. It serves to highlight the utter failure of this Government over the past decade to make any substantial improvement to the availability of affordable housing in this state, or in the protection of vulnerable tenants haemorrhaging from the private rental market into homelessness. This, across a decade in which the Government has consistently boasted of glowing economic outcomes and record investments in other areas.

In addition to the Government's commitment to building houses years from now, which if past performance is any indication may well be a pipe dream, we could be providing more immediate alleviation of the urgent market failure in our private rental market if the Government cared to prioritise those most vulnerable. It is in the private rental market that so many of our most vulnerable citizens are stuck while they wait for new supply of affordable housing to materialise. That is where, while they wait, they are ground down even further into poverty and disadvantage. A review of the Residential Tenancy Act has been called for years and could be undertaken immediately to come into effect, perhaps as soon as the end of this year, for example. Such a review could lead to appropriate caps on rental increases - the only objection to which is landlord greed.

Large jumps in rent have been an all too frequent factor driving Tasmanians out of what had been secure private rentals into homelessness and onto our public housing waiting lists.

All of us would have had people affected by massive increases in rents in our electorate offices begging for help.

With the current only limiting factor for rent increases being market equivalence under our legislation, we are seeing a race to the top when it comes to rental increases in this state. Capping annual rent increases to say, CPI, or some other appropriate moderate measure, would stabilise rent increases for the short to medium term and act to prevent the fall of Tasmanians from secure renter into homelessness that we are seeing all too often. The plain reality is there is no detriment to landlords in such sensible regulation. Their property will still rise in value. Their wealth will build. They will still collect the rent that has been sufficient to date and can increase in line with the allowable levels such as CPI or other moderate caps.

Nations similar to us, around the globe, have utilised some form of rent stabilisation to assist in very tight rental markets such as we are experiencing. Nations such as Ireland, Scotland, Spain and Canada. Not just places that might be seen as being more radical than we are.

In addition to rent stabilisation through regulatory reform, there is a range of other measures the Government could contemplate to provide more urgent assistance.

If the Government does not want to listen to me on this, or the Tenants' Union, or community sector organisations that are all calling for these things, I dug out work done by the UTAS Institute for Social Change, back in 2018. Remember, and the member for Rumney mentioned this earlier, many of us can turn our minds back to 2018 when we first got alarmed by the housing crisis, as it was first described, then descending on our state. In early 2018, more than four years ago this Government called an urgent Housing Summit at that time, to bring forward solutions. UTAS Institute for Social Change did some preparatory work for that summit and produced a Tasmanian Housing Summit Directions Paper in March 2018.

I will mention a couple of the suggestions the institute included in that paper as appropriate for the crisis response. It identified a few categories of response, crisis response, and then medium- to long-term responses. These are from what they suggested in March 2018, and could be done to help with the crisis response identified at that time.

The first one of those I will point to is an audit of vacant residential property in Tasmanian cities and incentives for the conversion of vacant residential properties into long-term housing.

The second one is a pause strategy for approvals to convert entire properties to short-term holiday accommodation in key urban areas.

Here we are four years later. Imagine how many more Tasmanian families may be securely and affordably housed now if those excellent, evidence-based suggestions from the Institute for Social Change had been actioned. But it is not too late if the Government cared to act on it.

I turn to speak more briefly on a few of the topics from the Budget I will highlight, knowing others have done a good job in speaking to some I am not so familiar with or experienced in to bring forth good comment.

The first one that I am interested to speak about is the children and youth area. Again, this is an area that is going to be significantly impacted by the dismantling of the Department of Communities Tasmania and I remain concerned about the full impact of that. It is concerning to start such a major proposed restructure without consulting and without speaking to the people who work in that area, who will be impacted by it, without speaking to the broader community about it and other stakeholders that interact.

That is where we started with an announcement. I remain concerned the area of children and youth will be conflated into the Department of Education and become part of a larger super department there. Just because children are part of each of the remit of those departmental areas does not necessarily mean that they belong together, and we can look to other states as some of us have discussed here before. States such as South Australia have run into trouble when they have tried to bring those two things under one umbrella.

However, in the budget papers, I do recognise and am very pleased to see there is funding of \$2.2 million allocated for the whole-of-government response unit to continue to support the coordinated Tasmanian Government response to the commission inquiry. It is really important work. We really have to see that commission inquiry through to the end and it will continue to be a process that is challenging and at time distressing. I am pleased to see that Government is giving every indication it intends to see that through and continues to support the work that comes out of it.

I do also note the continued investment stated in the Child Safety Service system, including additional frontline workers for the IRL, for the child safety system and the Advice and Referral line. It says that this is to 'meet increased demand and continue to support improved outcomes under the Strong Families Safe Kids child safety redesign'. I do note though that investment to meet increased demand as it says does seem to drop off into the forward Estimates and I am wondering why that is. Is that going to mean less investment and fewer staff available? We already know there are challenges recruiting and retaining staff in that area. I am concerned about our child safety system and the way that is staffed, the conditions under which the staff work and the outcomes we provide to children.

I also note, and think the member Elwick might have pointed to this in his contribution earlier, there is some investment provided for the intensive family engagement services in this area to help prevent children from entering statutory care. It looks like in the papers there is funding allocated in 2022-23 and nothing over the forward Estimates. It does say this specific funding allocation for these services will be based on demand and the department is currently assessing the appropriate long-term funding allocation. It looks like the intention is there to fund in the forward Estimates but we will not put it in the papers at the moment in case we have to count it, maybe?

There may also be some uncertainty in relation to efforts moving into the Department of Education and the bringing together of those two departments. What we can certainly assume is there will be a demand there, past the year it is funded and an allocation would be required. It does bring questions to mind as to why it is not outlined to some extent.

Similarly, I am pleased to see funding allocated of \$2.2 million to establish out-of-home care accreditation carers registration to improve the standards. That was a recommendation of the royal commission and it is pleasing to see it says it starts in 2023-24 and goes forward from



there. I am not sure why the delay in that work; that recommendation has certainly been there for some time. It will be important to see that progressed as quickly as possible.

I note \$6 million allocated for the continuation of the Transition to Independence program (T2i). However, that is over two years and there is nothing then in the forward Estimates. Again, it uses the similar wording from earlier where it says 'this specific funding allocation for these services will be based on demand, and the department is currently assessing appropriate long-term funding allocation'. Again, they have not put anything in there so we do not have to count it, but we know that it will be needed. It seems a little bit disingenuous of the Government to do that.

Of course, I am very interested to see what pans out with the Youth Justice Reform transition plan. While it is pleasing we are finally closing Ashley after nearly a decade of having had it recommended to be done, we know the design of what comes next will be really important in setting the tone for how we approach this area of Youth Justice. I would hope we will, in the not too distant future, be including in that an approach that accommodates a raise in the age of criminal responsibility to 14 years.

I will briefly touch on education, and others here are watching this area very carefully and have given it more scrutiny than I am able to give. There are some positive things I will point out in this area as well.

It is pleasing to see investments made in safeguarding children and young people, implementing recommendations from the Department of Education inquiry report. We are told there should be school safeguarding officers in every government school; mandatory professional development training; additional staff to support the investigation of complaints and disciplinary processes for the Teachers Registration Board. They are all positive things.

It would be interesting though - and perhaps for the other committee in Estimates - to get a breakdown of what is being allocated for school safeguarding officers per school per year. We know there are in the vicinity of 200 - maybe 203 schools - in this state. It is a fairly modest allocation being made in this area. On my back-of-the-envelope reckoning, it does not seem like a very large amount per school, so I am wondering what that means for the outcome and expectation for that allocation. No doubt Committee B will interrogate that in quite some detail.

There are some good news stories in the Budget in Education. There is \$25 million, as the member for Mersey pointed out, to continue to support more students impacted by trauma. That is an incredibly important and valuable investment.

The \$5 million program is to reduce the digital divide for learners, providing more devices. These are important equity measures in our schools to support those investments. It is a small thing but quite symbolic: the free sanitary items in all Tasmanian schools. It is very pleasing to see that come about.

I also was quite delighted to see continuing investment into expanding the school lunch pilot program to an additional 30 schools. I have always been a big fan of that program and I would dearly love to see it rolled out statewide one day.

I note that students with a disability, with our needs-based funding model, are yet to see that model evaluated and assessed as to its efficacy, and what impact it is having on our students. I note that there will be an independent evaluation of the model, apparently next year. It is a shame to have taken that long, but I hope that means we will understand how to tailor or adapt that funding model to deliver even better to students. There are still ways in which we are falling short on that.

Infrastructure investment in schools is scattered around the state. I am pleased for having six new child and family learning centres. These are excellent, important, fundamental supports in our communities. There is even one in my patch coming on board in Kingston, so I am very pleased to see that.

While we can welcome this, I guess the way I have presented it is a bit of a grab-bag of initiatives and infrastructure commitments. We are still left with a question and that is: what is this Government doing, or planning to do, to make transformative change in our educational attainment in this state, our educational outcomes? The member for Elwick went into quite a bit of detail on this so I will not need to, but NAPLAN data over the past decade does not paint a good picture of our educational outcome. We are not improving our outcomes. In fact, in many ways we are going backwards. That is significant for the future of our state.

While we have had structural changes in extending our high schools to year 12, which has delivered some improvements in retention at that end of the school, I believe we are yet to see an impact on educational outcomes as tracked through our NAPLAN results.

Just today, I was hearing it reported in the media that research has come out which has mapped the impact of COVID-19 on school attendance for students in Tasmania. The research found that the attendance rates for children from lower social-economic households had been more adversely impacted as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. That is a further barrier to attainment for those students which will require a well-developed and effective response from this Government. What is our plan for education?

Health spending in this state will always be a challenge, I believe. We are seeing, this year, health spending is sitting at 33.6 percent of the state's Budget. It is a rising proportion and a significant challenge. The figure was something like \$7.3 million per day spent delivering health services in Tasmania. We know that what is in the budget is generally an underspend; only last week we passed a bill to top up the Health budget for this current financial year, as we do each year, because the Government wants its budget to look better than it knows it really is, when we have to pay for Health fully through the year.

We know that GP-led healthcare and hospital avoidance programs are good, but they have their own limitations, especially because GPs remain underfunded at a federal level. As a result, we see impacts in our bulk-billing rates in this state that are far lower than they should be, and waiting times to access a GP are very poor.

Improving access to digital health and investing in fully integrated healthcare systems and telehealth are all positive investments; I hope they continue to be developed and utilised in this state.

One thing in health that I am particularly pleased to see is the successful pilot of the PACER program leading it to be continued and our pilot to be extended into the north-west of

the state. In my view this should be extended statewide. It is beneficial not just for the 74 per cent of its clients who were supported to remain in the community instead of being taken to hospital, but also for those staffing the service: the police, the ambulance and the clinical services staff who are part of the PACER teams. I have spoken to some of these workers when I ran into them in the street. From what they describe, the impact of working in this coordinated, effective and supportive team to deliver these positive outcomes, keeping people out of hospitals and being supported in the community, must be considerably more positive for those staff and lead also to their improved job satisfaction, and to less stress and trauma in their individual service areas.

On preventive health, to state it briefly, all international research tells us that if we want to change the health trajectories of our state, our country and our jurisdiction, we need to spend 5 per cent of our total health budget on preventive health. That is what the research tells us, but we do not do it and we never have. It is always projected to be well under 2 per cent, sometimes as low as 1 per cent. I have not calculated what the preventive health figure is in this Budget, but we will probably be able to find that out through Estimates. Those in the community sector interested in this area often do the assessment and are able to provide that figure. It needs to be 5 per cent. We really need to think about transformation here, and preventive health is one of our key opportunities for it.

One last positive that I would really like to highlight about the health area is the investment in oral health. The \$300 000 is a very modest amount. It is going to Oral Health Services Tasmania. Sorry, it is \$300 000 for the Royal Flying Doctor Service and \$1.5 million for Oral Health Services Tasmania to provide additional dental appointments. That is such a good investment. It is not enough. We could do much more. Oral health is so pivotal to overall health and to keeping people out of hospital, but it is good to see something additional there.

I am not going to speak in detail about mental health other than to say I hope the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services - CAMHS - reforms continue to be invested in appropriately. Young people's mental health has been incredibly hard-hit of late and it is essential that we provide the support they need, but so far we are still falling short. Although there is money invested to continue the implementation of the Rethink 2020 mental health plan, with its focus on suicide prevention, I did note the Mental Health Council of Tasmania's comment in relation to the Budget that:

However, given the absence of any specific workforce initiatives in this budget, in a sector which already struggling to attract and retain qualified mental health professionals, we are concerned we won't have the skilled workforce needed to deliver on these announcements.

Again, workforce challenges are a bit of a common theme and it would be a shame if we were to underdeliver in mental health because of a workforce recruitment issue.

I was very excited, though almost missed it, on 4 May 2022, when the Premier, Jeremy Rockliff, put out a media release announcing that Tasmania's first wellbeing framework would be delivered. This will be an interesting area to understand better in Estimates, especially what, if any, genuine financial investment is going to be made and what, if any, benchmarks and accountability will be attached to this framework. I am maintaining a positive expectation here because I noted in the Premier's media release that he acknowledged that they are going to engage with Tasmanians to create this framework to 'ensure their wellbeing priorities are

Government priorities, supported by the right targets, measures, policies and services'. The media release goes on to say:

Wellbeing can mean different things to different people, but it includes economy, health, education, safety, housing, living standards, environment and climate, social inclusion and connection, identity and belonging, good governance and access and services.

Having a set of wellbeing indicators will help prioritise where we need to invest more of our time, energy and creativity so that we can make a real difference to Tasmanians who currently aren't sharing in the benefits of our prosperity in the way they should.

I am so pleased to see that announcement and I remain hopeful that we will see it well executed as we see the strategy consulted on and developed over time. I am heartened by the indication that there will be benchmarks and targets put in place, and that there is such a comprehensive approach to the different areas of people's lives that need to be part of wellbeing. It is exactly the sort of framework, with benchmarks and measurable targets, that I have spoken about many times in this place.

I was a little disconcerted by the fact that this media release on 4 May was put out by the Premier so quietly, without fanfare; I do not believe it got any coverage in the media when it was put out. I have not really heard any mention of it since, but during Estimates there will be an opportunity to speak more about it. If it is the Government's priority and something the Government has a genuine intention to invest in and bring forward in a way that has impact and can be foundational and transformative for us, I would have thought they would trumpet it a little more loudly.

There are a few areas that I will save my thoughts on for the Estimates and explore my questions there.

I have come to the end of my contribution. I suggest that Tasmania is not immune to the tectonic shifts within the political landscape that we have seen recently playing out in the federal election. Such shifts rarely occur overnight; they come about more gradually. Just as some social commentators are pointing out, there really was no excuse for political players, whether parties, observers or even the media, to be taken by surprise by the particular manifestation of community mood that we saw in that election. There is also no excuse for our state Government to be out of touch with the Tasmanian population, recognising the sudden key personnel change within the Government this April. Despite that, it is sadly surprising to see such a minimalist business-as-usual approach set out in these budget papers. Despite the loud assertions of agility and success, what I see is the Government's failure, via this Budget, to anticipate, recognise and catch the zeitgeist train to prove otherwise.

An agile government would provide a fiscal plan detailing strategies for reducing debt levels over the forward Estimates which does not rely on the blunt tools of cuts and wage suppression, a fiscal plan which also does not rely on interstate posturing and fist-waving, but instead includes meaningful and rigorous tax reform. An agile and compassionate government would have focused on identifying and addressing any synergies and disparities in our COVID-19 recovery plan and the growing cost of living challenges.

I am disappointed at the lack of transformative investment into many of the areas that are our state's biggest challenges.

To conclude, members here are no doubt familiar with the famous Mahatma Gandhi quotation which always springs to mind during budget sessions, for me at least: 'The true measure of any society can be found in how it treats its most vulnerable members.'

Despite some good and sound initiatives, such as provisions to address matters arising from the Commission of Inquiry into the State Government's Response to Child Sexual Abuse and the Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability, and the reviews we see being undertaken of the State Service, this Budget's investments are to some extent underwhelming for our major challenges. This Budget as a measurement tool by which to evaluate the delivery of the Premier's vision of an inclusive and supportive Tasmania remains oblique. That zeitgeist train is moving further away from us toward the horizon.

Mr President, I note the 2022-23 Budget.

**Debate adjourned**

## **ADJOURNMENT**

**Mrs HISCUTT** (Montgomery - Leader of the Government in the Legislative Council) -  
Mr President, I move -

That the Council at its rising adjourn until 11 a.m. on Wednesday 1 June 2022.

**Motion agreed to.**

**Mrs HISCUTT** - Before I move the adjournment, I remind members of our briefings tomorrow morning starting at 9 a.m. with LGAT.

Mr President, I move -

That the Council do now adjourn.

**The Council adjourned at 9.05 p.m.**

## Appendix 1

### QUESTION WITHOUT NOTICE

#### Legislative Council

ASKED BY: Hon Josh Willie MLC

*L. Hiscutt*  
Tabled and incorporated  
into Hansard.  
L. Hiscutt  
31 May 2022

ANSWERED BY: Hon Leonie Hiscutt MLC, Leader of the  
Government in the Legislative Council

#### QUESTION:

My question is to the Honourable Leader

1. Can the State Government please provide the attendance rates for each school for Term 1?

#### ANSWER:

1. Average daily attendance rates for each Tasmanian Government School, as at the end of Term 1  
(Note that data are reported as at the end of Term 1 and may be updated. These rates should be treated as preliminary.)

School	Attendance rate % (Term 1, 2022)
Albuera Street Primary School	92.7
Andrews Creek Primary School	91.2
Austins Ferry Primary School	87.4
Bagdad Primary School	79.7
Bayview Secondary College	66.5
Beaconsfield Primary School	84.5
Bellerive Primary School	92.8
Bicheno Primary School	89.0
Blackmans Bay Primary School	90.6
Boat Harbour Primary School	88.4
Bothwell District High School	85.3
Bowen Road Primary School	85.4
Bracknell Primary School	89.3
Bridport Primary School	90.4

CA

School	Attendance rate % (Term 1, 2022)
Brighton Primary School	88.7
Brooks High School	79.8
Bruny Island District School	87.6
Burnie High School	87.6
Burnie Primary School	91.7
Cambridge Primary School	92.6
Campania District School	79.9
Campbell Street Primary School	86.7
Campbell Town District High School	83.3
Cape Barren Island School	72.3
Claremont College	67.2
Clarence High School	81.3
Clarendon Vale Primary School	80.5
Collinsvale Primary School	87.5
Cooee Primary School	90.6
Cosgrove High School	76.7
Cressy District High School	86.8
Cygnets Primary School	84.7
Deloraine High School	81.3
Deloraine Primary School	86.5
Devonport High School	83.2
Devonport Primary School	91.6
Dodges Ferry Primary School	80.0
Don College	75.6
Dover District School	81.3
Dunalley Primary School	79.8
East Devonport Primary School	83.5
East Launceston Primary School	89.4
East Tamar Primary School	78.3
East Ulverstone Primary School	84.0
Edith Creek Primary School	88.5
Elizabeth College	73.9
Evandale Primary School	92.4
Exeter High School	83.5
Exeter Primary School	84.3
Fairview Primary School	77.6
Flinders Island District High School	90.4
Forest Primary School	90.0
Forth Primary School	90.0
Franklin Primary School	85.1
Geeveston Primary School	76.8
Glen Dhu Primary School	85.1
Glen Huon Primary School	84.1

School	Attendance rate % (Term 1, 2022)
Glenora District School	76.4
Glenorchy Primary School	79.6
Goodwood Primary School	80.1
Goulburn Street Primary School	86.4
Hagley Farm Primary School	90.0
Havenview Primary School	88.0
Hellyer College	79.2
Hillcrest Primary School	88.7
Hobart City High School	81.8
Hobart College	82.1
Howrah Primary School	92.3
Huonville High School	71.9
Huonville Primary School	89.4
Illawarra Primary School	89.4
Invermay Primary School	81.3
JRLF - East Derwent Primary School	75.3
JRLF - Gagebrook Primary School	69.5
JRLF - Herdsmans Cove Primary School	77.6
JRLF - Senior School	60.9
Kempton Primary School	84.7
King Island District High School	90.8
Kings Meadows High School	79.7
Kingston High School	76.6
Kingston Primary School	80.5
Lansdowne Crescent Primary School	93.8
Latrobe High School	84.8
Latrobe Primary School	91.0
Lauderdale Primary School	90.8
Launceston Big Picture School	72.5
Launceston College	75.6
Lenah Valley Primary School	92.5
Lilydale District School	86.1
Lindisfame North Primary School	86.9
Lindisfame Primary School	90.4
Longford Primary School	86.8
Margate Primary School	85.5
Miandetta Primary School	91.2
Mole Creek Primary School	82.9
Molesworth Primary School	82.4
Montagu Bay Primary School	93.4
Montello Primary School	89.9
Montrose Bay High School	72.0



School	Attendance rate % (Term 1, 2022)
Moonah Primary School	85.6
Mount Nelson Primary School	88.9
Mount Stuart Primary School	89.2
Mountain Heights School	70.5
Mowbray Heights Primary School	90.0
Natone Primary School	81.7
New Norfolk High School	67.1
New Norfolk Primary School	75.5
New Town Primary School	87.1
Newstead College	78.2
Nixon Street Primary School	85.6
North West Support School	81.6
Northern Support School	81.8
Norwood Primary School	84.0
Oatlands District High School	78.0
Orford Primary School	86.9
Ouse District School	62.1
Parklands High School	78.6
Penguin District School	88.8
Perth Primary School	88.4
Port Dalrymple School	78.3
Port Sorell Primary School	92.0
Princes Street Primary School	93.5
Prospect High School	84.7
Punchbowl Primary School	92.9
Queechy High School	80.6
Ravenswood Heights Primary School	80.6
Redpa Primary School	84.0
Reece High School	84.4
Riana Primary School	89.6
Richmond Primary School	85.6
Ridgley Primary School	83.3
Ringarooma Primary School	85.4
Risdon Vale Primary School	77.7
Riverside High School	89.1
Riverside Primary School	90.5
Rokeby Primary School	80.1
Romaine Park Primary School	84.7
Rose Bay High School	74.5
Rosebery District High School	70.4
Rosetta Primary School	81.4
Rosny College	70.5
Sandy Bay Infant School	90.2

School	Attendance rate % (Term 1, 2022)
Sassafras Primary School	90.1
Scottsdale High School	79.6
Scottsdale Primary School	86.5
Sheffield School	85.5
Smithton High School	84.0
Smithton Primary School	89.7
Snug Primary School	83.2
Somerset Primary School	88.9
Sorell School	79.5
South Arm Primary School	80.0
South George Town Primary School	87.3
South Hobart Primary School	91.4
Southern Support School	78.3
Sprent Primary School	91.9
Spreyton Primary School	92.4
Springfield Gardens Primary School	89.1
St Helens District High School	80.7
St Leonards Primary School	81.9
St Marys District School	80.7
Stanley Primary School	89.6
Strahan Primary School	83.8
Summerdale Primary School	84.0
Swansea Primary School	90.3
Table Cape Primary School	90.6
Taroona High School	87.9
Taroona Primary School	92.6
Tasman District School	77.0
Trevallyn Primary School	89.0
Triabunna District School	82.3
Ulverstone Primary School	92.0
Ulverstone Secondary College	76.0
Waimea Heights Primary School	90.0
Warrane Primary School	77.4
Waverley Primary School	84.3
West Launceston Primary School	92.0
West Ulverstone Primary School	81.1
Westbury Primary School	89.7
Westerway Primary School	86.3
Wilmot Primary School	83.5
Windermere Primary School	88.3
Winnaleah District High School	85.6
Woodbridge School	85.7
Wynyard High School	84.9

School	Attendance rate % (Term 1, 2022)
Yolla District School	85.6
Youngtown Primary School	90.8
Zeehan Primary School	84.2

**Notes:**

- Attendance rates are calculated from the session minutes recorded by schools and colleges in EduPoint.
- Data are reported as at the end of Term 1 and may be updated.

Data Source DoE Internal

APPROVED/NOT APPROVED

Hon Roger Jaensch MP  
Minister for Education, Children and Youth

Date: 31.5.22

