



PARLIAMENT OF TASMANIA

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

REPORT OF DEBATES

Tuesday 17 November 2020

REVISED EDITION

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The President, **Mr Farrell**, took the Chair at 11.00 a.m., acknowledged the Traditional People and read Prayers.

PETITION

Garden Island Creek and Garden Island Sands - Erosion

[11.02 a.m.]

Dr Seidel presented an e-petition signed by approximately 144 citizens of Tasmania, calling for the preservation of Garden Island Creek and Garden Island Sands from erosion and the provision of safe beach access.

Petition received.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE

Member for Pembroke

[11.05 a.m.]

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

That the member for Pembroke, Ms Siejka, be granted absence of leave from the service of the Council for this day's sitting.

Motion agreed to.

STATEMENT BY THE PRESIDENT

Aboriginal Flag

Mr PRESIDENT - Honourable members, I thank members who responded to the email I sent in regard to the letter from Madam Speaker, the Honourable Sue Hickey MP and the Resolution of the House of Assembly dated 11 November 2020 to fly the Aboriginal flag at Parliament House whenever the Tasmanian State Flag is raised. The responses I received were positive and I have communicated to the Speaker that the Legislative Council concurs with the views of Madam Speaker that the flag should be flown over Parliament House whenever the state flag is raised

Members - Hear, hear.

SPECIAL INTEREST MATTERS

Garden Island Creek Community

[11.09]

Dr SEIDEL (Huon) - Mr President, it is a privilege to have presented my first e-petition from the electorate of Huon to the House earlier this morning and it is a privilege to speak on behalf of my fabulous constituents of the Garden Island Creek community. In my inaugural speech I proudly pointed out that I was very lucky to live in Tasmania's most spectacular electorate. The Huon Valley is an area of outstanding beauty and it is Tasmania's natural treasure chest. I will repeat that over and over again for the next six years.

Garden Island Creek is a little gem nestled between Randalls Bay and Charlotte Cove in the south east of the valley. Home to over two dozen and often young families its secluded beach and shallow yet clear waters have attracted many shack owners over the years.

It is a vibrant little community and just a lovely spot to enjoy our Tasmanian way of life. However, the coastal environment is brittle. Climate change and rising sea levels have caused accelerated and significant foreshore erosion, and that is exactly what the local petitioners are urging the Government to act on.

In their petition, residents specifically raise that the foreshore is eroding at a very rapid rate. The banks have destabilised, causing large trees to fall into the water and creating hazardous debris. A boat ramp which was damaged by sea level rise and storm activity was recently removed, leaving beach access in an unsafe condition.

It is almost impossible now for elderly residents or people with disabilities to access the beach safely. Furthermore, petitioners are pointing out domestic septic systems are becoming closer to the receding shoreline and may soon pose a threat to human life and the environment if erosion control measures are not enacted.

The petitioners are calling on the Government to make funds available to begin a strategic approach to prevent beach erosion. The petitioners are also calling on the Government to restore safe access to the beach and the boat ramp, and to address safety concerns. They urge the Government to implement beach mitigation measures and to restore a community space that has been enjoyed for generations.

Of course, this should not have been unexpected news for the Government. The Department of Premier and Cabinet Tasmanian Climate Change office conducted a study of the affected area in Garden Island Creek as early as in 2015. The study included a number of private and commercial assets, public assets, natural ecosystem services and natural values.

The study outlined in this century alone almost 45 private properties would be at risk of erosion and inundation. The evolutionary inundation probability for all properties were calculated as over 45 per cent. At workshops held over five years ago the community expressed significant concerns about the present-day risks.

Community reported seeing changes to the beach in the last 20 years with some noticing erosions in the dune system that progressed between four to five metres. At least half of the

erosion issues were said to have occurred over the last five years. At the time three pathways were explored with local residents - .

- (1) Protect existing development as long as practical while protecting natural values. This pathway protects property but only where protection has minimal impact on the values of the area important to the community.
- (2) Protect existing development and permit new developments to the maximum possible extent for as long as possible. This pathway concentrates on protecting the existing and future community and property using all available options including intensification of development work.
- (3) Let climate change take its course and retreat early. Basically, a do-nothing approach.

Members, it should be of no surprise the community very much preferred option (1), protecting existing development while protecting natural resources. It is a logical option that is also the most cost-effective. It is the appropriate mitigation strategy the project consultants recommended to the Government over five years ago, yet nothing has happened. No preventative mitigation has been initiated and predictably coast erosion has advanced and caused substantially more damage to the community.

It makes me wonder why a study was initiated in the first place. It seems nobody wants to act on the study report's alarming conclusion, which is disappointing and needs to change as a matter of urgency.

Members, just because Garden Island Creek is a small rural community in the Huon does not mean we can forget about its needs. Rural communities matter; rural people matter. They pay the same rates, levies and substantial land taxes as others. They do not ask for much for return. They just want to maintain their way of life. The Garden Island Creek community just wants safe access to their beach, and they want the obvious cause of erosion issues, which have been known for years, to finally be addressed.

Mr President, I thank the Garden Island Creek committee for their care and their stewardship. In particular, I would like to thank the principal petitioner, Kimberly Mendonca as well as Sarah Ollington and John Synnott, for arranging the insightful community meetings. Now, it is up to the Government to take action. Doing nothing is not an option.

Planning Matters Alliance Tasmania

[11.15 a.m.]

Ms WEBB (Nelson) - Mr President, today I rise to celebrate the hard work and success of the Planning Matters Alliance Tasmania, better known to many as PMAT.

PMAT is a growing network of community groups from across the state advocating for a strategic, sustainable and integrated planning system serving to protect the values that make Tasmania a special place to live and visit.

PMAT was established in 2017 in response to the Tasmanian Government's planning system reforms, with a view to advance better knowledge of, and participation in, those reforms. PMAT is a non-government organisation run purely on donations and voluntary support. It has one part-time paid coordinator.

Mr President, I am pleased to advise today that PMAT recently received national recognition for its contribution to planning at the 2020 National Awards for Planning Excellence. PMAT won the 2020 Planning Champion award for being the best non-planner organisation from across Australia. This award acknowledges PMAT's success in promoting good planning, the planning profession and the value of planning to the general community.

The Planning Institute of Australia judges, who made this award, highlighted PMAT's strong model for uniting community groups to think about, to question and to engage with planning frameworks. Also noted by the judges was PMAT's role in educating the community about the new Tasmanian planning scheme. Importantly, this award recognises PMAT as a national champion and a key voice and participant in planning discussions in our state.

The Planning Champion award is well deserved, and testament to at least three years of work done by the PMAT state president, Anne Harrison; the state coordinator, Sophie Underwood; and myriad PMAT members and volunteers who have worked hard since the group was launched in 2017.

Mr President, today PMAT has close to 70 community groups as members. These groups include ratepayer associations, local progress associations, social and environmental organisations, local 'friends of' groups, and some single-issue advocacy groups in particular areas of the state.

The core of PMAT's advocacy for good planning is the PMAT platform document, which has key principles that must underpin a robust planning system. PMAT's platform was developed with input from over 20 community groups and is a key guiding document. The platform states that to achieve the best future for Tasmania and all Tasmanians, the planning system must enshrine core planning principles.

These principles relate to community and environment, to strategic vision, transparency and independence, to community involvement, integrated assessment and implementation that is shared between state and local government.

To quote from PMAT -

In essence, an effective land use planning system is one which provides for economic development that respects our local amenity and character, safeguards our natural and cultural heritage, sense of place and brand, and allows the Tasmanian community to participate transparently in planning and development decisions that affect their future.

To this end, PMAT has worked to make complex planning schemes, laws and processes easily accessible and understandable to members of the Tasmanian community. PMAT has helped Tasmanians to have a voice in the lengthy, complicated and sometimes contentious

planning reform processes of the past few years, under which we will see every land title across every municipality transition to the new Tasmanian Planning Scheme.

PMAT has done this through a series of public events, traditional communications, submission guides and online portals. It has been very innovative in the way that it supports communities in their participation and in having a voice. To assist with the educative role that it has grown, PMAT has developed an excellent resource - a free guide to help the community engage with and have a say in development of local planning rules, under the new statewide planning scheme.

The guide is aimed at individuals and community groups interested in how land titles will be treated under the new Tasmanian Planning Scheme, but are not quite sure how to get involved in the community consultation processes.

The guide clearly explains the key elements of the single statewide planning scheme, its state and local planning provisions, and how planning decisions will be made. Then it steps members of the public through how they can be involved in having their say.

Mr President, citizen participation is a cornerstone of healthy democracy and a sign of a vibrant and engaged community. In advocating for community participation and creating accessible and practical resources to assist, PMAT aims to ensure Tasmania's planning decisions are open, transparent, and forward-looking, and that the community will always have a say in planning matters and decisions.

Winning the Planning Institute of Australia's national Planning Champion award confirms that PMAT is well and truly on the right track to achieving that aim. I congratulate PMAT on its success. I admire the commitment and dedication of those who continue its excellent work, and I wish them every success going forward.

Playgroup Tasmania and National Children's Week

[11.21 a.m.]

Ms ARMITAGE (Launceston) - Mr President, from 24 October to 1 November, it was National Children's Week - an annual week celebrated by the focus and attention of the wider community on children, their rights and achievements.

Children's Week is all about celebrating the right of children to enjoy childhood. This year's theme was 'Children have the right to choose their own friends and safely connect with others'.

Nationally, Children's Week is organised by the Children's Week Council of Australia, but in Tasmania, the backbone organisation that takes ownership and responsibility of the themes and activities is Playgroup Tasmania, which does extraordinary work in the community with our families.

This year it was very difficult to organise activities owing to COVID-19 and social distancing requirements, but Playgroup Tasmania, Housing Choices Tasmania, and all their

partner organisations pulled together some very special events, both in person, across the entire state, and online.

This year saw the development of a comprehensive activity guide that was available in hard copy and digital. This year, the focus was also on smaller, locally based activities, and everyone had the chance to participate. Amongst many other things, an at-home scavenger hunt, art competition and teddy bear giving online were a real success. At many locations across Tasmania, movie afternoons, picnics, painting, music and yoga were all available for parents and children alike.

It was truly a fantastic week, and I congratulate Playgroup Tasmania for adapting so well to the unusual circumstances, and pulling together such wonderful events.

For the other 51 weeks of the year, Playgroup Tasmania does wonderful work at the coalface with our families and children. As a not-for-profit, state-based membership organisation, it relies very strongly on people power to provide support and resources to assist with the establishment, coordination, administration, and promotion of playgroups right across Tasmania.

It operates with a voluntary board of governance, and a small contingent of staff, including Chief Executive Officer Jacinda Armstrong, who manages playgroup development officers and administrative staff based in all regions of the state.

As a peak body representing over 35 volunteer-led community playgroups, and 15 organisational playgroups, including Child and Family Centres and neighbourhood community houses, it will come as no surprise that each year over 500 families engage with Playgroup Tasmania, with even more attending playgroups each week.

Playgroup Tasmania also administers a supported playgroup program called PlayConnect, which offers a soft entry for families with children with autism spectrum disorder-like symptoms to be connected for wider support and relevant information.

During National Children's Week, Playgroup Tasmania launched its fabulous new outdoor area at its Holbrook Street facility in Launceston. This playgroup alone services 80 families each week across Launceston's northern suburbs, providing access to learning, productive and fun play, and an opportunity for parents to connect.

This facility will significantly contribute to the wellbeing of our families and children, and will provide fantastic opportunities for families to interact with their community. This very impressive redevelopment was made possible through a grant from the Tasmanian Community Fund, as well as through the generosity of the Rotary Club of Central Launceston and the WD Booth Trust.

It is fantastic to know that with hard work, making positive connections and with community spirit, incredible initiatives like this can come to fruition. Playgroup Tasmania is a wonderful organisation doing important work in our communities. I encourage every family with young children to take advantage of what it has to offer and get involved if they can. It is a truly local organisation making our communities better and stronger.

Recognition of Visitors

Mr PRESIDENT - Honourable members, I welcome to the Chamber from the Glenorchy Knights Football Club, club president Paul Woodham, and player and youth coordinator Marina Brkic, who are here as guests of the Legislative Council. I am sure all members will make you welcome in the Chamber today.

Members - Hear, hear.

Glenorchy Knights Football Club

[11.26 a.m.]

Mr WILLIE (Elwick) - Mr President, today I am proud to recognise the importance of the Glenorchy Knights Football Club within the Glenorchy municipality and to celebrate their achievements across the club's 60-year history. Here today in the Chamber I welcome Paul Woodham, President of the club, and Marina Brkic, player and youth coordinator.

The Glenorchy Knights Football Club represents the City of Glenorchy and surrounds in the National Premier League Tasmania, as well as the Southern Championship. The Glenorchy Knights support social teams, juniors, youth teams, senior men's and women's teams. The Knights have a proud history in the northern suburbs of Hobart. Built on friendship and family, their story began in 1956 on the Cadbury Estate where young men would gather after work to kick around a soccer ball. From there the young men registered with Tasmania's governing soccer body as the Croatia-Hobart Soccer Club.

In its early days, success remained elusive for the club and in one forgettable year the team managed only three wins, including one which was a forfeit. The Croatia-Hobart Soccer Club gradually rose through the ranks and by the mid-1960s they were a well-respected unit. Over the next few decades the Croatia-Hobart Soccer Club would establish themselves as a highly competitive and talented team. The club achieved success, including several premierships and state champion titles.

The 1990s was a period of great change for the game of soccer. Aimed at endorsing the game as an Australian game promoting inclusion and multiculturalism, Soccer Australia made the decision to end ethnic affiliations with Australian teams. This affected all soccer clubs around the country. Understandably, it was a controversial move, with the soccer community believing the ruling took away the heart and history of the game.

The Croatia-Hobart Soccer Club could not avoid the inevitable and the Glenorchy Knights was established. The name change did not diminish the history of the club. The diversity and spirit remain strong today with founding member families maintaining connections with the club. Throughout its history the Glenorchy Knights have boasted some of the greatest players we have seen here in Tasmania and indeed across Australia. A decorated legend of the game, Milan Lakoseljic was a striker for the Knights and top goalscorer in southern Tasmania in the 1971, 1973, 1974, 1979 and 1981 seasons. Milan won the

competition's best and fairest award in 1971 and in 1973, and played a key role in many of the Knights' finals.

Sadly, Milan passed away in 1999 at young age. Recognising his contribution to the game, in 2000 the Tasmanian statewide cup was renamed the Lakoseljac Cup in his honour. The Lakoseljac Cup means an awful lot to the Knights. They have won it several times, including the inaugural cup and the 2020 cup, which was secured just a few weeks ago with a 2-1 win over the Olympia Warriors at Football Tasmania's statewide final game. The Knights' under-20s also took to the field on the day, seeking a win for the statewide cup. While not successful, the under-20s had not entered this competition for many years so it was a great achievement to make the final.

It was a day full of achievement for the Knights, and I was lucky to join in the celebrations. Not only did they win the Lakoseljac Cup, but also the Knights were recognised by Football Tasmania with a few other awards, including James Sherman who won the National Premier Leagues Tasmanian Coach of the Year; player Alex Walter who won the most valuable player; Lachlan Hart who won the Golden Gloves; and again Alex Walter for the Golden Boot.

Earlier this year I was invited to become patron of the Glenorchy Knights and I could not be prouder to be part of a club founded in tradition and family values. I am sure I speak about all sporting clubs when I say this, but in the year we have had, the Glenorchy Knights have maintained a reassuring sense of community for their members and families which cannot be overstated.

I recognise the committee, volunteers and coaches who have remained dedicated to the club. I also acknowledge the players who remained fit and ready despite not knowing if and when football would commence. There would be no game without the players, and I thank every one of them for taking to the field this year in unique circumstances. The future is bright for the Glenorchy Knights and I thank Paul and Marina for joining me today in the Chamber and I wish the club the very best for next season and beyond.

Members - Hear, Hear.

Chris Symonds - Wynyard Yacht Club

[11.31 a.m.]

Ms FORREST (Murchison) - Mr President, we often meet extraordinary people in our work and lives generally. There are few as extraordinary as Chris Symonds, one of my constituents. Unfortunately, Chris cannot join us in the Chamber - it is a bit of a long haul from Wynyard.

Chris Symonds is a well-known Wynyard sporting and community identity whom I have spoken about before. Chris has been sailing since he was nine years old and is a successful international parasailing competitor and champion.

In 2002 Chris was diagnosed with Kennedy's Disease - a rare genetic motor neurone disease. Kennedy's Disease causes progressive muscle wasting throughout the body. Fifty people in Australia are living with the disease, which has no cure or treatment.

In 2010 Chris gave up work as a senior manager at Caterpillar Underground Mining to focus on his health, family, sailing and community. These days he is on a disability pension and is a self-managed participant in the NDIS. He needs support workers to train, compete and generally access the community.

Chris does not let this inhibit him at all. He is an active member of the Wynyard community and plays an important role representing many in our community who are not able to speak up for themselves. He was recently appointed chair of the Premier's Disability Advisory Council. When appointed as chair, he said -

My role with PDAC is of high priority and I look forward to our role in supporting the Tasmanian Government to make good decisions for all members of all communities in which we live.

Some of Chris' other roles include senior vice-president of a large NDIS provider, North West Support Services; vice-president of Sailability Tasmania; public officer of Motor Neurone Disease Association of Tasmania; and unit commander of the Wynyard Volunteer Marine Rescue. He is a board member of Yachting Tasmania and was 2019 Citizen of the Year in the Waratah-Wynyard community.

Chris is the commodore of the internationally recognised Wynyard Yacht Club and represents the club working with Waratah-Wynyard Council on the development of the new multipurpose foreshore facility which will include a new home for the club. This facility will be part of the council's master plan for the Wynyard waterfront and is funded under the federal government's building stronger regions program. Chris is working with all levels of government to secure funding to assist the development of the club and his vision is to have the Wynyard Yacht Club as one of the parasailing training centres in Australia.

He continues to work with the Waratah-Wynyard Council to ensure that community liaison and inclusion are key drivers for the new building's future. Community inclusion is key to why the club has been so successful and Chris believes this will continue. Building works have started, with piles driven 18 metres into the mud where Camp Creek once flowed before it was diverted in the early 1960s to ensure the foundations are stable, with completion expected before June 2021. The club's programs are still running and so far have not been impacted by the building works.

Mr President, as a previous winner of the Australian Yacht Club of the Year, the Wynyard Yacht Club was again nominated as Tasmania's entry in the national sailing awards as Club of the Year along with two individual members who also were nominated - Ela Klinger for Volunteer of the Year and Chris Symonds as Para Sailor of the Year.

This year, Chris was selected as a national winner in this category. His acceptance speech recognised many who support his training. Preparations are underway for the next para national schedule for mid-January 2021, sailing out of the Royal Brighton Yacht Club in Melbourne; hopefully that will go ahead. The club is hopeful this regatta will occur.

Chris and others obviously involved in parasailing are at risk of COVID-19. Restrictions and precautions will be closely monitored by his support team. Regardless of whether it goes ahead or not, the club's structured training program on and off the water in Wynyard will

continue. Chris recently has taken delivery, through the NDIS, of an all-terrain wheelchair that has opened up opportunities for him to travel to locations he has not seen for many years.

He has been using it very extensively, from his Facebook posts; Cradle Mountain, Tamar Island, Fossil Bluff, the Inglis River track and the Nut at Stanley were some of the destinations he has been to lately although the most pleasure he has received from his new-found mobility is simply being able to access the beach near his home on a daily basis, like any able-bodied person, and relax and listen to the waves lapping the beach.

Mr President, I commend, acknowledge and sincerely thank Chris Symonds, a truly exceptional man who is a highly valued asset to our community.

Members - Hear, hear.

**MINES WORK HEALTH AND SAFETY (SUPPLEMENTARY
REQUIREMENTS) AMENDMENT BILL 2019 (No. 48)**

**PROPERTY AGENTS AND LAND TRANSACTIONS
AMENDMENT BILL 2019 (No. 53)**

Third Reading

Bills read the third time.

APPROPRIATION BILL (No. 1) 2020 (No. 46)

APPROPRIATION BILL (No. 2) 2020 (No. 47)

Note Papers - Budget Papers 2020-21

Resumed from Thursday, 12 November 2020 (page 32).

[11.38 a.m.]

Mrs HISCUTT (Montgomery - Leader of the Government in the Legislative Council - As usual, I will leave most of the big-ticket items to the responsible ministers and concentrate most of my comments on the effects of the budget on my electorate of Montgomery, and therefore, my comments today will be made in my role as the member for Montgomery. Yet again, I attended the roadshow dinner presented by the local Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Business Northwest, in conjunction with the Tasmanian Chamber of Commerce and Industry - TCCI - on Friday night after the Budget Speech.

The Premier was very concise in his delivery and explanation of the Budget, and I think at the Budget dinner, the member for Mersey made it very clear at which port the *Spirit of Tasmania* will remain.

Mr Gaffney - I made it clear, or the Premier made it clear?

Mrs HISCUTT - No, I think the conversation - you may remember there was a bit of a heated debate among members of the public, not members of parliament.

Mr Gaffney - Yes.

Mrs HISCUTT - The Premier made it very clear that the *Spirit* will remain in Devonport.

Mr Gaffney - That is right.

Mrs HISCUTT - That is right.

As an aside, Mr President, I had my hair cut on Friday, and my hairdresser was so excited I was attending the dinner with the Premier. She asked if I could get his autograph. The Premier laughed, and he asked her name and duly signed the piece of paper. I was very grateful to him for doing that; I thought it was pretty exciting for her.

Mr President, I find the quick cheat sheets very easy to understand and use. I delved into the Budget papers on other things I would like to make reference on as we go along, then I will finish off with an assessment of the second reading speech and things I want to note.

The first thing on the cheat sheet is the \$14.4 million for the Burnie Court Complex as part of the \$15 million project. The Government had previously acknowledged the existing Burnie Court facilities are no longer fit for purpose. A thorough assessment of the court building has made clear the best option for Burnie is the development of a new court facility in a different location. I organised for the previous attorney-general, the Honourable Vanessa Goodwin visit, to Ulverstone and the Central Coast municipality, where they made a pitch for that new court, but unfortunately it was not to be. It will be somewhere in Burnie.

Rather than refurbish the current site, as had been previously planned, the decision has been made to relocate the Burnie courts to Mooreville Road, in premises currently occupied by the University of Tasmania. The University of Tasmania is going to move out and this is now vacant. This announcement did cause a little bit of angst amongst the community. I believe it stems from maybe people needing a little bit more time to digest the information. I note there was a letter sent from the Business Northwest chamber to the Attorney-General informing her as to their concerns.

I was at the meeting held by the chamber; there was a little discussion about it. Not everybody was against the move, but the letter was sent anyway, because the majority was against the move. That is still yet to unfold. The old courts are not fit for purpose; they are really a rabbit warren. When I was sworn in as a justice of the peace, I had to go to the court house to do that in front of a magistrate. It really was a rabbit warren to get you down to the magistrates' offices.

The member for Murchison may have been in there - there are accused people and victims having to pass each other, and the current system certainly needs sorting out.

Ms Forrest - The victims and perpetrators have to be in the same space for an extended period of time. It is really unsafe.

Mrs HISCUTT - It is not a good set-up.

Ms Forrest - It is mentally unsafe and everything. It is in desperate need.

Mrs HISCUTT - Security is very cramped and even the waiting area is very crowded. With opposing people there, we all agree it needs sorting out. The new site, up on Mooreville Road at the old university site, has plenty of parking. When I say 'old university site', it is a very new building. It is big, open, spacious and even smells new, it is that new. It is on the bus route, so there is no reason it cannot be there.

One concern was that it was out of town, but I cannot really see, with four minutes drive up, the road is out of town that much, so I dismissed that concern. It was commented that we should use a disused building in the Burnie city centre as there are some there. I have looked at them and I just cannot see them being fit for purpose either. Another concern is that it will be near Burnie Primary School. Well, the original courts are there now. The member for Murchison may remember it was built next to the Burnie Primary School before the Burnie Primary School moved out. It has not been an issue in the past.

Ms Forrest - There is currently a childcare centre right near it too.

Mrs HISCUTT - I have a comment from the deputy mayor of Burnie, who said to me, 'You will need to make it clear, Leonie', she said, 'that not all people who go to court are criminals. Some of them are just normal people who are caught up in disputes which end up in the court room, so you should not just presume that because it is a court, that you are going to have bad people there, it is just not the case.'

A lot more work still needs to be done in this area, but personally I believe it is the right move. Like all new things, it usually starts with rejection, then it finally ends up being accepted and welcomed. I hope that is what will happen there.

Ms Forrest - The issue was that the neighbouring community was not given any heads-up at all. It was a complete shock to them, and that was a failure of communication.

Mrs HISCUTT - The next item on my cheat sheet is \$18.9 million for the new K-12 at the Penguin District School. A quick look at it newsletter from term 4, week 4, which says -

It is remarkable to think that we are only 6 weeks in to our new redevelopment. Year 9 student, Tyler, has been tasked with taking a series of timelapse images and monthly drone flyovers to share a different perspective of the work as it starts to take shape over the next 18 months.

When I first heard of this new redevelopment, I thought, 'My goodness, how time flies', because the primary school seems so new compared to the secondary school, which always seemed old - but when I think about it, my eldest son was the first intake in that new primary school, and that was 30 years ago. Time flies, and it is obviously not new any more, so when I did a drive-by I could see all the fences in place, and excavation happening, and orange and yellow jackets everywhere.

When I visit the men's shed there, they talk about having a shared veggie patch with the school, and it would be a good thing if they could pull that off. I would like to give credit to

Mat Grining, the principal. He is a fine young man and he is in charge of the oversight of this development, which, when it is finished, will be a good thing.

The next thing that interested me is the \$5.9 million for the Burnie ambulance station. This money is to build a state-of-the-art ambulance station. The old site is tucked away behind the Harvey Norman store, which is just off the wharf area. It is close to the highway, but a set of busy lights there makes it very hard for the ambulance to get out. I have not been in the ambulance station in Burnie, but I am told it is a rabbit warren and needs sorting out. The site options and detailed analysis of the outcomes there are still underway, and I look forward to seeing that.

The next one is the \$68.5 million for Cradle Mountain cableway and visitor experience as part of the \$86.8 million project. I look at Cradle Mountain and Dove Lake with fond memories of the first marriage I ever performed on the edges of Dove Lake.

Ms Rattray - I thought you would talk about your own!

Mrs HISCUTT - No, that is not the first one I performed. When I say 'married', I mean 'I married a couple' on the edge of Dove Lake. That was very exciting - a couple from England. That was their life dream, so I was pleased to be part of that.

The Cradle Mountain area really is a drawcard for the north-west coast. I hear some people in the tourism industry saying, 'Why does it always have to be about Cradle Mountain?' Most people here know why. You need to have a drawcard for an area, and the spin-offs are really good. It is a bit like bees to the honeypot.

When I sell Cradle Mountain, I say it is only 60 minutes out of Burnie, or it is only 90 minutes out of Stanley, or something like that. You have to have something, because everyone comes to you, and they want either to go to MONA or Cradle Mountain.

What is happening at Cradle Mountain is a good thing. There are also spin-offs for the mural town of Sheffield. You have to pass through Sheffield on the way to get to Cradle Mountain, or Wilmot and their lovely letterbox trail. People have to go through that, and that is good.

Mr Valentine - The starting point for Coles.

Mrs HISCUTT - Exactly right. The building burned down a while ago, very sad thing.

Of course, more people too to my area of the Leven Canyon. The new visitor centre is officially open. The multimillion-dollar contemporary world-class visitor centre and supporting infrastructure befitting Tasmania's Cradle Mountain reputation as a global destination for nature-based tourism was open to the public as of 22 June 2020.

The Cradle Mountain Visitor Centre and services were designed by Cumulus Studio architects and built by Fairbrother, supporting local jobs on the north-west coast.

Due to the COVID-19 situation, I had to visit the new visitor information centre the following day, because there was not enough room for me at the official opening. I do not

know if it was fortunate, or unfortunate, but it snowed the next day. It was absolutely lovely, but it was cold.

The design inside the centre is absolutely fabulous. If anybody has not been there, I recommend you go. The roof struck me the most. There are copper snowdrops falling from the roof, and they look absolutely beautiful. I really recommend anyone who has not seen it to go and have a look.

Ms Rattray - Some of us would have liked to have been invited to the opening as well.

Mrs HISCUTT - I would have too, but there was not enough room for me, so settle petal.

It will also include a cableway, and that will take a lot of pressure off the environment by reducing the number of cars, buses and minibuses going to and from the visitor centre into Dove Lake.

The minister informed me that the shelter by Dove Lake is starting to take shape. Work had commenced on a state-of-the-art all-weather viewing station at Dove Lake that will offer visitors breathtaking views of the lake and popular Cradle Mountain. This was on 10 May 2020.

Construction of the new shelter is being undertaken by Devonport-based Vos Construction, with building design by Cumulus Studio architects - the same people who did the visitor centre.

The new shelter will incorporate a walker registration and information area, interpretative materials, a landscaped courtyard, toilets, bus shelter and a turning circle.

This kind of infrastructure build take time, and I am looking forward to seeing a completed project at Cradle Mountain. I am sure the benefits to my electorate of Montgomery will be huge, especially in the tourism and accommodation sector.

The next one that caught my eye was progression of the \$28.5 million Don Irrigation joint state and federal project.

Our farm, at Howth, is on the Dial Blythe Irrigation Scheme. The money to get in was a bit of a sore point to start with, but now when you turn on that tap and it is instant water, it is worth every cent.

Ms Rattray - Liquid gold.

Mrs HISCUTT - Worth every cent. I am pleased to report, especially to the member for McIntyre, that we had a random audit on our water access plan recently. We had a WAP audit, and I am pleased to report we passed that.

The Don Irrigation Scheme - and it is called Don because that is where it finishes - will supply 5000 megalitres per annum of high-quality, reliable irrigation water from Don, and then into my electorates of Forth, Barrington and the Sheffield district.

It was originally proposed to be a smaller 3000-megalitre scheme, providing water to the Don and Forth area. Tasmanian Irrigation -TI - extended the scheme further south, following

a successful expression of interest process requested by local farmers from the Sheffield and West Kentish regions.

The scheme, once constructed, will provide water to some of the best land in the state. It is a shame the member for Huon is not here to hear that. The best land in the state.

Ms Forrest - I will remind him when he comes back.

Mrs HISCUTT - Thank you very much. The area is famous for its cropping, and, further to the south, for its dairy enterprises.

The project is in the feasibility stage after the preferred option was launched at the Lower Barrington Town Hall, on 10 March 2020. I was at that meeting, and the little hall at Lower Barrington was packed with farmers. There were many questions and answers, and standing outside talking to some of the people I know, they were all very happy with it. So that was a good start.

The Forth River catchment provides the 95 per cent reliability that TI schemes are required to achieve, and it is regarded as the best water source in the area. Scheme designs include a pump station at Lake Barrington, and a second pump station downstream from the Palooa Dam at Forthside. No storage dams are planned, and the pump stations will pump to balance tanks, with distribution to the irrigators via 67 kilometres of distribution pipeline.

A 180-day summer irrigation season is proposed. Water delivery will also be available, given adequate demands from the irrigators, and the peak flow rate for the scheme is 41.7 megalitres per day.

I am sure that like other farmers, members of this scheme will appreciate the benefits; and if anyone is worrying about the WAP audit, that was not that difficult.

The next thing to catch my attention was the \$11.4 million for the Community Rapid Response Service, including the north-west pilot. I found this quite interesting because of a personal experience I had. The Community Rapid Response Service provides health care for people at risk of needing to go to hospital with an acute illness, injury or deterioration of a pre-existing condition. People are referred to the Community Rapid Response Service by their general practitioner and can expect a response - and I will call them the team from now on - from a team nurse within four hours of referral. The team does not replace an ambulance call when the condition is critical and/or an urgent response is required.

A nurse practitioner, community nurses and the person's usual general practitioner and other health professionals as required, such as physiotherapists, occupational therapists, can all plan together when a person is referred. Care can be delivered to people in their home or other appropriate settings in the community such as residential aged care. There is no cost for the service other than the usual general practitioner visit and prescription costs.

Some examples of a health condition treated by the team include, but are not limited to, acute injury or illnesses, exacerbation of chronic health conditions, infections, nutritional deficiencies, acute renal or urinary conditions, and palliative care. This is where the personal note comes in. I had a friend who died recently, only in October, and my husband supplied

support services to them - he used to take their rubbish away and take care of that sort of thing for them - and we would often text to her husband to ask how she was going.

One night he sent me a text - and the date of the text was 12 September, so we are not talking long ago - and in his message he said the new emergency response nurse had visited his home to tend to his wife. He said: 'They are awesome. They are a new team on the coast that has only just been mobilised.'

Their operating hours are from 7.30 in the morning to 9.30 at night, seven days a week, including public holidays, and the after-hours service is provided by GP Assist from 9.30 p.m. to 7.30 a.m., seven days per week also. From someone who has used that service who thinks it is absolutely awesome, I would like to see this service continued and I am glad to see there is money in the Budget for that.

The next thing to get my attention was the \$40.5 million for State Roads upgrades, including the new Leith overpass. During my election last year, Leith was one of the new parts that came into my election and I doorknocked it for the second time specifically asking what people's opinions were on the Leith overpass. I also attended community forums in Forth about the overpass.

The problem is that part of the Leith town is on one side of the highway and the other part is on the other side of the dual lane Bass Highway. The merging lanes are reasonably short for people trying to get across it, especially for school buses trying to do that. It is always very hard for a big slow bus trying to get across four lanes of highway. We have signs there as triggers; these flash 'Slow down' when people are trying to get on and off the highway. That works for those people who want it to work, but most people still just scream through at 110 kilometres an hour, so it is not very successful.

I am aware that there have been many accidents and deaths there over the years. Last time I checked with the department, the consultation and the design work was near completion, so it is good to see that these funds are in the Budget. It is over a four-year period and I should imagine that will start imminently.

There is \$12 million for the Burnie to Wynyard section of the coastal pathway and the future erosion protection; that is over two years. The Burnie to Wynyard area is in the member for Murchison's electorate, but I would like to comment a little on it because it has come from the Waratah-Wynyard, Burnie, Central Coast, Devonport and Latrobe councils, as well as state departments.

This project has been ongoing for many years, being done in stages. The section between Burnie and Wynyard is utilising the rail corridor in part. We passed legislation to enable this to happen on 16 August 2016. The Strategic Infrastructure Corridors (Strategic and Recreational Use) Act will enable non-operational rail lines to be used for uses other than rail, such as cycle and walking tracks, horseriding and running. The Government's policy is to retain all non-operational rail corridors in public hands. It is known as 'rail banking' for possible future development options. An example for alternative use is the North East Rail Trail project which was going to use a non-operational north-east rail corridor. I will not say one more word about that. I will move on to my own.

I remember the briefings. I was very proud of the Burnie and the Waratah-Wynyard general managers who attended. I thought they are on the same page, and I thought how wonderful it was compared to the other briefings we had had.

Mr PRESIDENT - A vast difference.

Mrs HISCUTT - A vast difference. There was no argument with that lot; everyone was on the same side. The only argument that later developed was between the councils and the state, as to who was going to fix the erosion problems under the rail corridor as the sea starts to reclaim some parts of that. TasRail, of course, was not interested in the corridor anymore because it was not using it. It looks like the state has lost that argument -

Ms Forrest - As it should have; it was always its responsibility, always.

Mrs HISCUTT - and are now doing the remedial work to enable the coastal pathway to proceed by providing the funding. It will be good when it is finished. Indeed, it is another long-term project, and it will provide physical wellness for the locals and visitors alike.

Ms Forrest - And finally we can move on.

Mrs HISCUTT - Then we move to more than \$10 million for the new Burnie Youth Foyer, including operating costs over four years. I was not certain what a youth foyer was, so I called my contact who said Eveline House in Devonport was a fine example. Eveline House is managed by Anglicare and has 25 self-contained units, five purpose-built for people with disabilities. Tenants also have access to laundry, gym, common areas, outdoor spaces and games rooms. Eveline House provides tenants with safe affordable housing, as well as opportunities to participate in community activities, education, employment and training. The new Burnie Youth Foyer will be purpose-built to provide integrated learning and accommodation for young people at risk of homelessness or exiting out-of-home care.

When I rang my contact from Anglicare, she said these youth foyers are one of the success stories of the industry. She was very pleased to be able to espouse the good things that come out of that. The one in Devonport, she mentioned, is managed very well. In her industry, she said, it is a good, safe place for youth. I look forward to that happening in Burnie.

There was \$28 million for six new child and family learning centres statewide, including West Ulverstone. I do not think I need to talk much about what these child and family learning centres are; I think everybody knows what they are. I will be pleased to see that in West Ulverstone, a much-needed area.

Just for noting, there is \$8 million for the north-west racing infrastructure. Seeing the minister is in the room, I might just alert her to the fact that if you cannot find anywhere in the Devonport municipality, do not be afraid to look over the fence into Central Coast. Keep that in mind, thank you.

I liked the look of a couple of things in the Budget Papers that I will make note of.

Keep Tassie Beautiful. Now, that is part of the Department of Primary Industries, Parks, Water and Environment's - DPIPWE's - allocation to the Environment Protection Authority

Tasmania. I note this year \$27 143 000 is budgeted for that and then, of course, there are forward Estimates, of which \$45 000 goes to the Tassie division of Keep Australia Beautiful.

Ms Rattray - How does that work? I recently wrote a letter to the local paper about the disgraceful amount of rubbish on the side of roads, particularly in the north-east, that I travel on more regularly - who is going to pick it up?

Mrs HISCUTT - This comes down to groups of people who make an effort within their townships and, yes, I have walked the roads in my area too with empty super bags, picking up rubbish. It is absolutely disgraceful, yes.

Ms Forrest - I saw some workers or people picking up on the Brooker Highway when I drove in yesterday. Is this something people on community orders may be doing and that sort of thing?

Mrs HISCUTT - That sounds like a good suggestion.

Ms Forrest - It would be a good community service.

Ms Rattray - I agree wholeheartedly, member.

Mrs HISCUTT - The Keep Australia Beautiful, Tassie division, this year focused on more of a caring and sharing role in light of COVID-19. On Friday, 6 November, the Sustainable Communities Tidy Towns Awards and presentation luncheon was held at Cradle Mountain Hotel. Seeing as the Government is a major supporter there - and I was the only government representative there - I was asked to present the tidiest town winner. I will come back to the tidiest town in a moment.

I wanted to note the presentation opened with a short video by the Wilmot Tourist and Progress Association which is the winner of the Community Health, Wellbeing and Interest award. That little, but very active, group is ably led by councillor Phillip Richards from Kentish Council. It has lots of members. It looks after the cemetery and the museum; it runs a market and holds morning teas. They are just good community-minded people. Now, to the winner of the tidiest town 2020, it was Penguin - Penguin. I could not believe it.

Ms Forrest - I reckon that is because Penguin had a big scrub-up the night before.

Mrs HISCUTT - Libby Burton is the president of this 7 Day Makeover group who see to tidying Penguin. The 7 Day Makeover was something initiated by the Central Coast Council for the Ulverstone and Burnie central areas, designed as a consultation with the community as to what they would like to see happen and better around their town, and that was the end of it.

For some reason, Libby Burton has continued the 7 Day Makeover more as an independent group in Penguin. Penguin is such a busy little town. If you are going to Penguin, do not go on a Friday and a Saturday because there are no parking places.

Ms Howlett - My favourite furniture shop is there.

Mrs HISCUTT - It is. There is some interesting stuff there. This little 7 Day Makeover group do things like pot plants, where they paint pot plants. There is the Tardis - did you know

the Tardis has landed in Penguin? The Tardis is a little bookshop, you can open a Tardis, put a book in and take another one out. It is just a book exchange spot.

They have the Big Penguin, of course, and then there is a kindness board. The 7 Day Makeover put up a blackboard on the side of the post office and there you are welcome to write nice comments about people. You could write, 'Mr President, you are a wonderful man' or something like that.

Mr PRESIDENT - Funny, I would be up there with my chooks.

Mrs HISCUTT - You will be up there. It is a kindness board so you write good things on there.

Mr PRESIDENT - Great idea.

Mrs HISCUTT - I could go on a bit more about Penguin but I will probably just be talking to the converted.

The other thing I picked up in the Budget Paper No. 2 , volume 1, that I liked the look of is the Royal Tasmanian Botanical Gardens. Members all know I love botanical gardens.

Ms Rattray - The Leader should be on Committee B that was allocated this morning. There was an absolute fight for who would take the lead.

Mrs HISCUTT - Was there really? I just have to fight to get it; I was so excited about it the first year I had a line item to ask, but the minister of the day did not bring the curator in because he thought it would be non-controversial. I said, yes, very non-controversial, but I wanted to ask some questions, so I hope the curator comes in.

In the Budget Papers, funding of \$4 million is provided in 2020-21 for the Royal Tasmanian Botanical Gardens to undertake its biggest capital works program in 30 years. As one of Tasmania's most popular attractions, visitation to the gardens has grown by more than 40 per cent over the last six years, especially by locals. This is placing pressure on ageing infrastructure and facilities.

The funding is in addition to the \$3.6 million provided in 2018-19 to support a new visitor centre and improvements to access points across the gardens.

Other botanical gardens across Australia may be bigger, but none pack a punch like the Royal Tasmanian Botanical Gardens. This incredibly beautiful patch of land was established in 1818. There is a visitor centre, a restaurant, shop, gallery and exhibits featuring local artists. The grounds contain some one-of-a-kind exhibits and it is all set on the banks of the beautiful Derwent River.

I believe the curator may be Chris Lang; he and his team do an absolutely wonderful job and I congratulate them all.

I will just finish with a couple of things I would like to note in the second reading speech. I will not go through everything.

I note there is an investment of more than \$22 million to significantly boost jobs for apprentices, trainees and youth employees. The only comment I wrote next to that was - go girls - so I certainly hope girls and women pick up on this. I presume the apprentices will include mature age apprentices. I can see a need for mature age trainees or apprentices and hope that will include them.

I did have a panic moment when I was listening to the Treasurer, the Premier's speech. He talked about \$1 million to establish a new not-for-profit tourism hospitality RTO. In the tourism sector what the RTO originally means is a regional tourism organisation so I thought, we already have one. What is going on?

It is a regional training organisation, which was good. Over the years, tourism has had an iteration of organisations statewide, then not statewide and then district-wide. A lot of iterations have come and gone over the years. At the minute the north-west coast has what we call 'West by North West'.

In Tasmania, tourism is managed via the T21 Visitor Economy Strategy. This is in partnership between Tourism Tasmania, which is the government, and Tourism Industry Council of Tasmania - that is the industry - and is the only tourism partnership of its kind in Australia.

This is tribute to Tasmania's impressive focus on tourism, further supported by the Premier holding the portfolio of Tourism minister. These organisations set the strategic direction for tourism in their region, identify priorities and deliver programs that engage their industry and stakeholders.

They have the autonomy to plan and deliver programs that effectively deliver and market the region and are accountable to their industry and key stakeholders. This arrangement presents a tourism industry-led approach to regional tourism in Tasmania. It empowers the tourism industry to take more control of tourism in their region. I will come back to that control part in a minute with Tourism Tasmania now providing some support funding for four organisations.

This approach also aims to improve the coordination of resources across councils, the tourism industry and Tourism Tasmania that are directed towards agreed regional tourism priorities, as well as clarification of the role of local tourism associations - LTAs - and their contribution to the development of regional priorities.

At a regional level, currently there are four RTOs. There is Destination Southern Tasmania, East Coast Tourism, Tourism Northern Tasmania and West by North West. I am concerned with West by North West, which is run by a fellow called Mr Tom Wootton.

The local tourism association on the central coast is the Caves to Canyon group. They have a good exciting project happening at the minute called a VR project. They have engaged a Mr Doug Broomhall who, I believe, is well known to the member for Elwick in Hobart, and who has a little business called Push Start VR. Tom Wootton actually gets stuck into it to try to help, and it is one of the best things I have seen in all the years I have been involved in tourism. The man, Tom Wootton, is doing a great job. I wanted to clear that up, because so many times we have had people who just do not seem to help, but this fellow is doing a wonderful job.

Between him and the council, West by North West and the Central Coast Council, there has been some funds put into this project. They have received a letter of support from the Premier as the Minister for Tourism. They hope to get it onto the *Spirit* and into some of the visitor information centres around Tasmania, maybe even one on the mainland, but that is still a work in progress.

The project is around \$17 000 and is supported by the Caves to Canyon group, the council and West by North West, so I am pleased to be able to report that.

Ms Rattray - Would the member like to indicate to the House who is providing the voice over on that video?

Mr PRESIDENT - Let me guess.

Mrs HISCUTT - My husband, Ben, is the treasurer and the pusher of this. Has the member for McIntyre had a look with the VR?

Ms Rattray - I have had a look and it is very impressive.

Mrs HISCUTT - And there are big eagles flying at you and kangaroos and scenes.

Ms Rattray - It feels like you are in the canyon.

Mrs HISCUTT - The member for Rosevears has also had a look. I found it a bit spooky the first time my husband said, 'Here, have a look at this.'. I put it on and I could hear his dulcet tones in my ear.

Ms Rattray - Very good, great initiative.

Mrs HISCUTT - It was good West by North West helped stumping up some money. I was very impressed.

Then I have moved on to the Building Projects Support Program. This a 25 per cent contribution by the Government to shovel-ready projects of over \$2 million. The first thing that popped into my head was the Burnie Agricultural and Pastoral Society and I will pass it on to them straightaway. I sent a text to the new president. You may wonder why you would send a text. The new president of the Burnie agricultural society is 22 years old. He is young. If you send a text, you get an answer; his age group always responds to texts, so I thought I would send him a text so he has that information. He was elected possibly the youngest president of any show society in Australia at 22. That was at its AGM on 17 July. I note they have also made no change to the patron, who is Leonie Hiscutt, MLC. I am proud to be patron of that group. I do know they have a resident retired architect at hand who is doing some amazing work with them. I have seen the plans of their new redevelopment. They are very extensive plans and they have been to the council to talk about development applications. I hope this grant is something they may be able to utilise.

I will make note of the \$9.8 billion of health spending. Every time I think of that figure, my eyes water. I also note \$15 million is allocated to public housing for heating and energy efficiency initiatives. Some of the saddest things I have ever had to deal with in my office are

older people living in public housing, who cannot afford to turn their heaters on. It is a sad situation. It could be for many reasons, but the main reason is because of the cost. Hopefully, these funds will help alleviate some of those problems and at least people will be able to turn their heaters on.

We also talk about \$10 million as part of the \$17.5 million upgrade to meet the requirements of Tasmania's international terminal. As members are probably aware, the Liberal Party held its conference recently and the Prime Minister turned up and spoke and said something like, 'How confident can Tasmania be?' He said, 'Who else in Australia would be developing an international airport in the COVID-19 state we are in?'

That is confidence.

We move on to \$30 million which will be invested in waste and resource recovery initiatives across Tasmania. A commitment to the Waste Action Plan, a container refund deposit scheme - and \$9.5 million will be allocated to that.

We talked about FOGO at this point. Now, what is FOGO, you might ask? The Central Coast municipality, in October 2019, was the first council in north-west Tasmania to introduce the FOGO kerbside collection service. FOGO stands for food organics, garden organics. We have to carefully separate all those wastes now. The council provided an extra bin for those sorts of things, which includes food scraps, lawn clippings, small branches and garden debris.

There was a bit of resistance in the beginning from some residents. It is a fortnightly collection. The correct storage and handling of the product is needed. Imagine your chook bin, as we call it: if you are keeping it for a fortnight, what are you going to do with it? There is a process around that - you have to wrap it in newspaper and freeze it until the collection date. Some people were a bit upset about this and they left their bins outside the council chambers. I remember driving past a few times, wondering, 'What are those bins doing in front of the council chambers?'. That is what was going on. There were signed petitions to reverse the decision, but now it has settled down and is accepted.

I was talking to a lady who has three sons. She said to the boys, 'Let's give it a crack'. That is what they have done, and they are handling it very well. Congratulations to the mayor, Jan Bonde, for pushing this. As I said earlier, some people just do not like change, but everyone now can see the benefits to everybody - especially our environment - with that one.

This is something you might be interested in, Mr President -

Ms Rattray - A train?

Mrs HISCUTT - No.

Mr PRESIDENT - That is it then.

Mrs HISCUTT - There is \$10.5 million provided to biosecurity over four years, and \$4.6 million provided for a weed action fund for farmers to sort out. I do not know whether anyone remembers, but on Armistice Day, when we were on the lawn out the front, I noticed a variegated thistle in the lawn. Did I point that out to anybody?

Ms Forrest - You did.

Mrs HISCUTT - I did. I went home to my trusty *Tasmanian Weed Handbook*, which was put out by the Department of Agriculture many years ago, just to make sure. A variegated thistle is what it is - *Silybum marianum*, of the compositae family. It is a serious weed in Tasmania.

Mr Dean - It is a shocking weed, in fact.

Mrs HISCUTT - It is particularly bad in the lower rainfall areas of the Midlands. The infestation can be very dense, and may totally dominate pasture or crops. It is also a widespread and troublesome weed on roadsides.

I popped out and had a look this morning to see whether it was still there. I noticed that somebody had chipped it out with a hoe, I presume, but I noticed some growth coming back in it, so perhaps that is something we should put on the agenda for the House committee and talk to the Speaker about that.

Ms Rattray - Either that or take a hoe to it.

Mrs HISCUTT - Or a bigger hoe - it has already had a hoe taken to it.

I also note the \$8 million over two years to support the State Fire Commission's activities. I look forward to our briefing from the fire chief, Chris Arnol, and the Police commissioner, Darren Hine, on the fire season preparedness on Thursday at 9.30 in Committee Room 2.

Finally, as the Premier said in the last couple of statements of his second reading speech, we must continue to do the right thing and continue to support one another. If we do that, we will rebuild Tasmania, not just for now, but for generations to come.

Mr President, I think this is an excellent budget. I look forward to the challenges of rebuilding. I look forward to a brighter future for my grandchildren and for all Tasmanians.

Mr President, I note the Budget.

[12.25 p.m.]

Ms FORREST (Murchison) - Mr President, listening to the Premier's Budget Speech the other day, I was actually having trouble seeing the forest for the trees. The list of spending initiatives was quite bewildering. I will speak about some specific areas, where I am pleased to see additional funding and focus on some areas.

First, I wish to focus on the overall Budget, and the approach to it.

We all know, very well, that this year has been one like no other in our lifetime. We are also dealing with this Budget very late in the year, after passing a supply bill early in the year due to COVID-19 outbreak.

Whilst there have been a lot of emergency measures, legislation, notices and other financial reports, I had hoped for more detail and clarity on a plan for our way forward to actually provide a clearer pathway to recovery.

The Premier has, with the support of health experts, including Dr Mark Veitch and his team, and his other colleagues done a great job of addressing the health and wellbeing of our citizens. They are to be collectively commended, during what has been such a frightening time, and this has come at an economic cost.

The Government has also responded rapidly to these changes, and the impact on the state's finances are here for all of us to see. It is no real surprise.

As a state, we have done well in containing COVID-19, and I believe the economic support from both state and federal governments has been important and needed. When rolled out so rapidly, as we saw, there were bound to be some issues, and some inequities in the initial response. The important thing was getting the money out the door, and the support out the door.

However, now, as a state and a nation, we are in an enviable position if we look at many parts of the world. We should now be seeing a clearly articulated plan for both our social and our economic recovery. This Budget does consider both, to some degree, but lacks any form of clear plan for the medium term, or longer term, and very little in the way of a short-term plan.

As I said, Mr President, the list of spending initiatives was quite bewildering. If this is the first time you have tuned into a budget speech, you could be forgiven for thinking it was Christmas for everyone.

However, for those of us who have been here a while, and heard many budget speeches - and this was the longest I have ever sat through, by a margin - all is not what it may have seemed.

I struggled to get my head around what spending was directed at COVID-19-induced problems, what was extra spending to prevent us from slipping back into the dark hole we were heading before COVID-19 pandemic struck, as outlined in the mid-year update issued in February this year, and what was the extra spending needed to keep existing programs properly funded. It is the same problem every year, unbundling the Budget into what is new and what is a rehash or a reannouncement.

I noticed a comment by Saul Eslake in the Saturday newspapers, indicating he was also trying to unravel what was actually extra spending. In the *Mercury*, Mr Eslake was quoted as saying, 'the government's headline figures painted an exaggerated picture'-

'The additional infrastructure spend in the budget - over and above what had already been announced - is actually quite modest,' he said.

'Although 'general government' infrastructure spending will approach almost \$4bn over the four years to 2023-24 ... only \$300m of the additional general government infrastructure spending has been added since last year's budget.

Mr President, I thought 'That cannot be right.'

The Premier told us his Budget contained the largest and most significant infrastructure program in the state's history, and here we have a respected commentator saying the extra spending is really quite modest.

The policy and parameter statement in the Budget Papers really helps put the spending spree into focus. It pinpoints the additional spending.

Saul Eslake is correct. The new infrastructure spending added since last year over the four years of the Budget year and the forward Estimates period is only \$301.4 million. That is the new projects. Not the deferred projects. They are included separately, with parameter adjustments, rather than policy adjustments. It is all separated out in the policy and parameter statement.

Policy changes are new policies or changes to existing policies. Parameter changes occur when existing policies cost more, or are deferred. The parameter adjustments for capex spending dwarf the policy adjustments. Overall the extra infrastructure spending comprises more deferrals than new projects. I have been drawing this Chamber's attention to the constant failure that this describes every year, as we see the same thing occurring, of capex spending falling well short of the budget promises.

In the year just completed, the 2019-20 year, the capex shortfall was a whopping \$180 million - a 26 per cent shortfall. When one looks at extra operating expenses, the expense adjustments for this year - the year that sees the most changes - are at \$1.23 billion. Let us break up that amount: \$772 million relates to policy changes and \$461 million are parameter changes; of the policy changes, \$410 million are related to COVID-19 responses and recovery; \$242 million was extra health funding; and a further \$100 million related to the reversal of efficiency dividends announced last year.

The latter is not extra spending per se, but rather the abandonment of a search that would have been a painful and austere reduction in services. A completely inappropriate and quite a dumb idea at the time, it would have been foolhardy in the extreme to continue when the pandemic struck. Hence, only \$410 million out of a total of \$1.23 billion in extra spending - or roughly one-third - relates to the COVID-19 response and recovery spending. Another 20 per cent - or \$242 million - relates to new health initiatives and almost all the rest arises from underfunding and deferral in past years.

That is almost half, because we did not address the issues earlier. All of us who have been here for a while know that every year the actual spend in health is what you need to look at, not the budget from last year's health spending. I will be interested to find out at Estimates whether all the new policy initiatives are actually new, or whether they are really existing policies, by properly funding the operations of the updated Royal Hobart Hospital which has been a work in progress almost as long as I have been in this Chamber.

The question is: Has the funding of the operations of the new Royal Hobart Hospital just been introduced into the Budget and forward Estimates for the first time? If so, if we did not properly account for the expected costs of running the hospital, the hospital upgrade, in the forward Estimates in past years, have we been receiving a misleading picture of the state's true financial picture in past years?

As it is, we need to be honest about this Budget. Our insistence on deferring spending, particularly infrastructure spending, and the relentless underfunding of most services in past

years, has meant that when COVID-19 came along we found ourselves with three problems to solve.

So far, I have talked about spending, trying to understand what spending addresses what particular problem, but what about revenue? The policy and parameter statement indicates revenue is more than was expected, over all, in last year's budget. In every year we receive more revenue but most of that comes from the federal government.

There have been a few adverse movements in particular revenue items but, overall, we will get more revenue than expected in last year's budget. The pandemic has hit GST revenues quite hard, coming as it did in March. It meant that the GST pool suddenly shrank due to spending all but stopping except for essentials. Up until then we had been receiving regular interim distributions from the pool, some of which will now have to be repaid in this current year and that is noted in the Budget Papers, if you have seen it.

We have to pay back some of the GST we got that was not anticipated in the pandemic because no-one anticipated that. The current year distributions will be less anyway because the pool is expected to be smaller. We will suffer a double whammy this year. We will be repaying some of last year's overpayment of the GST at the same time as bearing a lower level of receipts due to the expected smaller pool this year.

Yet despite the fall of \$347 million in GST receipts in this year's Budget, there will be extra specific-purpose grants, so overall federal grants are down by only \$9 million. Over the Budget and forward Estimates, 80 per cent of the extra revenue will all come from the federal government. Our reliance on the federal government goes from 61 per cent in the year just gone - the 2019-20 year - to 67 per cent by the end of forward Estimates in 2023- 24. I can only imagine what the Western Australians will say about that.

We are not doing much to help ourselves. Less of our revenue will be coming from our own sources. Have a look at the chart on page 92 of volume 1 of the Budget Papers. The fall in revenue from government businesses is quite alarming as well. Have the geese which have provided us with a steady stream of golden eggs over the last 10 years suddenly gone off the lay or is it because they were loaded up with so much debt - having been used by the government as a source of working capital for so long that they are not in the same shape as they once were. Will they be able to come back?

Will we ever be able to agree on raising more revenue? The Premier is always quick to undermine the concept by saying things as he did in this Budget, 'We can never tax our way to prosperity.'. Try telling that to the Scandinavians next time you meet one. Ask them whether they would prefer lower taxes and a health system that relies on more private funds like the US model, or not. I think I know what the answer might be.

If anything, this pandemic has dispelled the false notion that lower taxes means greater prosperity. If taxes help fund the services that most people want and many cannot afford, increased taxes will lead to greater prosperity from a macro viewpoint at least. Of course, there will be some at the top end of town who may pay more in taxes than the benefits they receive via the use of community assets and the consumption of public goods - that is what happens in a civilised society - but overall the community is better off. Almost everyone agrees with that notion.

When it comes to doing anything about it, we idly sit by and allow others, many of whom would be considered greedy, self-interested whingers who live amongst us both here in Tasmania and throughout Australia, to determine our chosen path. It is just part of the narrative that people accept, even when the facts that originally underpin the narrative have changed.

As the Trump circus has shown, people accept a narrative. They do not concern themselves with checking the narrative against available facts. It takes a lot to change a narrative and facts will not do it. Donald J Trump is an exemplar par extraordinaire.

But narrative can change. The debt and deficit narrative that propelled Tony Abbott to his ill-fated prime ministership is one such example. The debt and deficit narrative has been put to one side, at least for the time being, because it is no longer of any use in helping us tackle our current problems. Debt and deficits are the only way to solve our problems, especially when we have a state government refusing point-blank to try to raise more of its own revenue.

I saw a media release come through while I was listening to the Leader. The New South Wales budget has just been handed down and they talk about this tax reform agenda they have happening. I have just had a quick look at the media reports, which you cannot rely on obviously as a source of fact, but it seems a bit of toing and froing, lowering the rate of payroll tax but raising their threshold and removing stamp duty and replacing it with a land tax on purchases. That is what it said in the media so it sounds like a bit of shuffling the deck chairs to me rather than a full tax reform agenda, but it seems that discussion is one no-one is willing to have.

What has helped people abandon the debt and deficit narrative is not only the interest rates that are low - that certainly helps with low interest payments to borrowers - but that an increasing amount of government debt is owned by the Reserve Bank. The federal government owes money to its wholly owned subsidiary. In effect it owes money to itself. When and if the time for repayment of principal arrives, there will simply be a transfer from the left pocket to the right pocket. Whether the loan is repaid or written off does not matter. Whatever the proceeds of the loan were used for, whether to spend on physical assets or social capital, these assets will remain and form part of the nation's equity and we will all benefit. That is what nation-building is about or what it should be.

Let me remind you that increasingly the RBA, our bank, is acquiring more of the Tasmanian Government's debt. The RBA is starting to acquire TASCORP bonds, \$127 million as at 30 June 2020 according to TASCORP's annual report and there may have been more since. The RBA denies it is financing the state Government, but the pattern will be that it will end up holding more state government debt, even if done indirectly.

All states are facing the same problem as us. The RBA is acquiring more state government debts on the secondary market. If the RBA were just trying to drive down interest rates on state government borrowings, if it intervenes in the market to acquire bonds, the price of those bonds will rise, which means the interest rates the bond holders have appeared to accept will fall, meaning the subsequent new issue of bonds by state governments will be at a lower rate. It is likely the RBA will own increasing amounts of state government debt, in addition to the federal government debt. Welcome to new federalism. That is how it is working at the moment in response to the COVID pandemic.

The RBA has a \$200 billion term loan facility in place to lend funds to private banks at 0.1 per cent interest to help reinvigorate the economy. For goodness sake, the best return on those dollars is if they were given to the states on a pro rata basis as the Commonwealth Grants Commission would do, so the states could get on with their own programs. One thing for sure about the states is they are much closer to where the services are delivered and better placed to do so.

The federal government persists with the idea those funds are best given to private banks in the hope that some may trickle down. If state governments want funds, they will have to get their own. Our Government meekly accepts this and pretends its approach, as outlined in the Budget, will grow the economy. It will to a certain extent and that growth will result in increased revenue that will allow the Government to start repaying its debt. This is absolute bollocks. There is no reason to believe this will happen. The current settings will not even produce surplus funds to enable debt repayment. We are living in a world of illusion if you think otherwise. The world has irrevocably changed, but nothing has changed if this Budget is all that the Government is prepared to do, and I am hoping it is not.

Do not get me wrong: the Government has done a wonderful job in its initial response to the COVID crisis, but long term it clings to the delusion that in a year or two we will be back on the path to wherever we were going. We will never get where we should be if this Budget is a guide. We know from the Public Accounts Committee's look at government sustainability, that the Government is currently on an unsustainable trajectory, and that was before COVID. Services are underfunded and they will grow faster than revenue, meaning the funding gap will widen. We need more revenue. The Government will not do anything. We will reach Mars before this Government unilaterally does anything more about revenue. We cannot even have a conversation.

Action at the federal level would be required for tax reform to work. I am not sure how New South Wales thinks it will manage it all on its own. Having not read all the detail, it is a big hard to comment. An action at the federal level would be required to use the overwhelming advantages of having a public-owned central bank like the RBA to assist state governments wherever it can.

All indications are there is no intention at the federal level to work with the states to bring about meaningful reform in this area. Here we go back to the future. This is why I am so profoundly disappointed with the overall intent and structure of the Budget. It is more of the same old, same old, and instead of a more explicit outline of the challenges and possibilities ahead which may trigger meaningful and fruitful community debates, we are presented with a document that will do little to help us navigate our way forward. I certainly appreciate the need for delay of this Budget, but I believe we deserved a little bit more detail in the forward plan after waiting the extra six months.

Before I complete my contribution, I would like to reflect on some of the inclusions and exclusions in this Budget more specific to my electorate and in broader terms making my substantive comments on the overall Budget.

Most regions of the state, including the north-west, were hit hard economically, psychologically and socially during the COVID-19 outbreak and its aftermath, which continues. COVID-19 has clearly exposed our reliance on tourism and hospitality and the need for diversification of industry in our state. It will take a long time for tourism to come back to

pre-COVID-19 levels. I cannot see Australian borders opening to international visitors any time soon. A different approach needs to be taken to receiving returning Australians in terms of the management of their quarantines. We have seen in Adelaide in just the last couple of days the very real risk that poses, even with people doing the right thing, which I expect they were. It is a highly infectious disease; we have to manage it, I suggest, in a purpose-built facility somewhere in warmer climes because we know COVID-19 likes it when it is cold.

As a state we can do much more to maximise our manufacturing and agricultural value-adding opportunities rather than heavy reliance on tourism. We certainly have the capacity in our state to do this. Look at some of the advanced manufacturing going on up in the north-west particularly. Surely, we can do more of that. We could build our own electric vehicles and mining equipment. I have spoken here in the past about some of the underground electric mining equipment Epiroc has been putting together. It would be good to have electric rubbish trucks around the town too, as now they are so noisy.

Why cannot we be doing this? We could do this. I understand it is much less complicated to build an electric truck or vehicle than it is to build a combustion engine one. We could do that here. Why do we not look at those sorts of things? We can value-add much more to our agricultural product. We know the harm that COVID-19 did to many of our agricultural sectors in terms of the rock lobster industry and that sort of thing which dried up overnight. We have the ongoing challenges with our trade relations with China impacting on a number of agricultural sectors. We need to look more at what we can do in our state to supply our own domestic markets and value-add here.

I note the \$400 000 for the Advanced Manufacturing Action Plan. I will be asking more about that when we get to Budget Estimates, if that falls within Estimates Committee A's purview. A lot more can be done. We need to be really open to this. Yes, our worker costs and employment conditions are probably higher than the costs in some of the countries we may engage with, but you have to think about the full benefit, not just the cost, of production. What benefit does that flow through to the community?

One of the serious omissions in this Budget that has deeply distressed me is there is no funding for any work, or consideration, on Montello Primary School. The Minister for Education has visited the school; it is in his electorate after all and he is aware of the tragic state of this school. I offered the Premier a tour with me to see for himself, as the Premier and Treasurer, how substandard these facilities are. I have spoken about Montello Primary School last year on at least one, if not two occasions. I have had communications, written and verbal, with the minister back in 2018. He responded to me back in the beginning of 2019 regarding the facilities, saying in his letter -

... the Government, whilst committed to providing contemporary learning environments, is also committed to being financially responsible, working with available resourcing and delivering responsible budgets to benefit and protect the future of Tasmania.

This is pre-COVID-19, I admit, but we seem to be able to find money when it is needed now. Unfortunately, this means not all priorities can be progressed at once. This is in response to me the end of 2018. He said -

Having said that, -

I go on to what the minister said -

- the Montello Primary School was allocated \$315 000 -

Just keep this in mind -

- for 2017-18 ...

So, in the 2017-18 -

- for accommodation and lighting improvements. Additionally, the school has been allocated \$91 000 in 2018-19 for retaining-wall improvements -

So, the school did not fall over -

I also understand that Montello Primary School was ranked as a Priority 2 site under the 2018 Capital Works process.

I received an email from one of my constituents related to Montello Primary School and I contacted them to find out how happy they were with the Budget. I am going to quote this letter -

I guess Ruth knows the conditions our students have endured in this OLD, -

In block letters -

- antiquated building having had the tour a year or so back, and starting to fight for us. But what has come to light recently -

Here they quoted an article from *The Advocate* -

... is that Learning Services North West are moving into the current Penguin Primary School ... so they will effectively be working in a beautiful space ... far, far better than what our students have! It's has added insult to injury. It seems that votes from our feeder areas just aren't important.

Now, the feeder area for Montello is a low socio-economic, highly disadvantaged community around Montello. There are kids there who are extremely vulnerable, families who are extremely vulnerable. COVID-19 was a massive challenge for this school. They could not do a lot of online learning. They had to print and prepare package after package of hard copy information and hope there was some way in those homes that those children had a chance. They are working in a facility that is disgraceful.

Members who were not here at the time, might like to hear how bad some of this is. The toilet block is a haven for bullies. There are two levels. When I went to school in primary school at Riana Area School, this is how it was set up then - there were two levels, corridors, classrooms on the side and the toilet block was somewhere down underneath out to the side. That is how it is. There are stairs right down to it.

There is no accessible access to those toilets unless you go out around the playground, out in the freezing cold, down to those toilets. There is absolutely no way you can supervise children in that toilet block. It is concrete, cold, disgraceful, with wind howling through because the vents are those open vents, on the southern side of the school.

Mr Dean - Queechy had to shut one of theirs off because it is just not habitable.

Ms FORREST - The good news was, after that, member for Windermere, they built a new toilet block that had some disability access. So, the main street in front of the school comes along - Bird Street - and the main entrance where all the parents and anyone walking along the street going about their normal business walks past the front of the school - the new toilet block was built right there.

When you walk into that toilet block, there are little individual cubicles, and there is a little corridor you walk into that is separate to the main building - it is linked by walkways - but when you walk into it, there is a window that goes onto the front, onto the street. When you go into the toilet, you open the door - these are little kids who sometimes forget to close the door - and you can see straight in from the street.

Now, one could ask, how the hell did that happen? I could not believe it when I walked in there. This is the new toilet block. Talk about substandard. The thing is that it faces the other way from where the supervision occurs behind that building. That is where the kids hang out and play - behind it. The kids, thankfully, do not play on the street. I will go on with this email.

Since Ruth last had contact with Mr Rockliff, he responded by saying that \$315,000 had been spent in 2017-2018 for accommodation and lighting improvements ...

As I mentioned - I just quoted from his letter

... - yes, in the Annual Report of the Education Department you can see this was 'urgent capacity requirement' and the lighting upgrade was vital as the existing lights were smoking!!

Is this okay? This is fixing a potential fire, but it might have been better if the school had burnt down. How dare I say that? I tell you that it might have made someone sit up and take notice -

And the \$91,000 allocated in the 2018-19 Budget for a retaining wall referred to in the same letter - was re-allocated this year to upgrade the tin cans [the demountable classrooms] we were given the 'urgent capacity requirement'! ... these rooms now have carpet, natural lighting and adequate space and heating.

Until this year they had none of that and they had been there for some time. This is what we are expecting our kids to learn in - really vulnerable disadvantaged kids. It is hard enough to get them to school in first place -

Our major concerns of access to the school buildings and internal facilities, cold and ill lit learning areas and toilets worse than those of the Upper Takone Football Ground continue to haunt us.

I know other schools in Tasmania have substandard facilities, as recently the member for Windermere has referred to one, but this is an absolute out-and-out disgrace.

I will be speaking to the Premier because the minister himself does not seem to have made it a priority. I hope someone from Committee B might take up the Montello Primary School in Estimates with the minister. I will be doing so with the Premier at a separate occasion because that is not something we can scrutinise in our committee.

To move on, I was really pleased to see support for 'Step In'-style education and training as I spoke about it in the Chamber only last sitting week - the very successful Stepping In program, which gets women into training and qualifications in entry-level skills for energy, manufacturing and mining roles. This fund of \$400 000 over two years, to develop leadership and employment opportunities for women in male-dominated areas, is really welcome.

I have seen the results of that very small pilot we did for 20 women. I was talking to Shannon Bakes a couple of days ago and he said another two women had been among the finalists for apprenticeships just recently in areas that have never had females in them. One of them decided she wanted to do something else, but she made it possible for those employers to see there are women out there who are willing and quite capable of doing these jobs.

As I said previously, often these are more highly paid and more stable jobs too, so whilst in the second reading speech the Premier refers to employment for women coming back more strongly, that is because hospitality and tourism started up again, and they are fairly heavily female-dominated areas. Of course so many more women are in nursing and caring roles, and those roles did not diminish as much and have increased as well.

I will not go much into general health because we have a whole day with the Minister for Health next week but I would like to talk about mental health because I know Estimates Committee B has carriage of that. I am sure members have seen in the media the Productivity Commission's report showing the extraordinary costs of mental health to our country in terms of economical cost, not to mention the social and human cost of underinvestment and lack of access to quality mental health care.

This has been made significantly worse during COVID-19 - not just during our lockdown here but also when other states were in extended lockdown, as occurred in Victoria. Many of us have our families there and it does impact on our mental health as well as their mental health.

There are people in Tasmania with relatives in South Australia who had plans for Christmas. I worry about some of these families. They have been hanging out for this catch-up so we need to be cognisant of these important decisions being made to protect our overall health and wellbeing and aware of the mental health implications of this.

I saw some really sad -

Sitting suspended from 1.00 p.m to 2.30 p.m.

QUESTIONS

Aurora - Onerous Contracts - Liability

[2.30 p.m.]

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

The Treasurer's Annual Financial Report 2019-20 notes on page 83, Regarding other liabilities, \$620 million in onerous contracts relate to Hydro Tasmania's onerous contracts.

- (1) Why are the onerous contracts related to Aurora not included in this line item?
- (2) If the liability related to Aurora's onerous contracts is noted, where is it noted?
- (3) If these have been omitted will this be corrected?

ANSWER

Mr President, I thank the member for Murchison for her question.

- (1) Page 88 represents the onerous contracts liability of \$260 million. The footnote outlines this liability as it -

is related to gas contracts, lease liabilities and large-scale generation certificates from Hydro Tasmania.

The onerous contract provision of \$29 million held by Aurora Energy Pty Ltd relates to energy purchase contracts. This item has been recognised separately and is represented within the line item 'Other' of \$299 million on page 83. This is consistent with the presentation for the 2018-19.

- (2) As noted above, this item is presented with other liabilities of \$299 million, on page 83.
- (3) This liability has not been omitted and no change is required to the report.

My advisor tells me I may have given you the wrong page number for question (1); page 83.

TABLED PAPER

Government Response - Petition - Huntingfield Development and the Kingborough Future Infrastructure Plan

Mrs HISCUTT (Montgomery - Leader of the Government in the Legislative Council) (by leave) - Mr President, I have the honour of tabling the Government's response to

the member for Nelson's petition regarding the Huntingfield development and the Kingborough future infrastructure plan.

APPROPRIATION BILL (No. 1) 2020 (No. 46)

APPROPRIATION BILL (No. 2) 2020 (No. 47)

Note Papers - Budget Papers 2020-21

Resumed from above.

[2.34 p.m.]

Ms FORREST (Murchison) - Mr President, before the break I was talking about the mental health impacts of COVID, but also acknowledging the significant demand on our mental health services even pre-COVID. I was referring to the people who have loved ones in South Australia. I did tune in at 2 p.m. to listen to the Premier and Dr Veitch. I did not hear all Dr Veitch's comments regarding South Australia. It sounds promising in that they seem to have a pretty good handle on that cluster already, though over the next 24 to 48 hours, time will tell. Hopefully, we will not see an extended period of South Australia being the pariah of the nation.

Once that cluster was identified, many states, including Tasmania, acted swiftly, which I must say we are all grateful for. But there were people who were directly impacted - people who were on their way to or were waiting to see family members in Adelaide, or in South Australia generally; young people at university in South Australia suddenly faced with the prospect of not being able to see them, when they had not seen them for a whole year already.

We need to be very aware of the ongoing mental health challenges that will present while COVID-19 continues to be part of our lives, which we expect may be for the rest of our lives, in one form or another.

As I said, the outbreak that occurred in our state certainly had a significant impact on people of the north-west coast, but all Tasmanians - particularly healthcare workers - were impacted; businesses were impacted; teachers and all associated staff, mental healthcare and education were impacted; exporters were impacted; individuals were impacted, and the list goes on.

There is not a person who escaped some sort of emotional reaction or impact as a result of this pandemic, and that will continue, so we need to be sure that the support provided is not just playing catch-up for what we were already behind.

We need to try to get ahead of this and have really good services. There are matters I will raise that I hope maybe Committee B might be able to follow up on, more so with the minister at the time.

I know people in the north-west and west coast regions are waiting too long to access mental health care - people's condition deteriorates over time without early intervention, making the care they get when they finally do get it less effective, or it takes much longer to

bring a person back to good mental health. We know early intervention is the key. We must focus on making sure these services are available.

Mr President, to highlight this, currently there is no social worker on the west coast at all. Not one - and only a part-time one in Smithton, servicing Circular Head, who I understand is actually funded through the Royal Flying Doctor Service.

This is a Tasmanian Health Service responsibility. This is a responsibility of our statewide mental health services. This is not something we should be relying on third parties to do. Sure, the part-time social worker funded through our RFDS is important and should be continued, but not as an alternative to a properly resourced social health worker and other mental health workers who are very much needed.

This is particularly the case in the youth mental health space. We just do not have adequate mental health services for young people.

I do note in the Budget Papers - and we have heard it time and time again since the Labor government was in power. It is not a new problem we have here; it has been going on for a very long time. As I said, if the mental health needs of young people are not met, they become older people with mental health problems. We know undiagnosed and untreated postnatal depression can re-present as depression in a woman in her forties and older, so you have to intervene early. You have to intervene with quality and timely care if we are ever going to get on top of this.

Playing catch-up all the time - which is what we have been doing for almost ever - is just simply not going to work. We do need to put much more in the front end, and I hope they will be really digging deep into that in Committee B, into service provision that we can actually see, that will be delivered, not just what has been promised. I cannot remember how many years we have been promised an adolescent mental health unit.

I know there are some beds at the Launceston General Hospital and some beds in the south, and there is additional funding this year, which I will come to in a minute, but the reality is that young people on the north-west coast cannot access acute mental health services in a timely manner - and certainly not close to home.

These young people need the support of their families. Some of these young people come from quite disadvantaged families, who cannot afford to go to Hobart - but they will if they have to, for the best interests of their child. We must adequately fund and resource our mental health services statewide. We need to have more adolescent inpatient mental health beds opened.

I note the \$10 million for the new residential eating disorder clinic to be established in Hobart. This is very much needed. What is the time frame for completion of this? If the Leader is unable to provide an answer, maybe Committee B can follow up on this question. Does the funding allocated - \$10 million - include a staffing allocation? Are you looking at another Royal Hobart Hospital - build it and we will see what happens after that? It is no good having a facility and no appropriately skilled staff to handle it. Many people in Tasmania have adolescents with eating disorders who end up going to Melbourne. Sometimes that has been funded by the state, as it should be because we do not have an adequate facility here.

I raised one of those some time ago, when we had a locum psychiatrist in the state who was almost in big trouble for talking to me - but it did not stop him nonetheless, because he saw great injustices being done. This will continue. Again, early intervention in an eating disorder is paramount. I am sure Committee B will follow up on a number of those areas, because they are so crucial to all regions of our state.

I note the additional Child and Family Centres; they are very much needed. I am glad to see the Government is finally getting on with actually building some more. I note there is one in Waratah-Wynyard region, which is really needed and appreciated. It is a high-risk community for many reasons, including intergenerational poverty, disadvantage and a family violence hotspot. It is only when you provide a collection of services in a way that is non-threatening and easy to access for people, that they will access these services at times. If you do not provide it in a way they feel safe to access it, they just keep slipping through the gaps. I commend the Government on this and hope we will see more. We need one in Smithton and there are other areas - we have one on the west coast. These are such a crucial part of social infrastructure in our state that actually supports families in a way that is accessible to just about every family. It is a place where they can go and not be going for a particular service, because many services are provided there. That is a really positive inclusion; I commend the Government for doing that.

That brings me to the matter of family violence. I noted in the Budget Papers - I think I read it there - that reports of family violence were stable or lower this year. I do not believe that is accurate at all. We know all the research shows that during COVID-19 the only reason reports were lower was because women were not in a position where they could report it - it was not safe to report it. They could not go online without having their coercive controller over their shoulder. They could not leave the house. Some people in this situation were forced into staying at home, even though they could have notionally gone out for an hour's exercise and perhaps maybe called while they were out - but their phone records are looked at. These are particularly vulnerable people.

The fact reports were down does not mean the problem is getting less. We will see a resurgence of this. Most of us were at the briefing the other day, with Alina Thomas from Engender Equality and Deb, who is a victim of family violence, including non-fatal strangulation, and the member for McIntyre's niece, who is now the chief lawyer at Women's Legal Service. That was very informative and instructive about the need to act in this area. I know the Attorney-General is dragging her feet on this. I hope we see some commitment coming out of this. It is only when we raise these matters as a standalone offence that it becomes safe to talk about and makes it possible for women to realise that is a very serious offence.

We heard both Deb and Alina speak about this and to say they did not identify having their partner put their hands around her throat until almost the point of suffocation was actually something that should be reported as a separate incident. It is a red flag for homicide. We know that, so we need to actually do legislative change in this space, as well as funding support.

I appreciate the Premier and Treasurer putting in extra funding to support that response during the COVID-19 outbreak. We need to continue that - not just providing services that engender equality, and provide counselling and support, for the victims predominantly, but there are some training opportunities there. There are the other organisations as well, but we

need to ensure we continue to adequately fund these services. There is heaps of unmet demand out there.

If you look at Engender Equality's annual report - and I acknowledge I am on the board of Engender Equality. If you look at the annual report, the demand has gone up so much - and that is from women who could make a call, could visit the website, could reach out. There is a lot of unmet demand out there, and we need to make it easy, accessible and safe.

We do not want to see more women murdered in this state by intimate partners. Sadly, we still see roughly one a day in Australia, on average, at the hand of their intimate partner, or past partner. We also know that the most dangerous time for a woman is when she decides to leave, and as she is actually leaving. There needs to be complete wraparound support.

We have the Minister for the Prevention of Family Violence appearing before Committee A, so we will be discussing that further then.

The arts: it was good at least to hear the arts mentioned in the Budget. Often they seem to get a very low ranking. Again, I go back to the period during COVID-19 where artists were just unilaterally out of work. Bang, gone. Any live performances were cancelled, and just about every opportunity for any income for artists just dried up.

It was really pleasing to see some support provided to them - but artists were last in line. Absolutely last in line. It is pleasing to see there is some funding to assist the creation of new works, particularly in the screen sector, but let us get a broad focus here.

Let us focus really broadly to ensure that all areas of the arts - not just the screen - the music, the visual arts, participatory arts, because I challenge anyone in this Chamber or in this parliament: all of you would have used and consumed the arts during the COVID-19 lockdown, at no cost to yourself. It would be on Facebook or wherever.

I did share that beautiful - I cannot think of the name of the artist who sang it - 'I've never Bin to Me', the song about the lockdown in Melbourne. I do not know if anyone else saw that, but she was in the wheelie bin out the front of a house, singing. She was sensational. If you have not seen it, I will share it with you. It was a Kate Bush song, *Never Been to Me*. It was so good.

Here is an artist doing the best she can, and she would not have any income from that, unless people gave her a donation.

I declare my interest in Unconformity, and rest assured Unconformity is particularly pleased to see the ongoing commitment to support Unconformity. We could not hold our festival this year. It is only a festival every two years, and we will be doing the festival in 2021, all things being okay then. I hope you can all get to the west coast for that, but book early, because accommodation books out really quickly, and this is such an important part of our community on the west coast.

It grew out of the closure of Mount Lyell after the deaths, and it has assisted with the rebirth of Queenstown in many respects. There is such a strong arts community there. They have internationally renowned artists like Raymond Arnold living in Queenstown and doing amazing things, as well as a whole range of other artists.

Unconformity fits right into that. We did a very small event this year that obviously cost less to run, but we are planning our major event next year. Those sort of festivals are a really important aspect of the arts, so I thank the Government for its ongoing support.

The Waratah-Wynyard coastal pathway. The Leader, the member for Montgomery mentioned that. That pathway does not actually go into your electorate. It is all mine now, isn't it?

Mrs Hiscutt - It is past my electorate, and into yours. I just had to note it because it has been in my electorate for so long.

Ms FORREST - This project is welcome. Every time I drive along the highway, I look at it and think, 'See all the rails going up.'. You can see two or three major areas of erosion from the highway. The rails are still there, and the sleepers, but you can see daylight under there. It is as if someone has come in and taken a big bite out from underneath the rail line, and off it has gone back to the sea.

Mrs HISCUTT - The ever-relentless sea.

Ms FORREST - That is right. It is very hard to hold back the sea.

This was the stand-off - who was going to repair the erosion? Clearly, in my view, it was the Government's responsibility. My question to the Leader is: will this funding fully address the urgent work that needs to be done with regard to the erosion? It is not just a patch-up job, so we can say, 'Yes, we have done some of it; over to you councils to do the rest.'

Once my councils take over the corridor manager role, it is then their responsibility. We need to have it staged so that means that they can just get on and build the trail or the pathway.

That is the question. Will it cover the repair of the erosion under the railway lines in two or three spots where you cannot do anything until it is fixed?

Mrs Hiscutt - Through you, Mr President, I shall seek an answer, but I am just pre-empting that if the mayor Mr Kons has anything to do with it, he will get everything he needs.

Ms FORREST - Yes - one way or another.

The upgrade to the North West Private Maternity Services Antenatal Clinic has been on the books since the joining together of the public and private sector in terms of north-west birthing services, which hasn't been 100 per cent successful, in my view, from a number of angles.

The midwives working in, and the women accessing, this service have been required to use very substandard facilities for far too long. I hope this will see it built, not just talked about. It is one of these re-announce, re-announce, re-announce things. This has been talked about in the last two or three budgets. I would like to see that this will actually see it built, completed and operational so that we have a decent facility.

I note the Waratah local recreation infrastructure funding. This is welcome funding for Waratah, but its big key issue at the moment is the reservoir. I have been asking questions about that recently. Once you decommission that, this money for the recreation infrastructure will not be so effective because you will end up with only an eyesore in the town, with a decommissioned reservoir that will look pretty horrid and create all sorts of environmental harm.

I encourage the relevant ministers responsible for this to look at it more broadly. I know the member for Braddon, Mr Ellis, was up there recently and understood entirely why the locals are so up in arms about this. Hopefully, he might have some influence in his party, Mr President, to see that the dam is not decommissioned.

Mrs Hiscutt - He is a good young man, without a doubt.

Ms FORREST - Well, let us see how good he is.

I appreciate there is additional investment in TAFE. I do not know it is going to go anywhere near what is needed to fix TasTAFE. I know that the rebuild continues, but it falls well short. If we are going to build all these social houses, which is fantastic, and if we are going to do all these other areas of growth in manufacturing and other things, which are supported in the Budget, we need the skilled tradespeople.

We need TAFE to be much better resourced and with appropriate facilities. That is a matter, I am sure, Committee B will be following up with great vigour.

Ms Rattray - I am making a note of all these areas, Mr President, some which were already in my mind.

Ms FORREST - I am sure some of them already were.

The upgrade to the police housing in Rosebery and Queenstown is really welcome as well, because those houses are pretty shabby, and most people would not be happy to live in them. We cannot expect our police, teachers or nurses to travel to these remote areas to work, if they do not have reasonable housing or a decent standard of housing.

The other tourism aspect is the West Coast Wilderness Railway. I notice it has been provided with \$4 million to address the downturn associated with COVID-19. Hopefully that will start to pick up again, with Australians happy to come to see our fantastic iconic railway.

I will be drilling down into a number of other areas next week, and I acknowledge there are a number of other funding allocations I am pleased to see included in this Budget but some of those will relate more to Committee A's work. However, I still remain disappointed with the overall intent, focus and structure of the Budget with more of the 'same old, same old' approach and no clear path. That is an extremely challenging budgetary position and that is disappointing to say the least.

I sincerely hope in the months ahead, and certainly in the 2021-22 Budget, which is not that far away, we get a much clearer sense from the Premier and the Government of the challenges and possibilities ahead. What are we going to do? What is the plan? How are we going to manage this? We need the same sort of leadership that saw us through the worst of

COVID-19 in Tasmania to date with effective and meaningful collaboration now as we work towards the future, whatever that will look like.

I appreciate the Premier continuing to engage with me and others outside his immediate circle to discuss ideas, challenges and ways forward, but we need a clearly articulated plan and commentary that will hopefully trigger meaningful and fruitful community debates. I know the Premier's Economic and Social Recovery Advisory Council has a role in that and it is doing public consultation at the moment. However, I had hoped there would be a little more in this Budget to give us some sense of where we are heading. Even though, despite PESRAC's work, regardless, we need a strong and visible leadership during this time and a plan as to how we are going to get our financials in order and provide all the services we need and rely on. Just saying we will be back in surplus in a couple of years time is meaningless. We have heard it too many times.

I look forward to the further scrutiny and some quite long days next week as we delve into the detail of the Budget.

[2.57 p.m.]

Ms HOWLETT (Prosser - Minister for Sport and Recreation) - Mr President, the 2020-21 Budget was made in truly extraordinary circumstances. This time last year, who would have predicted that the following year's budget would have been handed down on 12 November, a full 18 months after the previous budget was delivered, and who would have predicted the circumstances that led to the delay? A global pandemic, the closing of borders, the effective shutdown of entire industries, the widespread loss of jobs, the fast creation of new entitlements for some to remain employed and others to seek employment, a collapse in company revenues and, of course, massive public expenditure across all jurisdictions to maintain employment and stimulate demand in the economy. These will be memories of 2020 for many of us.

Tasmanians have experienced a truly remarkable year, a year that for many will be remembered for hardship, uncertainty, loss, loneliness, isolation and fear of the unknown. We have found out much about ourselves and our fellow Tasmanians through this period and while I would not like to say we are out of the woods yet, particularly after yesterday, we are certainly in a better place than where we were six months ago, thanks to our resilience and the strength of our state.

After a worrying period in which found ourselves at the national epicentre of infections, we fought the virus and have made what I believe will be seen in history as a highly successful recovery. Our kids went back to school. Businesses began to reopen, workers returned to their offices, most winter sporting competitions recommenced. Our borders are reopening to domestic travel and our businesses are rehiring. Of course, we remain a long way from situation normal, but this is the context of the making of the 2020-21 Budget, which we must not lose sight of. My colleague, the Treasurer, in his Budget Speech described the pandemic as one of the largest shocks to our way of life, our economy and our budget.

He added the Budget unashamedly uses a balance sheet to support our community, our businesses and our people. No Tasmanian ministerial portfolio was spared from the upheaval wrought by the COVID-19 pandemic, including my portfolios of Racing and Sport and

Recreation. I would like to describe the impact of the pandemic on my portfolios and how these have been dealt with through the Budget.

First, racing. It came as a shock to the industry participants when, as a result of Public Health advice, racing ceased on 2 April and did not resume until mid-June. There were 72 days of no racing. This was a very difficult introduction to this portfolio for me, as the new minister, but it was much tougher on the industry participants themselves who love their racing codes and their animals.

Fortunately, we had done some preliminary work on a \$2 million per month support package centred around animal welfare to keep racing animals in work, with trainers supported by a daily or weekly subsidy paid according to the number of animals kept in work. This package was quickly delivered to support 321 trainers across all three codes. This support package not only provided subsidised income to trainers, who are at the heart of the racing codes, it also kept the racing animals in work and ready to bounce back on the track when racing was safe to resume.

I am delighted the pessimistic predictions such as the death of racing in Tasmania and the wholesale loss of the racing animals, the industry and their trainers to the mainland did not eventuate. Nominations for fields when racing resumed were extremely strong and have remained so ever since. In fact, race field fees have bounced back very strongly, and wagering on Tasmanian racing remains very healthy throughout Australia.

Soon after the resumption of racing, I was also delighted to announce a 6 per cent increase in stakes for the current financial year. That brought the overall increase in stakes so far in this term of government to 12.2 per cent. To make this commitment in a year such as this is an achievement I am truly proud of. This was consistent with the Government election commitment to increasing stakes by an average of 4 per cent a year over the term of government.

For the record, during this time stakes across all three codes increased from a base of \$20.75 million in March 2018, to the current \$23.84 million. This increase in stakes was made possible by the responsible economic management of this Government and Tasracing's strong balance sheet. Pleasingly, we are on track to meet or possibly exceed our election commitment with a further increase in stakes to be made available in the next financial year.

Tasmania's racing industry has an economic value of around \$103 million and it is particularly important in our rural and regional areas; this year's state Budget recognises its importance through further support and investment. A total of \$42.2 million will be invested into the industry this financial year.

The funding in the 2020-21 state Budget means investment in the industry has grown by more than \$9.5 million since we came to government in 2014, helping pay for racing integrity services, stakes, animal welfare measures, infrastructure, and racing operations. We are also spending record levels to enhance the welfare of horses and greyhounds before, during, and following their racing careers.

I recently announced new funding for desexing of rehomed greyhounds, with the new Greyhound Adoption Program facility, Tasmania's very first dedicated facility, which is expected to increase adoptions over the coming years. A new voucher program for retraining

the retired racehorses has also just commenced. We are also supporting new and improved infrastructure at Tasmanian racetracks, with \$8 million being provided to Tasracing for the development of a new greyhound and harness racing facility to replace those at the Devonport Showground. This Budget is a win-win for racing participants on the north-west and the economy of Devonport, with a \$75 million housing development to take place at the showgrounds. Our election commitment of \$250 000 for community racing infrastructure grants will also continue this financial year.

I would now like to turn to my other portfolio of Sport and Recreation, and recap on the dire situation we found ourselves in earlier this year and how we responded. We are all aware of the high-profile elite-level sporting contests that were postponed or did not happen at all, like the interruption to the national AFL competition that saw urgent hubs being established in Queensland, and the season delayed, shortened, then extended into late October. And of course, as Tasmanians, we are aware that no Hawthorn or North Melbourne games were played in Tasmania this year.

Many other elite-level sports were interrupted, postponed, altered or cancelled, but it was the impact of the pandemic on grassroots sports that preoccupied me, as minister, and led to the Government's response, which continues with measures contained in the 2020-21 Budget.

Mr Dean - What about our own team? When is that coming on board? Are you going to tell us about that now?

Ms HOWLETT - Discussions are ongoing, member; we will have more to say on that later. I am proud to say Tasmania was the first state to act in order to keep local community sport alive and to maintain participation levels, when it was first safe to resume competition. On 27 March, I announced \$2 million in grant funding to support Tasmanian sporting organisations through the COVID-19 pandemic to ensure their continuity throughout the disruption. The intent of this initial tranche of the funding was to keep sporting administrations employed while revenues from player registrations and competition fees collapsed.

Tranche 1 of the COVID-19 Sport and Recreation Grants Program provided grants of up to \$150 000 to Tasmanian sporting organisations to assist with salary costs for the period from March to August 2020. Through tranche 1, more than \$1.9 million was provided to 25 sporting organisations to keep 186 Tasmanian employees of sporting organisations and clubs in their jobs. Tranche 2 focused on supporting grassroots clubs return to play in accordance with public health requirements, providing small grants of up to \$3000 to purchase items such as hygiene supplies, additional equipment, signage et cetera. Through tranche 2, more than \$900 000 was granted to 431 clubs across more than 40 sports to support their return to play.

Across both tranches, \$2.8 million was provided to the sport and recreation sector. Looking back on the implementation of these support packages, I am extremely proud of how they were created without a template to fall back on - perhaps we were the first in this country - and implemented at a speed that exceeded the expectations of all involved. I thank all those involved, including my staff, the loyal public servants in the Sport and Recreation division who demonstrated such experience and integrity in their assessment of the competitive grants program.

Recognising the need to improve community sporting infrastructure across Tasmania and to help stimulate the economy and create jobs, I was pleased to announce in July this year a

\$10 million capital works program entitled, 'Improving the Playing Field', a program funded in the 2020-21 Budget. This program provides grants to local councils and sporting organisations to improve playing facilities across Tasmania, to build and maintain participation following COVID-19. The first tranche of the small grants of between \$25 000 and \$50 000 has been assessed and will be announced very soon. The second tranche, of grants of up to \$250 000, has now also closed to applications, and successful applicants will be informed early in 2021.

Another significant budget allocation was afforded to Football Tasmania in this Budget, raising the annual allocation to the peak body to \$500 000 per year for the next two years, to leverage the upcoming 2023 FIFA Women's World Cup, which will be hosted in Australia and New Zealand.

This extra allocation has been warmly welcomed by Football Tasmania, and the Government is working with the Launceston City Council and Football Tasmania to secure World Cup training camps in our state.

As part of this year's Budget, I was also delighted to confirm that our Government will provide \$1 million over four years to continue the funding agreement with Basketball Tasmania to deliver the NBL1 clinic throughout the state.

Since this initiative began in 2017, our Government has provided a total of \$750 000 to the three NBL1 clubs: Hobart Chargers, Launceston Tornados and North-West Thunder. The clinics have provided a fantastic opportunity for students to learn from some of the stars in the NBL1 competition, and get a glimpse of the pathway from grassroots competition all the way to an elite level.

To sum up, budget commitments such as these at a time of extreme revenue constraints is a demonstration of our Government's willingness to keep the social and community fabric of our state in one piece.

I will now turn to some of the very significant budget commitments relevant to my electorate of Prosser, particularly in infrastructure.

Over the next four years, this Budget provides for a record infrastructure investment of nearly \$5 billion that will create and support around 25 000 jobs across the state, at a time when we need them most, as we build our way to recover the economy from the economic impacts of COVID-19.

Not only will this investment create jobs, but it will also fund infrastructure upgrades and developments where they are most needed. This Budget provides an additional \$45.2 million for the \$350 million South East Traffic Solution; \$37 million of this new funding will be invested in the duplication of the Midway Point and Sorell causeways. This Budget also provides \$112.3 million towards a \$576 million new Bridgewater bridge.

For many years, the residents of south-east Tasmania have been calling for investment to ease the traffic congestion between Brighton, Sorell and Hobart. The Tasmanian Liberal Government has listened to these calls, and we are building the necessary infrastructure that will ease the congestion burden between Hobart and its outer suburbs that are experiencing an influx of new residents.

The northern and southern Midlands, east coast and Tasman Peninsula will also benefit from this Budget: \$20.8 million is being invested in the upgrade of the Great Eastern Drive, as part of our investment to improve infrastructure critical to the Tasmanian visitor economy.

Another \$61.1 million is being put towards state road upgrades, including Mud Walls Road, Richmond Road and the Highland Lakes Road. I am sure you will be pleased about the Highland Lakes Road, Mr President.

On the Freycinet Peninsula, we are committing \$8.4 million to fund stage 1 of the sewage treatment plant upgrade as part of our long-term plan to address the area's wastewater issues.

On the Tasman Peninsula, \$2.1 million is being put towards a \$7.8 million stage 3 of the Three Capes Track project. We are also investing \$15.9 million to increase the capacity of the South-East Irrigation Scheme to meet the growing demands for water from irrigation in the region. Liquid gold, as the minister, Mr Barnett would refer to that commitment.

Not only does this Budget contain record amounts of funding for infrastructure, it also invests record funding into health, at \$9.8 billion, and \$7.5 billion into education.

As mentioned earlier, the municipalities of Brighton and Sorell are experiencing a major influx of new residents. Many of these new residents are young families beginning the next stage of their life. These families want to send their children to a local school.

To cater for this, the Government is investing \$25.3 million for the construction of a new Sorell school. The new school will provide state-of-the-art kindergarten to year 12 learning facilities, transforming it into the key educational facility in south-east Tasmania. We are also investing in a new early childhood and family learning centre in the municipality. This means that a child will be able to complete his or her entire pre-tertiary education in Sorell, from when they attend preschool, right through to year 12.

Health and emergency services in Sorell will benefit from \$11.5 million that is being provided for the completion of the Sorell emergency hub. The Sorell Community Health Centre will also receive funding from the \$24.4 million provided for rural and regional health facilities across the state. JobSeeker in Sorell and the south-east will continue to be supported through the provision of \$950 000 to extend the operations of the South East Employment Hub.

For the Brighton municipality, this Budget contributes \$40 million for the new \$50 million Brighton High School. As it stands, the Brighton Primary School is one of the largest primary schools in Tasmania. The school accommodates over 600 students from Brighton and surrounding municipalities, yet most of the students must travel out of the area to attend a high school. The new grades 7 to 12 high school will be located close to the existing primary school, and will have the capacity for more than 600 students. Once completed, students will be able to complete their entire pre-tertiary education in Brighton.

In addition to the new Brighton High School, \$4.2 million is being invested to redevelop the Jordan River Learning Federation School Farm, commonly referred to as the Brighton School Farm.

In other areas of my electorate of Prosser, funding is being provided to enhance health and emergency services, with \$2.1 million to be invested in the upgrade of the Campbell Town

ambulance station. Funding will continue to be provided for paramedics in Bicheno and Dodges Ferry, courtesy of the \$25.3 million in funding for rural paramedics across the state.

Police housing in Campbell Town will be upgraded through the \$13.2 million investment in upgrading Tasmania Police housing.

In conclusion, I thank some of those key community and business leaders for their hard work and diligence in the most difficult time of this year.

I thank my Cabinet colleagues, especially the Premier, for supporting me in my first year as a minister.

To the Department of Communities, particularly the Division of Sport and Recreation, I commend you for your willingness to move quickly to help with the design and implementation of assistance programs that have kept sporting administrators in their jobs, and enabled competitions to bounce back in good health.

To Tasracing and the Office of Racing Integrity: the shutdown of racing was an event that came as a shock to everyone involved and, in hindsight, the assistance package that focused on animal welfare measures was successful in meeting our objective of keeping racing animals in work and ready to hit the track, fit and healthy on the resumption of racing in mid-June.

Across my electorate I have had the pleasure to work collaboratively with a range of business and community leaders, particularly all my mayors. I thank them very much.

It has been a year of massive challenges, but we have pulled through, and we are looking forward to a continued growth path, getting out of a very difficult time.

Thank you, Mr President.

Ms RATTRAY (McIntyre) - Mr President, I acknowledge that the member for Rumney sat down when I stood up, so thank you.

As the member for Prosser said, no-one last year could have expected we would be dealing with the Budget and having it handed down on 12 November this year. It is certainly something that came as a significant challenge, not only to members but also to the community and certainly the government of the day.

When I listened to the speech - and as the member for Murchison said, it was a long one - I looked at my clock a couple of times and thought, 'This is never going to end.'

Ms Forrest - 'Surely, it is going to wrap up soon', you thought, didn't you? That is what I thought.

Ms RATTRAY - Yes. Given we did not have the paperwork in front of us to be able to go along as we have done in the past - not in recent years but certainly in the past - we had no idea how much longer it would go. Obviously, the Treasurer and Premier of the day decided he needed to take that time, so it is what it is. When he said that not since World War II has a single event had such far-reaching global impacts - the pandemic, COVID-19 - I thought about that statement and I thought, 'Now, what were the significant events of 1945?'. I did a little

homework just so we can talk about something else other than the Budget and I will not take too long.

Mr Dean - The end of the Second World War, probably.

Ms RATTRAY - Well, 12 April 1945, the US President Franklin D Roosevelt died and Harry S Truman then became the thirty-third president of the USA - and haven't we lived through the recent presidential election in the USA, and it is not done yet. On 29 April, Adolf Hitler marries long-time mistress, Eva Braun. The next day, they commit suicide. On 5 July, the fourteenth Australian prime minister, John Curtin, dies in office. On 26 July, Winston Churchill resigns as prime minister of the UK. This one will be of interest to the Clerk: on 29 September, Carlton defeats South Melbourne in the VFL grand final known as the 'bloodbath' due to wet, muddy conditions and violence between players and among spectators; while 26 December saw the first Sydney-to-Hobart yacht race, with the British yacht *Rani* winning line honours, so it is interesting when you look back on some of those events of 1945.

Ms Forrest - You talk about all these men that died; this year we have had Ruth Bader Ginsburg, Helen Reddy, Susan Ryan. Women were never women mentioned back then and there would have been important women die at that time too. A lot of really astounding women have died this year. It has been a really bad year.

Ms RATTRAY - I acknowledge the -

Ms Forrest - They just were not acknowledged back then.

Ms RATTRAY - member for Murchison's interjection about those significant women that have passed in 2020.

We look at sources of information once the Budget is handed down; I freely admit right here and now that I have not read the Budget Papers back to back. Obviously, I have a lot more homework to do between now and Monday morning at 8.50 when the committee kicks off for the Estimates process and the ensuing days after that as we deal with those various areas of scrutiny Committee B will look at. I note, from a couple of various sources, that if people were getting excited about this year's state Budget being a visionary document, they were going to be severely disappointed. What we have is a cautious and conservative document that seeks to offer stability in a sea of uncertainty.

It is difficult when there is such a focus on infrastructure spend. We certainly have heard about that from not only the previous speakers, but also certainly from the media. I will touch on that when I get to some of my comments around the infrastructure spend. Another source notes that at times like the one we are in now, the key objective of any budget should be recovery, and has the budget achieved that? That will be a question that we possibly will not know the answer to until when we assess the budget next year, whether it has actually achieved the recovery that has been put forward.

I also note that the economy is expected to slowly recover. Two big impacts of that expectation which are outside the Government's control are whether Tasmania and Australia will suffer a third wave of virus infection. We only have to look at South Australia over the past couple of days to see what the impact of that wave is having on that state and certainly our state as well. Already Tasmania has shut its border to South Australians. If they are going to

come to our state, they need to self-isolate for two weeks. That is a significant impost on anybody, so possibly people will change their plans and not come to Tasmania. That will again impact.

Then, it goes on, what will Australia's relationship with China look like, since half of our exports go to China? We have just seen over the past few weeks the negative impact on the seafood industry, with the rock lobsters, and also the wine industry in regard to the limitations that China is imposing on our country and our imports.

Budget revenue is \$6.4 billion, expenditure is \$7.5 billion. On the revenue side, two pressure points are worth noting. The Government has made no effort to initiate any tax reform. As soon as I read that, I thought the member for Murchison will certainly have that on her radar through the Estimates process. Certainly she touched on it again, as she does. There will be no movement in this area before the next election; however, it is offering tax relief in certain circumstances - for example, a waiver of land tax for commercial landholders adversely affected by the pandemic, and a waiver of payroll tax for employers accessing JobKeeper. There is a heavy reliance on GST receipts; they are also under pressure. GST represents around two-thirds of all government revenue, again a point the member for Murchison clearly articulated.

On the expenditure side, the Government is spending big and has emphasised its continuing commitment to increase expenditure in Health and on infrastructure spending generally. There are many stories and initiatives contained in the Budget Paper in that regard. The investment in new schools - the member for Prosser talked about a couple of schools in her electorate, but I am not able to talk about any in my electorate, at this time, because there are none.

There are some upgrades in smaller allocations, but I would consider some of those, under the \$16.5 million for School Revitalisation Maintenance stimulus, are necessary maintenance. Obviously, when you are talking about a new roof for a school, you do not do that out of a school budget. That has to come out of the state budget. I have a number of those, but nothing unfortunately, of any great significance this time round.

Under the heading of 'Keeping Tasmanians Safe', \$111.1 million is committed for the new northern correctional facility as part of a \$270 million project. I suggest that is some way off when we talk about spending the first part of the commitment because we have not settled on a design and, certainly, I do not believe we have settled with the community on a site. There is some way to go in regard to this. I flag with members that I have been able to reschedule the briefing with Mr Greg Barns, who has an alternative model for restorative justice. That will be when we are here for the final week of sittings.

It is worth listening to that initiative and proposal. There may well be an opportunity to bring parts of that concept into what is being proposed here, given that I do not believe it has been completely settled at this point in time.

I am fully supportive of the continuing upgrade to Tasmania Police housing statewide. As I have driven around the electorate, I have noticed a number of police officers' residences being upgraded. The member for Murchison is completely right when she has said you need to have decent accommodation for police officers to live in, particularly if you want them and their families to stay there as part of the community.

They may be able to put up with not so perfect housing if they are virtually camping, while they are undertaking their particular shift. But if you want a family to come and make input and be part of a community, you need to provide adequate and appropriate housing.

I absolutely support this and I look forward to the continuing upgrades of those police residences around the state. Money well spent.

I note there is \$9.3 million for the upgrade of the Risdon Prison shared facilities. Obviously, this will be an area Committee B will drill down into through the Estimates process, because, how many times have we heard Risdon Prison is not fit for purpose? We have heard that a number of times. Unfortunately, the expectations and the needs of those who spend time there has outgrown the facility.

Mr Dean - That is seen in the recidivism rate. The prison there is well beyond its use-by-date. What they are doing, how it is being run and organised, need change.

Ms RATTRAY - I note, with interest, \$6.3 million for the redevelopment of the Ashley Youth Detention Centre. Again, I am interested in drilling down into that particular allocation because as we know, the numbers vary between about seven and nine with sometimes up to a dozen. Again, \$6.3 million for the redevelopment of that particular facility in the McIntyre electorate will be something we will pursue. The \$4.2 million for the completion of the new Longford police station again is always welcome because we need to have police stations fit for purpose. Some of those with older facilities - as we saw recently when we visited Sorell and looked at the conditions of the police station and how those officers are expected to undertake their roles, functions and care for the community - can only be classed as outdated facilities.

That reference is still with the committee, and I am not at liberty to provide any further information, but on that day, I certainly saw a facility that needed an upgrade.

Also, I take the opportunity to progress the initiative for a new St Helens police station. It is not in the budget this year again and it is not the first time I have talked about it and expect it possibly will not be the last, but will keep on talking about it until there is an allocation.

I go back to the fact there has been a greenfield site offered by the proactive Break O'Day Council for St Helens where a new purpose-built facility can be built. There needs to be a swap for council to offer up the greenfield site situated adjacent to St Helens hospital - a magnificent building and what the community needs, and then the council would take over the current St Helens police station site. A win-win because as we know Break O'Day Council certainly can see a use for the old with a redeveloped St Helens police station. This would be a terrific outcome and I will continue to progress that initiative.

It has been suggested I need a formal letter from Break O'Day Council offering that, and it is on my radar. When I finish my contribution here, I will make sure I send that request through to Break O' Day and I could pretty well assume the general manager, John Brown, and the mayor, Michael Tucker, would be all over that in no time.

Not surprisingly, Health takes the biggest slice of the Budget. That is what the community expectation is and what we see from our graph. I hope I have it here. We know it takes the biggest slice of the Budget. One of the issues the member for Murchison raised was

having new upgraded facilities or facilities relating to Health services in the communities, but it is the staffing of those facilities that is really important.

I instance the new funding for ambulance services in our communities. I cite an example where about two weeks ago, a member at the community in the Dorset community called for a local ambulance. They waited three hours for an ambulance; in the end they could not wait any longer and found some assistance from a family member, and loaded their mum into the car and took their mum to the local hospital. Three hours. Normally, if the Scottsdale ambulance is not available, they call the George Town ambulance. If that is not available, they call the Launceston ambulance. I do not know how long it takes to make all those calls - but three hours.

So, the comfort I believe that the community had around having an ambulance service with paramedics located in our more regional and rural areas was completely undone by that particular circumstance.

Ms Forrest - I wonder if that sort of wait shows up in the averages, the performance information.

Dr Seidel - It doesn't; you can't get the information.

Ms Forrest - The performance information in the Budget Papers shows about 11 minutes.

Dr Seidel - That would be 13.6.

Ms RATTRAY - Three hours -

Mrs Hiscutt - It is all triaged, so there could have been an emergency elsewhere. This lady was not at death's door. I do not know.

Ms RATTRAY - I appreciate, by interjection, the member saying it might not have been urgent. You do not call an ambulance unless you believe it is urgent, particularly in the early hours of the morning. Normally people will think, we will wait until it gets to daylight and then we will call. It seems more civilised to do that.

But a three-hour wait, and then the ambulance never came. They ended up loading up their mum - who I might add is still in the hospital, two weeks on. It was not something that could have been sorted anywhere else other than a hospital situation.

Again, I come back to the fact that it is fantastic to have this allocation of funds, but we have to have the people on the ground, and the services in place to be able to support those services. That is important. It is integral to the operation of any of these initiatives.

We know there is a lot of money in the Budget allocated to information technology. That is the way the world is heading, and certainly us as a state. Again, that is all well and good, but not everybody in our communities has the access to, or the capacity to use, that information technology, and to use those areas where one might expect everybody is on board - and so we have no paper trail anymore. You do it all online.

I want the Government to understand - and I feel sure local members do, and see that this is the case - that it is no good having everything all tied up with technology, where you go online and you access this, and you access that, and you access something else, because it just does not happen for a lot of the people in some of those more outlying areas, and if they do access technology, it is usually at an elevated cost to everybody else. You can find a provider, but it costs more than the general provider, because of the way they have to go about it.

I cite my Beulah community. They can access some technology. For anyone who does not know where Beulah is, you turn off and head in before you get to Elizabeth Town. You turn left and head up there and you can come out around Railton. That is where Beulah is.

It is the cost of accessing those services. You have people who live out in the more isolated areas who struggle with not only mobile phone service - because there is none up there, or very little - but then accessing to hook into the internet and the like is just not that easy.

As we move towards this technology age, I remind the Government that it is not the be-all and end-all for some of our more senior people, and those who do not live close to - or have a lot of options - when it comes to service providers.

Mr President, it is worthwhile noting again that we have had some fantastic spring weather, so that has provided untold growth in the vegetation around our communities. Fire and the reduction of fire hazards around our state is going to be imperative in the coming months. I know a few burns are happening at the moment. I am seeing a few clouds of smoke around the communities. I just want to particularly thank our emergency services providers and those who work within that space, particularly the PWS and Sustainable Timber Tasmania, which also undertake some of those burns.

It is important we engage with the community and have it understand how important it is for those activities to take place. Unfortunately, you cannot bale all that fantastic growth that we are seeing around our communities. It is also going to be a challenge for the road verges as well. Grass is this high in some of our areas at the moment, including parts of my backyard, I might add - I am not a gardener, as I think everyone knows. That is another area where I think we really need to make sure we engage with the community.

Mr President, I will move to the Bass card, as I take in some of the Bass electorate. It would be remiss of me if I did not talk about the \$50 million for the Tasman Highway upgrades on The Sideling. It is at least two years since that has been announced. I believe, from talking to the local mayor more recently, there are still some negotiations or discussions about who might lead that project, and how that money might be spent. There is some federal funding as well to undertake that upgrade. People are ready, the communities are ready, for that work.

I would like to see it progress, and not have to be a repeat commitment into the future. It is really important. It is an important access point in and out of the north-east. We have a number of other access points for the north-east - but that particular one, if you are heading to Powranna or Smithton, or any of those areas, is the way you will possibly go. If you have come from Gladstone or that area, you might go through the Bridport highway, Bridport Road, but you will mostly take the Tasman Highway and up over The Sideling. We need to get on with that.

I did not see in the Budget Papers - but I will certainly be looking for it if it is there, or the Leader may point me to where it is - any upgrading from Launceston to meet up with the Great Eastern Drive for those lay-by areas.

I am talking about the slow-moving vehicle turnout areas, where they can pull over and let faster vehicles go past. I cannot see any on there. There may well be some on the Tasman Highway upgrade, but there is a lot of other highway from, say, the Scottsdale township, right through to the other side of St Helens, Dianas Basin, where it picks up the Great Eastern Drive - a lot of other areas need that attention.

Again, I know it is a bit of a hobby horse of mine, but I will not give up on that, because it is really important that we provide that safe motoring experience for those people who travel that area.

Mr President, I notice there was \$120 000 over three years to fund a midweek ski patroller on the Ben Lomond ski fields. I found that somewhat interesting. I am not sure where that would fit into in regard to where you explore that particular allocation. What happens after the three years? And the midweek ski patroller? How many people would be able to do midweek skiing on Ben Lomond?

Ms Forrest - How much snow do they get? That is the question I would like the answer to.

Ms RATTRAY - How much snow, and midweek - does that mean they work only Monday to Friday and they are not there on the weekends when most of the activity would be?

Ms Forrest - Maybe they have weekend patrols now.

Ms RATTRAY - I was interested in that. It is on the glossy, so I thought it is obviously a priority for somebody.

Mr Dean - A lot of people now work only three days. They have 10- and 12-hour shifts so they get in their full week in three to four days. A lot of the police do it that way - 10-hour shifts.

Ms RATTRAY - Anyway, I found that an interesting one.

On the glossy, it also says \$24.4 million for rural and regional health facility works statewide; I expect that part of that \$24.4 million would be a focus on mental health. I listened intently when the member for Murchison talked about the challenges for mental health and those struggling with mental health in our state. I, too, will be very keen to explore that through the Estimates process, and the early intervention I believe is absolutely crucial. I was very surprised when the member for Murchison indicated there was no social worker on the north-west coast.

Ms Forrest - On the west coast.

Ms RATTRAY - On the west coast. Apologies.

Ms Forrest - And only one in Smithton, which is funded by the RFDS.

Ms RATTRAY - I wrote that down wrong - so, the west coast. How is the community on the west coast or the east coast or any other part of Tasmania going to manage in these times without access to social workers? It is certainly a specialised area. Mr President, just on Friday a desperate parent came to my office to talk about their child, and they told me that the waitlist at Headspace is at least two months.

The advice from the medical fraternity - as this person had presented at the LGH - was for the parent to take some leave and to watch their child because there was no accessing services in a timely manner. I rang the minister's office, and Chris Edwards was fantastic. He said, 'It has been a while since I've worked in this area but I will find somebody who does', and I was provided a contact number - that person came in later in the day and said they had been directed to a service they did not know about, had not been advised of; they had come from the LGH and did not know that this service was available.

I thank Chris Edwards from the minister's office very much for that information and for getting straight on to that, but how many other people are falling through the cracks and are not able to access services they need? How many other parents are being TOLD to 'watch your child' because there are no services available in what is considered a timely manner?

Do we need to put some focus and some effort into having the qualified people that we need? It does not necessarily have to have them on our doorstep. This parent said to me 'we would be happy with a teleconference'. It is not necessarily a face-to-face meeting. Just even a teleconference would do. I have talked about accessing technology, and that is the way we are moving. If we do not necessarily have people who can take a face-to-face appointment, at least let us have access to the technology where they can have an exchange with people who know and understand those situations.

I would expect, as a parent, that I would be so close to that matter that I probably would not be thinking clearly, let alone be able to give the advice you need. I mean, do you say 'Toughen up'. I had this conversation with one of my colleagues. Do you say 'Toughen up' or do you wrap them up in cottonwool? I do not know, and I am sure there are many other parents who do not know what it is needed, but obviously someone who is trained in that area would know, would have the expertise, and would know what they need, and how they need to go about it.

I will certainly follow up these areas during the Estimates process, because it is so important we talk about those in the future.

I note specific items for our islands on the Bass list. Certainly, Flinders is named up here - \$640 000 towards Flinders Island health insurance infrastructure and patient transport. We know that is really important. There is also \$295 000 for infrastructure, refurbishment and fire service upgrades at the Flinders Island District School. Again, really important. Then there is \$480 000 for additional support for Biosecurity officers on both Flinders and King islands - again, a really important aspect of the islands and how they go about their business over there. So no issue with those.

I notice there is \$7.1 million for Parks and Wildlife to rebuild infrastructure damaged by bushfires as part of an \$8.3 million project; as I said, if we have another summer as we had previously, with the fuel load we have on the ground at the moment, I really hesitate to think about what might happen.

I am very pleased to finally see - and if the former member for Western Tiers was here he would probably be dancing a jig by now - \$4 million for the Container Refund Scheme, and Waste Action Plan initiatives. Wowee, hurry up. And commercial recycling opportunities - there is some money towards that as well. To my mind, that all goes hand in hand. We need to be able to get commercial recycling opportunities, which then filters down into the community as well. It is long overdue. Too many reports, but finally some actions. So well done to the Government in that particular area.

There is \$800 000 for Brand Tasmania. That will be an interesting one to explore through the Budget process. I am not sure who gets the guernsey for Brand Tasmania -

Ms Forrest - Premier.

Ms RATTRAY - Premier - So, Committee A - I would be interested in whatever information that committee can find in regard to that because at times there has been some criticism about the work of Brand Tasmania and what has actually been done in that space, and what that particular allocation of significant funding is actually doing for promoting the Tasmanian brand in the state.

Mr President, I need to just touch on the \$80 million in total - and \$68.5 million for the Derwent Entertainment Centre and indoor multi-sports facility. What other sports are going to be included in that significant upgrade? There is \$11.5 million for the National Basketball League. That comes to a total of \$80 million. Unless a lot of other sports are getting a benefit from the DEC, that is a great deal of investment.

I note the Public Works Committee has not even looked at the reference yet for that upgrade.

Mr Dean - It does not matter much what you need, from what you say. None received.

Ms RATTRAY - Mr President, the member for Windermere by interjection made a really valid point, because that needs to go through the Public Works Committee.

There is a process, as you well know. You were a member of that committee. There is a process there, so to expect that committee just to be a rubber stamp is disrespectful and not helpful.

Mrs Hiscutt - Your rubber stamp Committee B has the Minister for Sport and Recreation; you will be able to take that up with her.

Ms RATTRAY - It absolutely does and I certainly will be. It is a bad look to say this is all happening, and I know you have to allocate funds for various -

Mr Dean interjecting.

Ms RATTRAY - Imagine if the Public Works Committee decided that was not value for money, because that is the question: is this value for money on behalf of the Tasmanian people? That is the question asked at the end of that process. I expect people involved in that are working on their submission as we speak, but \$80 million is a lot of money. I am sure a lot of

other sporting organisations will be using that multi-sports facility and I look forward to having the detail of that explored through the Estimates process.

This is under the heading Community: \$351 000 for Volunteering Tasmania to re-engage with volunteers. Is there a concern by Government that the volunteers we had in our community who were put on hold through the COVID-19 time will not come back and will need to be re-engaged with?

Ms Forrest - All those volunteers are in the vulnerable categories in terms of age and health matters.

Ms RATTRAY - I absolutely agree and so they may decide their time for volunteering has finished - how Volunteering Tasmania will do that will be worth exploring.

There is \$250 000 to support the mental health of frontline volunteers, including the fire service and paramedics. We know they are so integral to what happens, particularly volunteer ambulance support and also volunteer firefighters.

I would like to see \$800 000 for them and perhaps \$250 000 for Brand Tasmania if it were me, but I do not put the budget together and I am not part of the Government but I know where I would like to see a focus on. I feel sure that their mental health is very important given that they work under very arduous and certainly challenging conditions and times.

I note there was an interview with independent economist Saul Eslake last week, which I listened to as I was travelling north. I thought some of the things he raised were quite useful; I took the opportunity to grab a transcript of the interview and I want to make a couple of points in regard to something he said.

He talked about the low interest rates and said if we were in a deficit, it was probably a good time to be in one now. He went on to talk about the infrastructure-led recovery: Is that the way to go? Is the \$5 billion spend on infrastructure this year a way of stimulating jobs? They were the questions asked. He responded that it was certainly part of the way to go and again, that is just him saying that. That is the advice that comes from authorities like the IMF and the Reserve Bank, and what the state Government is doing is entirely consistent with that authoritative advice. He went on to say - the way he reads the Budget Papers is interesting - that there is not a lot of additional infrastructure spending that had not been announced beforehand. That is something we will explore through the Estimates process - how many of these initiatives and projects are re-announcements? For instance, The Sidling upgrade was announced a couple of years ago.

He went on to say that -

... maybe \$300 million or so in the general government sector was not previously announced but I am not being critical of that because the overall number is still pretty high and we know that is \$5 billion.

He said that a lot of the infrastructure projects are 'blokey industries'. I know the member for Murchison talked about the fact that there is some money in the Budget to focus on women coming back into the workforce - particularly the ones in hospitality and some of those other areas that are what we call traditionally 'female' areas of work. He went on to say that

80 per cent of jobs in construction in Tasmania are held by men, although when you are driving through some of the roadworks now, you do see some -

Ms Forrest - Not many.

Ms RATTRAY - Not many, but you do see more women than we have ever seen before.

Ms Forrest - In Queensland they have had a major effort through Protec, one of the companies involved with the Step In program, and they have full women crews now in Queensland on the roadworks. I will be talking with them later when we look at how funding can be allocated because it is an important area.

Ms RATTRAY - I will be interested to see where that program leads to for opportunities for us girls, particularly in some of the more regional and remote areas where often the only thing you will pick up is some fruit harvesting or on the back of a potato harvester - that type of work - if you can't pick anything up in a cafe or within the hospitality industry. We know that the more infrastructure and projects that happen around our communities, regardless of who is doing that work, you will see the opportunity for people to put on additional workers in the cafes, the takeaway stores and so on because they need to get their lunch. I do not know so many of them have a homemade lunch in this day and age. I am not entirely sure.

He also went on to talk about the extent of payroll tax relief for employers, apprentices and other young people. He obviously felt that was a well-targeted measure and much better than the broad-based payroll tax relief, which he had heard Michael Bailey from the TCCI talk about the previous day. Again, tax reform is certainly an area that we have to have a conversation about some time. The member for Murchison has talked about it until the cows come home and still nothing has happened. Will there ever be a government brave enough to actually have those really hard conversations? I do not know. It is interesting that it still gets a guernsey at every budget time, particularly from commentators outside who look at these things.

One other interesting point: he said that while this possibly would not be of any interest to Joe Blow in the street, the outlook for those two years in which it is projecting a budget surplus - that is, the Budget - is too uncertain to provide an economic forecast for. Obviously, that is the 2022-2023 and the 2023-2024 years. They obviously have those numbers, because they could not project the budget figures without having at least some assumption about what the economy will do. Although it does not matter to the average Tasmanian, as an economist, Saul Eslake would be a bit critical of Treasury for not being willing to make those forecasts, to chance its arm as to what the economy might do two or three years out. He goes on to say that both South Australia and the Northern Territory, which presented their budgets on Tuesday last week, had forecasts, not only for economic growth, but also for unemployment, population growth and inflation right out to 2024.

Even the federal government had it, and he talked about the Western Australian budget which came down two days afterwards. I have not looked at the Western Australian budget; I do not know if they have those forecast details, but I thought Treasury should have had them. Who would be interested other than those sitting outside looking in? It certainly is worth mentioning again. It is always useful to look at what the experts are saying.

I want to touch briefly on a last couple of areas. The hospitality industry is so important to our state. Since the South Australian matter, I expect they have probably become quite nervous again, thinking we were going to have some relaxation and more people visiting and would be able to get back to some sort of normality. I am pleased there is a further \$ 1million commitment to waive the liquor licensing fees for 2021; that is useful. We need to take as much pressure off the hospitality industry as we possibly can; it needs to have confidence it will be able to provide for, not only the Tasmanian community, but certainly also for people visiting our state in the future. I think we have to be very mindful that we cannot expect the industry to take any more hits than it already has. So my suggestion is to look after the hospitality industry, and work with it.. It is quite a challenge for the hospitality industry at the moment - that you can only stand up outside and have a drink, and you sit down inside. I still do not understand the difference between -

Ms Forrest - I will tell you what it is about. It is because if you wanted to stand up, you would have fewer people in a venue; if you sit down, you can have more, because of the ability to socially distance properly. That is why the rule is there.

Ms RATTRAY - I still find it interesting that they feel there is more opportunity to have people sitting down than standing up. I think it is not well explained, because people keep saying to me -

Ms Forrest - No, no. I disagree with that.

Ms RATTRAY - that this is a nonsense, and you have venues continually - I visited one only a couple of weeks ago for a thirtieth birthday, and every 10 minutes there was hollering from behind the bar for people to sit down, and then 10 minutes later, the holler comes again.

Mr Dean - The director of Health told me the other day - when I raised it with him, that I thought it was a bit of a nonsense - he said the reason for it was that if you are standing at a bar, you are rubbing shoulders with one another.

Ms Forrest - That is what I am saying.

Mr Dean - There is closer contact than there is if you are sitting down.

Ms Forrest - Absolutely.

Mr Dean - And it was done for that reason - to try to ensure that does not happen.

Ms RATTRAY - Perhaps there needs to be some better communication, not only with - I mean, the venues are doing their best, but later on in the night, when sometimes too much alcohol and bad manners kick in, it is very difficult to actually make people do -

Ms Lovell - It is often young people and young women who are having to enforce those rules, so more support for them is important as well.

Ms RATTRAY - That is exactly right. I really feel for them.

Mr Dean - It is a bit like the airports. I had a person travelling to Victoria recently and they said at the airport they were isolated. They had to sit in a chair separate from one another - but on the aircraft, there were three of them crouched up in the three chairs.

Ms RATTRAY - Interestingly, my son-in-law came back from Western Australia last week. The Jetstar flight was cancelled, and he managed to pick up a Qantas flight into Launceston, and there were seven people on the flight - seven only.

Ms Lovell - They were nicely spaced.

Ms RATTRAY - Nicely spaced, but I wonder how many times they are going to fly a plane with seven people on it. I said, 'I think you were very lucky to even get home.' My little granddaughter is very pleased to see her daddy home, I might add - and the pink flamingo, the talking one.

I do have one question. In Budget Paper No. 2, volume 1, page 103, 4.9 Ex-Gratia Assistance, it is \$6.2 million. I am interested in what that relates to. If the Leader does not have an answer, I think possibly the honourable -

Ms Forrest - It is corporate restructures, if you read the note, that one.

Ms RATTRAY - It says, 'Under section 55 of the Financial Management Act 2016' -

Ms Forrest - That is right. There is another thing, yes.

Ms RATTRAY - It continues -

if the Treasurer is satisfied that it is appropriate to do so because of special circumstances, the Treasurer may authorise an amount to be paid to a person even though the payment would not otherwise be authorised by law or be required to meet a legal liability.

I am interested in how that \$6.2 million was arrived at, given that in the Budget papers 2019-20, \$610 000 was allocated, and in the forward Estimates, there is \$300 000. It is a significant increase, and I am interested in what might be expected for that to have such a significant allocation.

If we do not have an answer from the Leader, I might look to the Chair of Committee A to progress that.

Ms Lovell - It is on our list.

Ms RATTRAY - I would like to make one final point that is not included in the Budget. Some money has been provided or committed to effluent dumps. Anyone who travels in rural areas, and obviously through the cities as well, and follows a cattle truck - it is very difficult for those people in the industry to comply with community expectation when there are no effluent pits.

There are very few. There is one at Smithton and one at Powranna, but if you are not going to Powranna, and you are going to the far north-west, there is a long way between the

north-east or Gladstone or Pyengana when you have those cattle on, for them to expect that no effluent comes out of their trailers.

I know there is a project or an arm within DPIPWE looking at this, but there has to be - they are saying to me, local government = somebody has to take management of these once they are installed. If we are waiting for local government to put its hand up and say, 'That is fine, we will take over; you build them and we will take over', it is probably not going to happen, therefore I believe it is a state government responsibility - it is.

The industry wants to be involved in this. I went to a livestock transport meeting only a couple of months ago, and there is a will from all those people in the industry, because they do not want to be ticked off by people in the community because effluent is coming out - and I have to say, it is shit that comes out of their vehicles.

Ms Forrest - It gets all over your windscreen.

Ms RATTRAY - It does, and it is not fair they have to put up with the negative backlash from motorists when there is nowhere to dump. There has to be a cooperative approach. I want to be involved in this as much as anyone, because I am following those vehicles, too, and I do not particularly like it, but I know that it is not their fault because there are no designated effluent pits.

You only have to look at the New Zealand model. There are effluent pits everywhere in New Zealand. You drive not very far to find somewhere to unload and dump.

I am happy to keep working with the department, but if - as by interjection the member for Launceston said, or supported my statement - if we are waiting for local government to take over management of these, it is not likely to happen.

Ms Armitage - You will be waiting a while.

Ms RATTRAY - We have to be more proactive than that, and be able to put some of these pits into various areas. It is a biosecurity issue in itself. We say we are really proactive in this space, and we probably are for a lot of other aspects of biosecurity, but not for this.

I want to see some improvement in it; I want to be involved, and I am offering to be involved. Please use me as a useful resource when it comes to this particular issue.

As I said at the beginning of my contribution, at times like we are now in, the key objective of any budget should be recovery. Has the Budget achieved that? That will remain to be seen, in my view. I do not know whether it has achieved it, or will achieve it, but I also acknowledge the very trying times.

I expect the Government of the day has taken a very conservative approach; that was mentioned earlier. That is, a conservative approach to how we move ourselves out of this particularly challenging time. Before too long we will be dealing with next year's budget. I am keen for the opportunity to explore a lot more of the Budget through the Estimates process, as part of Committee B and I look forward to that opportunity, perhaps not so much for the long days and into the evening, as the member for Murchison might be.

Ms Forrest - I am not looking forward to it; I am just acknowledging the reality.

Ms RATTRAY - I thought we were looking forward to it. That is my offering on the Budget.

[4.25 p.m.]

Ms LOVELL (Rumney) - Mr President, I rise to speak briefly in reply to the Budget that was handed down by the Treasurer last week. We say every year it is difficult to speak at any level of detail to a budget we have not yet had the chance to properly scrutinise through the Estimates process, but this is the way we do it.

Ms Rattray - I agree.

Ms LOVELL - Yes. My contribution will be reflective of that. This has been a strange year, one that has required some fast decision-making, quick action and decisiveness. The coronavirus pandemic has touched almost every corner of the world. I still find it hard to fathom we have had this virus which has been so infectious, which has covered the entire globe and has had such devastating impacts. It is hard when you think about the magnitude of it to fully grasp that.

Tasmania, while we managed to avoid the types of impacts we have seen in other parts of the country and the world, certainly bore our share. It was entirely appropriate we treated this year differently from any other year any of us have dealt with in this parliament, including delaying this Budget. Tasmanians have been faced with challenges we have never faced before.

We were all extremely aware of the health risks posed by this virus. It is highly infectious, difficult to detect early and is inclined to spread far more quickly than we can respond. The health consequences can be catastrophic. While some people can suffer no more than mild symptoms, many others suffer disastrous long-lasting effects. We still do not understand the true long-term impact on the health of those who have been infected and I suspect we probably will not for some time. We are all desperately aware this virus can cause death. Thirteen Tasmanians died as a result of COVID-19 and we can never forget that. My thoughts and condolences are with the families, friends and all those who knew and loved those 13 Tasmanians.

It is not only the health impacts that Tasmanians have felt, far from it. Tasmanians were called on to follow health advice, work from home, social distance, keep their children home from school and stay away from their families and loved ones. Many Tasmanians lost work or income. At the height of the pandemic 20 000 Tasmanians lost their job. Over 12 000 of those are still yet to get back into the workforce. For every job vacancy today, there are 27 Tasmanians looking for work. Our unemployment rate is over 7 per cent and the Budget Papers forecast further rises to come.

Secure employment is absolutely critical in enabling people to live a life of dignity. To be able to actively participate in their community, rather than just exist in it; to be able to afford to not only pay the bills and put food on the table, but also afford the fees to play a team sport or take your kids to the movies once in a while. For those who will argue there are plenty of things we can do here in Tasmania that cost nothing, we need to be real about that. You cannot go for a walk on the beach if you cannot afford the petrol to get there. You cannot safely go for a bushwalk, if you do not have suitable shoes and clothing. It is not a lot of fun to take your

kids to a friend's birthday party if you cannot afford to take a present. Poverty is demoralising and it is isolating, and more Tasmanians are feeling this now more than ever.

I have been in regular contact with neighbourhood centres in my electorate, as I am sure all of us have. They should be commended for quickly adjusting to provide services under very different circumstances. One of the neighbourhood centres in my electorate, in Clarendon Vale, has run a program on Tuesday nights over the last several years, they call it Soul - it is an evening event once a week where they provide meals and companionship to members of the community. Before the pandemic, Soul, after several years of operation, was achieving or providing around 100 meals a night on Tuesday nights.

When they could no longer provide this service safely, they adjusted and moved to a delivery model. Volunteers and staff would work for hours and hours on end, at times coming into the centre at 7 a.m. and not leaving until 1 a.m. the next morning, taking orders, preparing meals, delivering them. I was lucky enough to witness this at first hand a few times - they were a well-oiled machine. They reported an increase in members of the community needing that support on a Tuesday night from the 100 meals a week they were providing prior to the pandemic to over 300 meals a week.

I heard stories from volunteers of delivering meals to homes and having those they were delivering to break down and share they have never had to ask for this sort of support before now. Every neighbourhood centre I have spoken to has reported the same thing, a sharp increase in people engaging who have never been in that position before. I am so glad our network of neighbourhood centres and other community organisations has been there to respond to those who need it. There is no shame in asking for or receiving help when you need it.

These stories and conversations highlighted for me just how tough people are doing it at the moment. This is just one example of the impact the pandemic and the resulting, very necessary, restrictions have had on our community. I have been very mindful while we have been here, in this place, making decisions about responses to COVID-19, protections for renters, support for business, grants to stimulate the construction industry, that we have been making those decisions from the very comfortable position of still being in work, still receiving an income. It is important we acknowledge and do not forget that.

We have all felt the impact of the pandemic, there is no doubt, right across Tasmania, but we have not all felt it in the same way. While I cannot attribute this quote to any particular person - I will not try to pretend they are my own words - but I have heard it said that we might have been in the same storm, but we were not all in the same boat. Some of us are in catamarans and luxury yachts equipped with lifeboats, built to weather the storm, while some are in dinghies, or clinging to a piece of driftwood.

So, with this in mind, I was looking for more in this Budget. This is the most important budget handed down in a generation. This was an opportunity for bold vision, for reform, an opportunity to shape our future in a way we have not been able to before. Instead we have been presented with more of the same. In my shadow portfolio areas of Health and Mental Health, this Budget is characterised with more of the same policies and promises we have seen for the last six years from this Government. While they will no doubt claim record spending in Health, let us remember you can be spending more than the year prior and still not even be keeping up with rising costs or increasing demands. What a hollow claim that is.

When you look at what really matters to Tasmanian's health outcomes, where are we? Our surgery waiting lists are longer than ever. Record numbers of Tasmanians are waiting far too long for critical surgery. The latest publicly available data for the end of the June quarter this year has 11 342 Tasmanians on the waitlist for surgery, and a staggering 42 238 Tasmanians on the outpatient waitlist. To be clear, these are patients who are waiting to find out if they need surgery or not. With the waitlist as phenomenal as this, by the time many of these patients can be seen by a specialist, chances are more of them will need surgery than they would have had they been able to be supported to manage and treat their condition sooner.

The Budget Papers outline that this last year, only 68 per cent of Category 1 surgeries, urgent surgeries that should be completed within 30 days, were seen on time, within clinically recommended time frames. For Category 2, it is worse - only 36.7 per cent of those patients.

The average overdue wait time in the last year - the number of days people are waiting longer than a clinically recommended time frame: Category 1 patients are waiting on average 84.9 days longer than recommended, an increase of 26.9 days on the year before. Category 2 patients are waiting, on average, 161.4 days longer than clinically recommended, another increase of 36.4 days on the year before.

Tens of thousands of Tasmanians are waiting for life-changing treatment - in some cases, life-saving treatment. There is no denying that more Tasmanians are sicker, with more complex conditions than ever before. But what is missing, and has been missing for so long, from this Government, is a recognition of why this is - not only that we have a problem, but what can we do to really fix it?

Most Tasmanians do not want to be sick enough to need surgery or hospitalisation. Tasmanians want to be healthy, to be supported by their government to maintain good health, to prevent these problems in the first place. And yet, we still have very little in this Budget in preventative health or early intervention measures. It is more of the same, and will result in the same poor health outcomes for too many. Tasmanians deserve better.

In ambulances, we have heard from the member for McIntyre - Madam Deputy President herself - of an incident she described where a constituent waited three hours for an ambulance that didn't turn up.

Just yesterday, we had Ambulance Tasmania operating at Surge Level 4 which, for members who do not understand those surge levels, is its highest escalation level. That is all hands on deck. That is what would normally happen if we were faced with a disaster. That is paramedics being called to come in on their days off, and paramedics being instructed not to spend a minute longer with their patient than they absolutely need to, because they have to move on to the next one. It is not good enough, and it is not working.

In mental health, there has been some excellent work with the sector to design an integrated mental health system, a system that focuses on wellness and early intervention, on community-based care, rather than acute care in a hospital setting. But we need to see a commitment from this Government to match this planning and design work with funding and with real action. This year has impacted on mental health and wellness in unprecedented ways.

Community organisations have stepped in and stepped up to respond to the increase in demand on their services. Many Tasmanians are struggling with the increased stress and anxiety that so much of us are feeling this year. This year has impacted on our mental health in ways, and at a scale we have not seen before, and I hear there is much more to come.

This was an opportunity to imagine a new future for Tasmania, a better future than we have lived through not only in this past year, but also before. Homelessness during a COVID-19 pandemic is unacceptable, but it should be unacceptable at all times. Thousands of Tasmanians living in poverty is unacceptable during a pandemic, but it should be unacceptable at all times. Unemployment at 7 per cent rising to 8.5 per cent is unacceptable during a pandemic, and it is unacceptable at all times.

This was our opportunity to be bold, to do things differently, better than we have before; to look at where we were vulnerable and to address those vulnerabilities; to better prepare us to face crises in the future; to create a fairer Tasmania - an opportunity that has sadly been missed.

[4.39 p.m.]

Ms ARMITAGE (Launceston) - Madam Deputy President, overall this is a macro budget which focuses heavily on broader economic inputs like emphasising infrastructure investment, generating investor and consumer confidence and providing incentives for business to stay open.

In the extended period since the Tasmanian Government handed down its last budget a great many factors have drastically changed the way we live, work and look after ourselves. The human and health element of the coronavirus pandemic has clearly been the driving factor around every health and economic policy the state and federal governments have enacted. This is the way it should be and few would argue otherwise.

In times such as these it is easier to look at our circumstances in a vacuum and, not unreasonably, to panic. However, it is clear that the better we get a handle on this virus, the better and more quickly our economy can recover and return to normal. We should have a great deal of confidence in seeing, for example, how well and quickly the COVID-19 outbreaks have been handled and suppressed. With the recent news about the outbreak in South Australia, I believe we can draw further confidence from the swift action taken to implement quarantine measures and contact tracing in the last few days. So too, with how impressively the outbreak in Victoria was contained and suppressed within a matter of months.

It is undeniable that the Tasmanian Government's quick handling of the virus here has led to better outcomes than was originally anticipated. For this we have to thank not just our Health department, director, minister, secretary or the Premier, but also the Tasmanian people who understood how significant the threat was and responded accordingly. It was only together we were going to get through this and if the last 10 months or so are an indicator of things to come, we have much to be optimistic about.

To the Budget - I understand we are to see a moderate return to surplus in the financial year 2022-23, although I am cautious of forward Estimates by nature. That being said, what we have with this Budget are steps to move towards something resembling getting back to normal. To this end I am glad to see the incorporation of the recommendations from the

Premier's Economic and Social Recovery Advisory Council into the Budget overall, but I will speak a little more about this later.

The Government has been clear that this Budget is focused on supporting employment, returning confidence in our economy, supporting the community and rebuilding a stronger Tasmania. There is a lot involved in these undertakings and the Government should be ambitious in its approach to repairing the state's affairs. It is no surprise then to see the Government prioritise simplifying and fast-tracking planning processes in order to keep our construction industry ticking along. The passing of the Building and Construction (Regulatory Reform Amendments) Bill back in June, for example, was a step in the right direction. The Tasmanian building and construction industry employs more than 20 000 people and the multiplier effect is even greater when you take into account its impact on the associated employers up and down the service and supply chain, which all depend on the state having a robust construction industry.

It is entirely appropriate that the Government also explore the Keynesian option of creating supply by enacting building and construction works to stimulate the economy, incentivise private investment, create jobs and promote ongoing and sustainable capital works projects. Legislative frameworks must contain the right settings to most effectively channel our precious resources and eliminate unnecessary red tape. The Tasmanian Chamber of Commerce and Industry - TCCI - Road to Recovery paper emphasised the significant impact that workforce changes have had on the economy and the resultant need for new skills and knowledge for a robust workforce.

It goes without saying that we need to be listening to our businesses when they tell us what they need in a workforce, and it is incumbent upon the Government to tool up our education and training sector to ensure people are workforce-ready. Now as we look to regenerating our economy, it is more important than ever that we have the right people with the right skills in the right place at the right time, and the most crucial period will be the next 12 to 18 months.

The chief executive of the TCCI, Michael Bailey, has also indicated that there may have been missed opportunities for restructure and reform, that long-term sustained growth should be the goal, supported by a range of further measures to continue supporting the private sector in the years to come. Reducing input costs like power costs and existing restrictions such as payroll tax need to be on the discussion agenda in the year to come. For now, the extension of the payroll tax rebate to apply to all apprentices, trainees and youth across all industry areas until 30 June 2022 at a cost of approximately \$22 million is certainly an incentive to get younger people who are particularly vulnerable to economic downturns into employment.

It is more important than ever to help our young people and learners to transition smoothly into the workforce. To this end, the provision of \$10.5 million for no- or low-cost vocational education and training courses as part of a wider initiative between the Australian Government and the Tasmanian Government to the tune of \$21 million under the JobTrainer initiative is certainly a wise use of public funds.

So, too, is the \$2 million for more TasTAFE teachers in priority industries, which I understand will focus on high demand areas such as aged care, electrotechnology, plumbing and nursing. It will be imperative this is enacted swiftly and properly in order to create a pipeline of learners to workers in the important months ahead.

So much rests on the correct implementation of these measures, including the veracity of the Budget's forward Estimates so proper engagement between the Government, the business sector and our VET institutions will be essential.

Measures such as these should not be taken in a vacuum, however, and it is incumbent upon the Government to maintain measures which make doing business easier. I understand the Government plans to continue the waiver of payroll tax on wages paid to employees under the JobKeeper program until its conclusion and providing land tax relief in 2021 for commercial property owners impacted by COVID-19.

I reiterate that the Government needs to consider how to best manage the need to maintain revenue streams, with longer term private sector support beyond this Budget and for the years ahead.

Of course, the big ticket item in this Budget is the focus on infrastructure with an investment of \$3.9 billion to be spent on roads and bridges, hospitals and the health sector, human services and housing, law and order, schools and education, tourism, recreation and culture and ICT to support service delivery.

I reiterate these are significant undertakings. There is a lot of spending in this Budget and there is much here to be optimistic about and much to generate confidence in investment and government spending. However, given the risk to Tasmania's share of money coming into the state from GST receipts to Australian Government funding and a decline in state revenue streams, it is also paramount this Budget takes responsible oversight for all the money being borrowed and spent. That is the entire point of this Budget and what underpins our plans for recovery and growth.

As of August, the Tasmanian Economic and Fiscal Update Report estimated there to be a decrease of \$146 million, with the major reductions comprising payroll tax \$76.6 million, conveyance duty \$29.8 million and land tax \$18.9 million. GST receipts from the Commonwealth Government amount to an incredible 62 per cent of the state's entire budgetary revenue. We must be careful and responsible.

The Budget Papers themselves note the risks inherent in major projects like infrastructure with issues like the availability of appropriate industries to actually undertake the work, and I am hoping Tasmanian workers are given the first opportunity, changes to the timing of project expenditure and the consequences of unforeseen delays.

The Moody's state of Tasmania report released last week says its slippage over the forward Estimates is highly likely and the scale of infrastructure spending will be difficult to deliver within the projected time frames.

Risks such as these are not limited to infrastructure, but exist below the surface across the entire Budget.

I say this not to cast a shadow over the Budget because I do not see any reason to do that just yet, even with the assessment from Moody's; however, I wish to emphasise that, like the occurrence of a global pandemic, even good planning and appropriate responses can undermine the best of efforts.

This is why proper oversight should be taking place. Here I am not talking about installing more red tape, but merely ensuring the great amounts of public expenditure, the likes of which we see in this Budget, are accurately and appropriately transparent, that tender processes are thorough and efficient and that time frames for project delivery are adhered to.

By way of example, I have for some time been trying to find out why a Queensland firm was engaged by the Tasmanian Health Service to undertake a survey for the Launceston General Hospital emergency patients rather than a Tasmanian firm, many of which I am sure are very well equipped to take on such a project.

To date I have not received a satisfactory answer and, as I have mentioned on several occasions, was insulted when the response basically stated if the Queensland firm did not do the work, it would cost substantially more for the Emergency Department staff to do the work themselves.

As reiterated on several occasions, my question was on whether Tasmanian firms had been given the opportunity. Certainly I did not have an expectation of the Department of Emergency Medicine doing the work itself, taking it away from its core business of health care.

It is risks such as these I believe have the potential to undermine the good faith in which this Budget has been handed down. Occurrences such as these fly in the face of PESRAC's recommendation to procure goods and services locally on an if-not, why-not basis. By way of further example, I also raise the issue of reports of only one-third of travel vouchers having been redeemed, with only a month left until they are no longer valid. Of course, there are many things to learn out of managing this crisis, but we should look at examples like these to make sure the vast amounts of public resources being spent actually end up where they need to go.

There is the potential of having great initiatives, backed up by very impressive amounts of public funding, becoming an illusion and our industries and small businesses suffering as a result. Now is the time to rethink and retool the state's approach to the economic prosperity. Now is the opportunity to think about what we want the state's balance sheet to look like in 20 years and to act towards making it a reality.

One of the most important drivers for the state's north has related to our population growth being a key driver of retail spending and housing demand. The October 2020 CommSec's State of the States report shows Tasmania is leading on a number of indicators, including retail spending and relative population growth. However, it has also been forecast by the Deloitte Access Economics Business Outlook report that Australia's population will be almost 600 000 people fewer by 2022 than it would have been without the pandemic.

The Australian Treasury also perceives a decline, with these reports representing the lowest rate of growth in over 100 years, the expected first occurrence of negative net migration since 1946. For Tasmania, the Budget Papers themselves show population forecasts are quite a bit less than expected which, for a state as small as Tasmania, is an issue that has greater magnitude than it might for more populous states. Forecasts show population growth is only

expected to rise by 0.5 per cent in 2020-21 and 0.6 per cent in 2021-22, down from the 1.2 per cent in 2018-19 and the 1 per cent estimated from this year.

Given that Tasmania's economic performance in 2018-19 was supported by above-trend growth in household consumption and dwelling investment, as well as robust business investment driven by the tourism sector, this emphasises Tasmania's unique vulnerability to a decline in population and visitors and the effect this has across the economy. Refocusing our efforts on these sectors will therefore be critical as we stage our approach out of the pandemic and return back to normal.

For Launceston specifically, I am pleased to see the Budget includes \$5.15 million to continue the upgrade of Launceston Airport as part of an overall \$10.3 million project. Being the gateway to the north, it is integral we present an accurately picturesque image of our part of the state to visitors and to consequently support our tourism industry and population growth.

I commend the vision of Hans van Pelt, the new chief executive of the airport, upon whom it will be incumbent to properly manage the airport and its assets in this crucial period into the future. I also wish to acknowledge the hard work and solid foundation laid by erstwhile general manager Paul Hodgen as well. It is clear that, given the vast differences in how containing the virus has spread across the world, it will be very unlikely we can expect to open our doors to international travellers any time soon.

However, there is much to be hopeful about with regard to interstate travellers, given the opening of our borders to our friends on the mainland. There is obviously much more to be done, but if we maintain this momentum in suppressing the virus and couple that with measures to responsibly entice people to visit, we will be off to an excellent start.

Keeping up consumer confidence will also be vital in the months and years ahead and the CommSec October State of the States report indicates Tasmania leads on the retail spending indicator, which is fantastic news. I note, however, there is little in the Budget by way of ongoing support for Tasmania's retail sector to keep this up.

In Launceston, vacancy rates in the CBD is a much-discussed and, frankly, concerning topic with some of our larger retailers leaving the Brisbane Street Mall and no-one replacing them. The redeveloped Brisbane Street Mall is barely two years old and fewer and fewer people are visiting. Despite this, the Launceston Chamber of Commerce has reported there have been 15 new store openings in the city in the past couple of months, which is an extremely encouraging sign. I would like to see how the Government continues to plan supporting this, as people and companies with the wherewithal to open a shop in this climate need to be supported as much as possible, given the positive contribution they make to our economy.

In recent years, Launceston has seen an unprecedented level of public and private investment to make the city more attractive and amenable. The construction of the Silo Hotel, the redevelopment of the C H Smith site and the Quadrant Mall, Civic Square and the Brisbane Street Mall refurbishments have all contributed to a quantifiable shift in the city's disposition. We cannot, however, simply construct and refresh these areas and expect them to flourish alone. Work must be done to maintain and accelerate the move towards making Launceston an even greater regional city.

As Launceston continues to move towards becoming the great educational regional city we are steering it on the way to, we will find that despite these opportunities arising, the work being done to make the inner city more liveable and attractive will be for nothing.

If the traffic issues, particularly as they relate to heavy, high-emission vehicles, remain a non-priority for the Government, urban sprawl will commensurately worsen, and the opportunities once present for city living and development will dissipate.

If we are to attract a younger demographic, we must leverage the world-class infrastructure that already exists here, not take it for granted, and not allow it to worsen. It makes very little sense for such significant expenditure to be channelled into Launceston's liveability and amenity, without also ensuring that issues like traffic flow and road maintenance detract from it. I know there are lots of plans to investigate options, conduct feasibility studies and get community input, which is an excellent start. It is time, however, to make decisions and start construction on some of these projects.

The much-contemplated eastern bypass concept to take heavy traffic out of our city is something we have discussed for decades at this point, without any real action being taken. I feel this is a missed opportunity. I am, however, glad to see some movement on the Tamar Bridge feasibility study, with millions provided in the Budget for the years to come for the Launceston and Tamar Valley traffic vision. The sooner we can get some movement towards construction, the sooner it can start being used. Feedback I have received indicates a great deal of support for this project. The Premier himself indicated that this will be one of his top priorities in the north of the state when he took up the role back in January, so it is good to see him stick to his word on this issue.

Now is the time to actually get these things done. Leader, am I correct in assuming that the eastern bypass is part of this traffic vision? Perhaps you could tell me where that is at.

I am cautiously optimistic that the \$41.1 million allocation to address and upgrade Launceston's urban water infrastructure will go some way to restoring the kanamaluka/Tamar Estuary back to something resembling its original state. This is not to say it should be immaculately pristine, but I am certainly hopeful that works on urban water infrastructure will prevent some of the stormwater overflow and raw sewage entering our waterways.

From budget Estimates in previous years, I have been advised that properly cleaning and maintaining the Tamar River would cost somewhere in the order of hundreds of millions of dollars, so while this funding is most certainly welcome, it does not seem as if it will have the ultimate outcome many people living in the Tamar Valley desire.

This issue, too, was flagged by the Premier as being one of his top priorities when he took up the position, so this follow-through is welcome, and I hope to see sustained efforts towards remediating the river. Of course, much of the work with regard to cleaning our river comes down to TasWater. It is hoped that Tasmanian employers - not just mainland companies with offices here - and Tasmanian workers are given much of that work.

We cannot forget that our state, and even the abstract notion of the economy, is made up of people. It is in the economy's best interests if people are looked after. The suite of measures contained in this Budget towards looking after health and wellbeing, focusing on education and training, as well as culture and recreation, are most welcome.

I note that the Budget, with \$2.8 million provided for sport and recreation grants, supports the ongoing viability and operations of sporting organisations. Funding of \$917 000 will be available in 2020-2021, so I am sincerely hoping that there will be enough to keep our vital sport and recreation organisations afloat, given their importance to the health, wellbeing and sense of community amongst Tasmanians.

Another thing quite close to my own heart is the provision of \$300 000 to Football Tasmania to leverage the FIFA 2023 Women's World Cup, and grow women's and girls' football in Tasmania. As one of the most widely played team sports in Tasmania, and with a strong uptake of Ticket to Play funding, which itself is receiving \$4 million over the next four years, this is a wise investment. Football Tasmania made a very compelling argument to the Government in its submission for this Budget.

Moreover, the provision of \$250 000 to the City of Launceston to progress planning for the redevelopment of UTAS Stadium, or York Park as it is affectionately known, to enable seating capacity to be increased, and for the stadium to be ready to play a part in the World Cup, is also welcome.

I would like to see the planning work expedited, however, considering the FIFA venue selection process will be taking place within a matter of months, and the opportunity could well be lost if we wait too long.

In these highly tumultuous and uncertain times, it is more important than ever that we look after our children. I am glad to see that education is receiving a boost, with the number of educational infrastructure projects being paired with the Government's focus on building and construction.

East Launceston Primary School is set to receive \$725 000 to finalise a \$4.5 million project for the provision of new kindergarten facilities, general learning areas and a multipurpose facility to cater for increased enrolments. I am pleased this project has been supported to its conclusion.

I am further glad to see a number of schools in and around the more newly developed areas around Launceston get funding for capital works. However, I am hoping that as the \$18 million implementation of the Education Act reforms are being rolled out, we will see some funding for other government schools in my electorate whose facilities could also be boosted. It is fantastic to build new schools for the areas that need them, but we should not neglect existing schools, who also feel the strain of depreciating facilities, and who should not have to wait for election time to be promised funding.

I am sure the member for Windermere will bring up Queechy High School when he speaks -

Mr Dean - I certainly will do.

Ms ARMITAGE - It is not actually on my side of the electorate.

Mr Dean - No. It is nothing to do with you.

Ms ARMITAGE - That is fine. I knew you would bring it up, so I thought I would leave that for you.

In a similar vein, I would like to get a better understanding of how the grade 7 to 12 implementation plan would be managed into the future, and will have some questions about this during Estimates.

In Launceston at least, our two major colleges have vastly different subscription rates, and as further year 11 and 12 providers enter that arena, getting a good understanding how each of them will be resourced on a longer term basis, to ensure we get the best outcomes for our teachers and students, will be very important.

Taking care of our communities is another factor that gives Tasmanians a sense of health and wellbeing.

The administration of crime and criminal justice, in addition to rehabilitating criminals, has been a hot button issue over this year. Just recently, it was reported in the *Mercury* that due to underfunding, prosecuted criminals are walking free - due to the office of crown prosecutions being underfunded. This is not an outcome we should accept in a developed country.

The criminal jurisdiction of the Supreme Court - the Budget papers indicate there was a total of 688 non-appeal matters pending as at 30 June 2020, of which 195, or 28.3 per cent, were between 12 and 24 months old.

For the Supreme Court's appellant jurisdiction, a total of 19 appeal matters were pending as at 30 June 2020, of which four, or 21.1 per cent, were between 12 and 24 months old, with none being greater than 24 months.

I should note that the papers also state that this is below the national average, which is 25.3 per cent. However, I would call this a dubious honour, considering that 21 per cent is still about one in five cases facing a delay such as this. This is not fair to our court system, those affected by crime, our police, the Director of Public Prosecutions, or those who are awaiting trial.

I note that the Crown Law budget is seeing greater investment over the forward Estimates - up from \$6.9 million in 2019-20, to \$8 million in 2020-21, with increases each year up to 2023-24.

I further note, however, that these increases are primarily a reflection of additional funding for Crown Law legal risk management - a measure to enable Crown Law to meet the increasing demand for services to the Government and agencies as a function of the greater infrastructure program being implemented by the Government. It is not greater funding to ensure the DPP is better resourced to manage a perpetually increasing case load. I will certainly be asking questions relating to this in Budget Estimates, because this should be a top priority for the Government.

Moreover, the management of our prisoners and prison system is a much vexed issue, and one I know the member for Windermere will raise.

Mr Dean - What?

Ms ARMITAGE - Prison and prisoners.

Mr Dean - Yes, maybe.

Ms ARMITAGE - Over recent months the \$5.7 million budget blowout of prison staff overtime has been highlighted equating to an average of \$16 000 per employee.

No-one would say this is an efficient way to run a prison system. Cost per prisoner per day is set to rise from \$335 per day from this financial year and this does not even factor in prisoner health costs borne by the Department of Health on behalf of Corrective Services.

The prison system has a foundation on high fixed costs, which are strongly affected by prisoner numbers, so properly managing this in concert with the high case load of the DPP will have significant effects on the Department of Justice bottom line in years to come.

I know \$3.5 million per annum has been allocated in the Budget to assist with increasing cost pressures as a result of sustained high prisoner numbers, but there seem to be some other problem in the state of our prison system, which is in much need of remediation.

The sectors hardest hit by the pandemic - health, tourism, hospitality et cetera - are ones that are traditionally female-dominated, resulting in a commensurate number of women whose jobs and livelihoods became threatened with the onset of the pandemic. It is pleasing to see the industry pipeline for women initiative with \$400 000 announced to implement measures to support industry attract and retain women in non-traditional fields and support leadership pipelines into these fields. I note the member for McIntyre raised it in her contribution.

As you mentioned with tourism particularly, with hospitality it is extremely difficult. There are a number of younger and even older women in that area and, of course, many hotels and restaurants had to close for a good number of months. There were some that simply could not hold onto the staff they had, particularly in these difficult times. Many have lost their jobs and it must be very hard particularly for people who have no other income and perhaps are single mums or on their own.

Of course, it is also difficult for males. It is not just the women, but, as mentioned, hospitality tends to be an area frequented by very many younger women.

We cannot ignore the elephant in the room of unemployment and unfortunately, this is projected to rise in the immediate future to 8.5 per cent. This is a serious problem. It would make sense then for the Government to prioritise measures not just to get people back to work, but to ensure those who will inevitably struggle will be looked after.

Unfortunately, while the focus on construction, rebuilding investor and spending confidence will help some people get back into work, I am struggling to find much in the papers by way of assistance for those who cannot.

I note the allocation of \$1.25 million for the rent relief fund for the next financial year, but nothing for the years hence. With the unemployment rate set to rise, it would be sensible for measures such as these to be funded because it would not be difficult to anticipate a future need for them.

It would be wise to not just rely on the Commonwealth Government to come through with support for these issues, because they simply may not. We are already expecting the end dates for the JobSeeker and JobKeeper payments, which are not too far away and for some this could mean the difference between being able to keep the lights on or not.

This is really an issue for those in hospitality, because I have heard from many people that a number of the businesses are still open because they are receiving JobKeeper payments for their staff and opening a limited number of days to enable their businesses to survive.

I will be continuing to monitor this issue, because people need to be considered. I am going to finish off with my favourite subject of health and will concentrate on the Launceston General Hospital.

I am pleased to see Health and Human Services are being looked after somewhat in this Budget. Most significantly, the \$79.8 million for the Launceston General Hospital, including expanding bed capacity and upgrading the car park, will provide important upgrades for Launceston itself and the region more widely.

I am further pleased to see this coupled with an \$11.9 million provision for extra graduate nurses, including 40 additional nurses for the north. There is little point in throwing money at a problem when it cannot be backed up by supporting measures like ensuring the hospital is properly staffed and furnished.

In the mid-1970s, I worked for the superintendent at the Launceston General Hospital. At that time and for many years after, the LGH was the hospital where residents wanted to work and registrars wanted to stay. Many of our current consultants who came from all over Australia started off at the Launceston General Hospital, loved the hospital and our city and stayed. This is what we should be aiming for again. For many years the LGH was considered the centre of excellence in this state and it can be again. While it is still a great hospital, I am afraid that losing various accreditations plus that constant threat - bed block, lack of beds, shortage of staff and low staff morale - all take a toll.

Having co-hosted the LGH rally in 2007 where many thousands of people showed their support for our hospital, I never lose sight of what is happening at the LGH and am continually in touch with the staff and patients. While I appreciate COVID-19 has had a major effect on the Budget, there are some areas that should not be short-changed. One area where I repeatedly seek answers is the waiting list for colonoscopies and endoscopies. I note that as at 30 September 2020, there were 1387 Category 1 patients waitlisted at the LGH, with 1111 being over-boundary by the seventy-fifth percentile wait time of 150 days.

One thing I would like to know with Emergency Department admissions and bed block, is: how many of those emergency patients that require a bed and prolonged treatment and stay have been on a waiting list for a procedural investigation that in due course, while waiting a long period, becomes an emergency? If that same patient had a procedure or investigation completed in a timely manner, it could have prevented their condition worsening, perhaps not even requiring a bed. Therefore, providing more funds for things such as investigations in the long run can be preventative health and save money in our health system.

Imagine getting a kit from the federal government for a faecal blood test and receiving a positive result. We are told often the earlier a cancer is found the better chance of recovery. If

you happen to be Category 1, the most urgent, cannot afford private health and need to go on a waiting list, with the numbers provided earlier, a person could go from a precancerous growth to removing the cancer with some radiotherapy and perhaps chemotherapy, to a much more radical procedure and a worse outcome.

I will finish off with the pain clinic. Both the north and north-west of our state have been without a pain management service for many years. I was advised in late 2018 that a service would commence in the first quarter of 2019. Unfortunately, this has not happened and a pain service coordinator has not been appointed. I note in the answer received previously that the Tasmanian Health Service has partnered with the Royal Flying Doctor Service - not of Tasmania, but of Victoria - to provide access to online telehealth appointments with a pain specialist. Perhaps the Leader can clarify why we are working with RFDS Victoria? I have other questions with regard to this service that I will put on the Notice Paper.

It has been a difficult year for everyone and governments are no exception. I believe our Premier and Treasurer has performed admirably and time alone will tell how our state fares with this Budget. I note the Budget.

[5.13 p.m.]

Ms PALMER (Rosevears) - Madam Deputy President, I will be making just a short contribution today. Our premier, Peter Gutwein, has described this state Budget as the most important budget he will ever hand down. They are strong words and they need to be because lives will depend upon this Budget, livelihoods will depend on this Budget, as will the very wellbeing of our community. Our small businesses, our schools, the culture of our cities, towns and communities will depend on this Budget, the very essence of who we are as Tasmanians.

Over the past nine months we have asked families to stay apart. We have asked business operators to completely change their structures and the way they do business and we asked them to do that overnight. We asked our children to learn at home and our educators to teach them through a screen. The lights went out on Tasmania's vibrant performing arts community as our theatres shut, with stages laying bare for months. Our magnificent tourist industry, the jewel in Tasmania's crown, brought to its knees. So much was asked of everyone and we responded, our frontline workers leading the way, our doctors, our nurses, our cleaners, our police officers.

This Budget is about more than numbers, more than profit and loss, this Budget is about the people we represent. This is a budget for all Tasmanians. Today I stand proud to be part of a team looking out for every corner of our state. No one could have predicted the trials of 2020, but as the reality of the year became clear, Tasmania certainly benefitted from this government's strong economic management. Indeed, it has been its strong economic management that formed a solid foundation, enabling us to see record support.

For me, as the member for Rosevears, this Budget is all about Launceston's western suburbs and the West Tamar region. More than ever before my community needs jobs. We all know having a job is not just about the money flowing in, it is a pretty big part, but a job gives you a sense of purpose, a sense that you contribute to your community, and that your contribution is needed, that your community needs you. This Budget is all about jobs and seeing those benefits flow to families and businesses. To that end, this Budget reflects the desire to build infrastructure of the future, the building of more homes, new schools and safer

roads. I will tell you what, as the West Tamar continues to see more and more families wanting to raise their children there, this Budget reflects the needs of my community well into the future.

More than ever we need confidence. There is no denying we have taken a hit. In some respects, there was a feeling that perhaps our island state was immune to much of the world, but that has not been the case. Well, we can have confidence because our Government went into this pandemic in such a strong economic position, holding net cash and investments rather than debt, we were in a position to provide extraordinary stimulus measures to keep Tasmanians safe. Now, we have a budget that continues with that focus. More than ever we need community. We have seen the power of what community can do. When we were forced to physically isolate from one another we had to improvise, find new ways to connect to families, to our neighbours, to strangers. Now, we have the opportunity to harness what we learned, what we achieved in those moments as we rebuild a stronger Tasmania.

As part of our plan to rebuild a stronger Tasmanian community, the Government is providing assistance to families, to businesses and indeed individuals with a range of grants. This is the best way to get our economy moving again by creating jobs, inspiring confidence and strengthening our communities. We have already delivered the largest economic and social support package across our nation per capita, which has included \$80 million towards small business support programs, reaching more than 14 000 Tasmanian small businesses. Our Premier has handed down a budget which is rebuilding the state for the decades to come, in particular through this massive infrastructure program.

Work has already begun on the West Tamar Highway, the primary commuter road corridor for residents and tourists enjoying the Tamar Valley wine route, not to mention the fact it is a gazetted B-double route. This Budget continues to support numerous projects including the site between Rosevears Drive and Gravelly Beach Road, which will see various improvements, including the widening of the road. Consultation continues to ensure we have the best outcomes for the thousands of vehicles, bike riders and pedestrians who travel this road daily. From Atkinsons Road and Waldhorn Drive - a section of our highway constituents have spoken to me about with concern, especially those travelling with caravans - will see a widening of the shoulder, resurfacing and line marking. An overtaking lane will be installed between Exeter and Batman Highway junction. At the junction of the West Tamar Highway and Motor Road, we will see works to improve site distances.

One aspect I am very excited about is the building of the Legana Primary School. This is going to be a huge game-changer for this thriving and fast-growing community which is attracting hundreds and, in the years to come, thousands of new families. Outcomes from the first round of public consultation found the community wanted it to be a hub for families and members of the community. In fact, the community has already started to shape the new school, giving valuable feedback on the features and spaces it would like included.

I was there in the public consultation, when we were able to put up on big sheets of butcher's paper what we wanted to see for that school. It included quality sporting facilities, music, drama, and creative spaces, publicly accessible recreation areas and good transport connectivity. There was also a great demand to see lots of natural light and gardens. The Government's partnership with the community and the West Tamar Council is vital in ensuring when this school opens in 2024 and our first little students walk through the door, this will be a project we are all so proud to be part of.

This Budget will also see \$100 000 allocated to the finalisation of the \$12 million development at Riverside High School, which I had the privilege to visit just a few weeks ago. This project has seen the modernisation of Riverside High to the benefit of all students.

The fight continues to see improvement of the Tamar River Estuary and for those of us who have lived along this river for most of our lives, we want a thriving and healthy river. In this Budget we see funding of almost \$250 000 over four years has been provided to continue the efforts to deliver evidence-based solutions. This initiative funds the provision of data and advice on issues of community concern, including water quality - big issue - stormwater and sediment control.

We have seen continued funding across affordable housing, in particular to my electorate, including the Launceston youth at risk centre and the Magnolia Place expansion. The member for Launceston has spoken about Magnolia Place in this place. Magnolia Place is the short-stay emergency accommodation space for women with children or on their own. Currently, it is only able to meet 30 per cent of its demand for services. The \$4.6 million will help to expand this shelter, with more homes to be built to cater for women in desperate situations. This will double the shelter's ability meeting up to 60 per cent of their demand.

Another highlight of this Budget is the additional funding for elective surgery in our major hospitals. There was no option but to stop elective surgery during the height of the COVID pandemic. Now we see the Government immediately address this COVID issue with \$45.5 million over two years - an enormous boost to our surgery capacity with an estimated 19 000 surgeries now planned for the 2020-21 financial year.

When I was doorknocking in the election campaign for the seat of Rosevears, a number of families, particularly in the suburb of Summerhill, raised this with me - their surgeries were put on hold - and I know this will be very, very welcome news to them. This is most welcome news for so many, not just in my electorate but, indeed, right across our state. I note comments from Paul Lupo, CEO of St Lukes Health, saying the funding boost in this Budget for elective surgery would go a long way to tackling some of the challenges of our community.

We also see additional funding in this Budget to support opening beds in our hospital with \$50.2 million over two years. What an impact that will have on our major hospitals - especially for me, the Launceston General Hospital. Northern Tasmania has so much to offer and support for people who call this region home.

We know tourism will play a huge role in helping us to rebuild Tasmania, our economy, support jobs, in regional areas. This is a long-term focus because when we can see our borders are open to the tourists, we want to get them in and we want to get them out to our regions. It is a really clear focus with the Government continuing its support of our major airports and, in particular, the Launceston Airport, which the member for Launceston just spoken about with over \$5 million committed towards further upgrades of this facility.

How wonderful to hear from Luke Martin, the CEO of the Tourism Industry Council, Tasmania, saying -

We welcome the record expenditure for Tourism Tasmania to invest in destination marketing and partnerships with our airlines to restore our visitor

demand quickly and ensure we can compete with other destinations across Australia.

When we look beyond the buildings and the streets in our communities, when we look to the heart and the soul of the places where we live, for me I look to the culture and our creative industries. The depth of sorrow and fear across this industry over the past months has been paramount: the beautiful creative humans who bring us live music, theatre, drama and dance; those who give us the gift of music from the floors of our pubs to our finest stages across our states; to those whose works are placed in our galleries.

This Budget provides an additional \$4 million in funding for the arts and it is just so great to see \$2.5 million of arts and cultural support to help our artists and organisations who simply are not able to make a living through the arts during the pandemic.

In conclusion, the Premier has handed down a budget which is rebuilding the state for now and for decades ahead. The Premier made it very clear when handing this Budget down -

I will not sugar-coat these challenges for the Tasmanian people. The road ahead will not be easy. There is no vaccine yet available and the pandemic continues to wreak havoc on countries around the world. Many of them are our trading partners. There are things we cannot control, such as volatility in international markets or how soon a vaccine may become available. However, what we can control is how we respond to the situation.

Well, this is how the Government has responded to the situation. Strong economic position is what gave us the strong foundation when COVID-19 hit and this Budget again reflects that same strong economic management because we do not know what might face us again and we do not know what our children might face. Thank you very much.

[5.27 p.m.]

Mr GAFFNEY (Mersey) - Mr President, whilst I normally attempt to speak diplomatically and in considered fashion making a contribution in this place, I would like to start today by being quite frank.

I do not think 2020 is a great year to be a treasurer - not here or in other states, federally or internationally. I do not think many people would jump at that job at present; obviously in spite of the Treasurer's many years of experience, the added responsibilities of the Premier's role and the onset and escalation of a global pandemic within weeks of his election have added considerable pressure and time constraints to the mix.

The Premier stated in his speech that this year has presented, 'challenges, disruption and uncertainty.'. That would be an understatement to say the least. This is the eleventh budget I have reviewed since being elected in 2009 and I cannot honestly remember another which has been so dramatically and unexpectedly affected by events external as well as internal to this state.

Last year I commented that Tasmania on the surface appears to be in a strong financial position, perhaps the strongest in many years. There is no doubt that this is at least partly due to the economic management of this Government and indeed a stronger Australian economy and as pointed out at the forums, a weakening Australian dollar.

Indeed the 2019-20 budget was presented in a prosperous and golden year for the Government. This year has certainly been the opposite end of the scale. I also spoke of budget response speeches in both places historically being an excellent opportunity for members to highlight the impact of the budget and forward projections on their electorate - the chance to highlight some positive investments and projects and also to note areas of concern in the communities we are elected to represent.

Whilst I will certainly touch on the allocations affecting the Mersey electorate in brief, I believe this year may be a year in which you can generally and reasonably be expecting that members in both places focus their attention on the Budget as a whole, and that the greater good of the state, its economy and the welfare and security of all Tasmanians would be foremost in our minds.

If there has been one positive outcome to a global pandemic, it surely must be the creative, innovative, caring and selfless ways in which our leaders, businesses, industries and the Tasmanian people have proven their capacity to, as they say in the Australian Defence Force, adapt, improvise and overcome. Businesses have reinvented themselves, whether it be premium spirit distillers manufacturing much-needed hand sanitiser, or restaurants providing hygienic contactless pickup and delivery to facilitate their continuance during a difficult period.

I have heard countless stories of people pulling together in communities to ensure that our most vulnerable and marginalised are not forgotten, nor neglected. Of course, there have been, are, and will continue to be some monumental challenges experienced as a result of the COVID-19 virus and its seemingly endless spread across the globe.

It was only Monday of this week the reports of another cluster of cases in South Australia had an immediate impact on our state in terms of access to travellers. My executive assistant who returned from South Australia only last Sunday is now in quarantine. That is great with the Estimates coming up, but I wish her well. Both leisure and business have planned employment commencements, which obviously will have flow-on effects to our local industries and agricultural sector. Our experts and health professionals are revisiting the plans and protocols developed throughout 2020 so they are once again prepared to support Tasmanians if and when necessary.

The virus and its reach appears to be unrelenting and unpredictable at times. We are not out of the woods yet and, as previously stated by the Premier and health experts, until such a time that a proven vaccine is developed and administered, there is still a long road ahead. There will be more outbreaks and perhaps the lifting and reintroduction of restrictions is to be expected. For now, this is the 'new normal'.

The 2019-20 budget identified the projection of net debt in 2023 as \$1.1 billion, attributed to the Government's infrastructure spending, lease liabilities and increased borrowings. The Treasury referred to this figure as modest and manageable. While that might have been the case in 2023, we now see a \$1.1 billion deficit flagged for 2020-21 financial year. On the surface that amount may appear concerning but it is important to look at the situation in relation to the factors that have led to the deficit, how this level of debt compares with that of the Australian states, and most critically, what planned and forward projections the Government has identified in order to once again balance the books.

I digress for a moment. From listening to the Premier last Thursday, then attending the breakfast at the casino on the Friday morning and then the dinner in Burnie on Friday evening, there was quiet acceptance by the community about the strategy and the presentation made. I found that quite heartening in the fact that there were not many questions asked about his leadership and where they had chosen to go. I thought from a community perspective that was very good.

In March this year, members in both places supported the Government's \$1 billion economic and social supports package, being touted as the largest in the country. The legislation presented was a response to an extraordinary event and in anticipation of a possibly unprecedented economic downturn in our state in terms of gravity and speed. Clearly, the Government has gathered data in regard to how these programs have impacted on the state of Tasmania and have accepted that although expensive, more investment is required to secure jobs, drive the manufacturing, building and business sectors and to work towards providing opportunities for all Tasmanians.

The reduction in the GST revenues experienced by all states and territories in Australia and the need to borrow in order to implement these plans have added to the pain experienced in the state's balance sheet. It should be noted that Tasmania's net debt is one of the lowest in the country. I heard some commentary which has suggested that the Budget has focused only on the business and the economy rather than on social issues. I do not agree that is the case. I believe close scrutiny of the Budget will reveal the amount of work done by Treasury and Treasury staff to provide allocations that provide the greatest benefit to all the departments and stakeholders they are required to support.

The Budget includes substantial investment of \$16.8 million in extending the Safe Space program, providing much-needed support for those experiencing homelessness, as well as general and mental health support, also over \$120 million for four years to deliver new housing projects. Additional allocations for TasCOSS, Closing the Gap, adult learning strategies, concession for low income households, including rates, water and sewerage and school levies and the continuation of Ticket to Play grants, which encourage and facilitate children's participation in sport. The Ticket to Play program has been hugely popular in the Mersey electorate.

It should also be noted in all areas of social need there is always need for more money and finance. Additionally, I would counter this is a difficult year, a one-off and one in which keeping our economy supported and steady, if not thriving, has to be the priority for 2021. I note the Treasurer and Premier's comments regarding the Budget's theme. He said -

This Budget unashamedly uses our balance sheet and strength to support our community, support our businesses and support our people. It provides the economic platform to create jobs through infrastructure and community investment, providing the certainty and confidence to rebuild Tasmania. The 2020-21 Tasmanian Budget is all about jobs, confidence and community.

As the member for McIntyre suggested earlier, this Budget is not and perhaps could not be a ground-breaker, these are unprecedented times. I support the Treasurer and his team's work in producing a budget with the aim of supporting jobs, confidence and community in our state. In my electorate, I noticed the Government's \$33 million commitment to the Mersey Community Hospital upgrade. This allocation is of considerable interest to the residents of

Devonport, Latrobe and surrounds. It is no secret the Mersey has become a political hot potato since the Devon Cottage private hospital of 1888 became the Devon Public Hospital in 1925. There have been numerous proposals to close the Mersey, with statements to the effect it is an expensive duplication of health services - to consider closing both the Mersey and the North West Regional hospitals and replace them both with a greenfield site hospital, a federal takeover and the subsequent return to the Tasmanian Health Service. The Mersey Community Hospital has a much-troubled history and it is this uncertainty which has caused confusion and unease within the communities.

With a University of Tasmania presence on the top floor of the hospital, the return of the 24/7 emergency department imminent, a new helipad, the use of the hospital for elective surgery and chemotherapy and a new commitment for upgrades, it would appear the Tasmanian Government has recognised the importance of the Mersey Community Hospital in our state's health system, working on the distribution of hospital functions amongst the four major hospitals to ensure the best outcomes for Tasmanians. We have to realise not all hospitals can provide all services, it is just not economically viable.

The *Spirit of Tasmania* has been departing from Devonport for many years now, and as we all know, provides a crucial link between our state and the mainland. Indeed, it could be regarded as a floating highway. This is the case for both human movement and freight. I welcome the Government's investment in the construction of the two new TT-Line vessels to ensure a large-scale ferry service to the mainland will continue for many years to come. Like many Tasmanians, we require the option to catch the *Spirit* on a motor bike, in a car with a caravan in tow, across the Bass Strait and it ostensibly acts as a gateway for incoming tourists through which they can explore our state.

Whilst there has been some concerns and media highlighting of tribulations over the building of the *Spirits*, I am trusting of the Government to ensure appropriate decisions are made for the benefit in the future of all Tasmanians. With respect to the north-west coast, which takes in the Mersey electorate, I note the announcement of the \$68.5 million for the Cradle Mountain cableway and visitor experience, \$19.4 million for the next iconic walk on the west coast, \$18.8 million for the new Penguin school catering for K to 12, and \$250 000 for infrastructure upgrades at King Island District High School.

As someone who travels them regularly, as many in this Chamber do, and fields a number of queries from constituents and visitors each year, I was really interested to read of the Government's \$2.4 billion allocation for road upgrades, which includes, over four years, \$147 million to improve the Bass Highway between Deloraine and Marrawah, \$18.8 million on the Lyell Highway between Queenstown and Strahan, and \$37.5 million spent on the Murchison Highway. As I said at the beginning, I do not mind where the money is being spent if it is for the betterment of all Tasmanians.

Having taught at a number of the schools in the local area, I maintain a healthy interest, both as a member for Mersey and as a former educator, in our primary and high schools, colleges and TAFE. There are some great things happening in the education sector in Mersey. I find it particularly pleasing to see significant investment in infrastructure in order to progress our facilities to provide modern, fit-for-purpose environments for our students.

On the back of the recent considerable upgrade and redevelopment of Latrobe High School, the Budget contains \$1.5 million for Spreyton Primary, and a \$9.9 million allocation for the completion of the Devonport High School redevelopment.

Devonport High School is approximately 30 metres from my office, Mr President, so it is a real pleasure to keep an eye on the progress of that.

I will conclude today by once again thanking the Treasurer and his staff for their diligence and commitment to the Tasmanian people in preparing this year's Budget. I would imagine the department is already working hard on the 2021-22 budget, and that the completion of both documents has been somewhat complicated by the overlap.

I look forward to starting the scrutiny process next week and drilling down further into the detail of the 2020-21 Budget.

I congratulate the Premier and the Government for their work.

[5.41 p.m.]

Mr DEAN (Windermere) - Mr President, it has certainly been a different year. There is no doubt about that. Not too many of us would have thought that a COVID-19 pandemic would have closed down the world. That is really what happened.

Obviously it closed down countries and states, but it also closed down people within the state, where they could not see their families, could not visit their families. They could not even attend funerals of family members, and so on.

It was just a horrid, horrible situation that everybody found themselves in. We hope we do not have to go through it again. We certainly do not want to.

Mr Valentine - Let us hope.

Mr DEAN - It would be absolutely tragic. We all knew this Budget would be a different budget. If you did not see it that way, you have probably lived under a rock for the last seven or eight months.

We knew it was going to be different, and the next budget will, of course, be released in another seven or eight months. That is about all it is. We will see another one.

Ms Forrest - We will do it all again.

Mr Valentine - Start the process.

Ms Forrest interjected.

Mr DEAN - Mr President, this Budget will be different as well because of the shortened period of time. I will not answer the last question.

Mr Valentine - In case it might incriminate you?

Mr DEAN - Mr President, in commencing the financial side a little, the financial commentators traditionally evaluate state budgets against sustainability. That is a level of net debt. Surplus versus deficit, and the size of the bottom line.

This year, across Australia, analysts are mostly looking at the effort of governments in supporting recovery from the most difficult circumstances for at least a quarter of a century.

In the recent past, members of parliament have had plenty of ammunition within a state budget to be critical, or complimentary of, particular strategies applied by the government. For instance, when we had rivers of gold. Remember that? Rivers of gold, flowing with the introduction of the GST - members constantly had opportunity to form an opinion about the application of those funds by the Bacon governments of the early 2000s.

I remember the various slush funds established by David Crean. For example, the economic and social infrastructure fund, which was largely, if not entirely, set up to dole out funds without parliamentary scrutiny, until after the event.

I recall very clearly the Michael Aird budgets. Budget of gold. All of this. Interesting times. They really were. Just the way it happened.

So, is this the most important budget since World War II, as the Treasurer suggests?

I do not really know, but what I do know is that the Government - particularly the Premier, and the Health minister - and the leading Health officials, Dr Mark Veitch and Dr Scott McKeown - have done an absolutely outstanding job in managing Tasmania's response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

I have not heard anybody speak an ill word of the way it has been managed, the way it has been handled.

While it has been tough - it has been tough on a lot of us, all of us - people have accepted that these things needed to be done.

I congratulate all those, and the State Controller, Darren Hine, as well.

I am aware of the time these people had to put in. A lot of us are not aware of that. The time, the hours, the nights - all that had to be put into getting this right, and the extraordinary drain on their families and on those people. They came through it well, I think. I hope.

Mr Valentine - Behind the scenes work, is it not?

Mr DEAN - Absolutely. I have been in emergency situations myself as a commander of police, and just simply as a lesser ranking officer, and it is a real torrid time. It drains people. You do not get home for nights, days on end. It just an incredible situation.

In turn, the Treasurer has framed the Budget in this low interest rate environment, which I perceive takes account of calls by the International Monetary Fund and the Reserve Bank to focus on helping workers find new jobs, supporting structural transformation towards the post-pandemic economy, and increasing borrowings as part of the fiscal support.

Saul Eslake has been mentioned here today, and I believe Saul Eslake's assessment of the Budget is about the best there is. It certainly is a good assessment, in my opinion. Mr Eslake says his assessment is based predominantly on whether the Government is doing all that it can to support a sustainable recovery from the current recession, and on whether the particular policy measures are the best the Government could have chosen.

He suggested the Government has done pretty well against both criteria, and that this Budget is an appropriate response to the circumstances the Government is confronting.

I think a look at debt as a proportion of gross state product is a useful measure, in addition to the bald dollar numbers, and it is much the same as considering our household debt as a proportion of our net financial position. An easy way to look at it, to understand this.

Again, I attribute the following analysis to Mr Eslake. Net debt forecast for 30 June next year will be the highest since 1998 in bald dollar terms, but as a proportion of gross state product, it will be about 4.5 per cent.

Ms Forrest - It is manageable, is what he is saying.

Mr DEAN - Yes, that is what he is saying. Set that figure against the highest marker, at about 15 per cent in the 1995 financial year, and it will be obvious that the debt is not in the realm of alarming just because of the quantum, and that has been talked about a lot.

People get concerned, scared, at the amount of debt, but they need to look at it much closer than that. Even by financial year 2021, it is likely to be less than at any time it was during the 1990s, and that is pretty hard to understand - but we know why.

Mr Valentine - The servicing cost is lower.

Mr DEAN - Yes, absolutely. Significantly, the servicing cost of this debt will be at record low levels. and that is what it is all about.

Mr Valentine - Sorry, I was not reading your notes.

Mr DEAN - No, you are right. I thought you might have read this. Lowest interest rates ever. The debt servicing cost in the 1990s was more than \$150 million, whereas the average over the next four years will be about \$50 million. That is not a bad figure in the context of a \$6 billion budget. It is pretty good. Really, quite good.

That places Tasmania well against every other jurisdiction, when looking at net debt as a proportion of gross state product, with Western Australia the best at over 8 per cent, because Western Australia is another country - they are on their own somewhere - and the Northern Territory the worst at 23 per cent.

It will be interesting to see the New South Wales number; I did not get it. The member for Murchison mentioned that its budget was released this morning. I am not quite sure what figure came out of being released earlier today.

But what is the perennial lead in the saddlebag? I am not sure if the member for Murchison has mentioned this; she normally always does. What is the unfunded superannuation liability?

By June next year it is forecast to be \$11.5 billion. Is that right?

Ms Forrest - Yes, that is right, but it is just a paper change, because the discount rate went from 4.5 per cent down to 1 per cent, so the value of it goes up enormously.

Mr DEAN - It just went up.

Mr Valentine - If the discount rate goes back up again, that will go down.

Ms Forrest - It will drop back down; that is right.

Mr DEAN - Crazy. About the only way that number can be tackled is if there are large cash surpluses which can then be set aside in a specific account - the Superannuation Provision Account - and that will ring loud in the ears of members who have been in this place for quite a while.

Ms Forrest - There is no SPA anymore. It has not been for years.

Mr DEAN - Yes. No, it has not been; that is right.

Ms Forrest - All right. Yes.

Mr DEAN - That is what I have been saying - it rings in our ears we would remember that.

Ms Forrest - Yes.

Mr DEAN - That is what I am saying.

Ms Forrest - There was never anything there; that is right.

Mr DEAN - Another process for addressing that unfunded liability could be asset sales but neither of the major parties, both Liberal and Labor are inclined to do that and that is fair enough. That is their position.

Mr Valentine - Just wait until 2070. It might sort of be very small.

Mr DEAN - Yes, well, you are right. It could well be.

Mr Valentine - It is a fair way out.

Mr DEAN - Yes, it is - a long way out. I have recently heard the health union suggest there is not enough in the Health budget, but I have never heard them suggest what other programs or projects should be cut in order to meet their wishes. They keep saying it, but they never tell us what needs to be cut - where we need to take money from to do that and what is going to happen.

Overall, this Budget, in my opinion, is responsible, especially in a low debt-funding environment as jobs stimulus in areas like payroll tax rebates for employment of apprentices

and trainees and youth employees is being provided and there is a strong focus on jobs and getting people back to work.

I have heard a number of commentators, economists and others refer to the fact there is a huge amount here in infrastructure spending for the year. Will we be able to deliver? Will there be the project officers available? Will State Growth be able to manage what it needs to manage? Will there be the contractors available to do this and take this on?

That will be the big question, because we will not be the only state going down this path. Other states are doing it, so it is going to be an interesting position, and I will be surprised if we can get even probably close to it.

I wanted to mention a little bit on payroll tax. I have always seen the payroll tax as an insidious tax and wonder why we continue to go down that path. It was a tax brought in about 1941 in the time of World War II when it was introduced to the Commonwealth, if you have a closer look at it. I am not sure why we need to tax employers for employing people in this day and age. I really find that difficult to understand.

I do not know who listened to a documentary program on television about five, six or seven weeks ago where there was a panel of people on it, including Gina Rinehart and a number of business people around the country. I know she would not support payroll tax - but what they were saying was, it was a tax governments really do need to take a good look at. It is a tax we should not now have.

I accept people want the best of everything. People want the best roads, the best in health, in education, in security and the rest of that and it has to be paid for. I would have thought there has got to be some other way we could get that return from the people that is needed.

Schools - the member for Murchison mentioned the Montello Primary School. I would suggest Queechy might be probably close to that. There has been a lot of work done on the Queechy school, but it is a school that needs a lot more work. Students at Queechy are still working from those original classrooms, the old metal window frames, some of which I am told are rusted and cannot even be opened. I am not quite sure how old Queechy is, I think it was built in about the 1960s. It is a very ordinary environment; I would ask some people to go there and have a look. On the other side, they have some modern rooms. There have built-ons and new buildings also, but they have a long way to go. The amenities room - I have raised this in this place many times - was condemned, or the students and all people using the Queechy facilities have condemned it, and would not use it because it is less than ordinary. It is atrocious.

Mr Willie - That is in the gym?

Mr DEAN - That is off the side of the gym. People will not use it. Students will not use it and it is a terrible situation. If it was anywhere else in a private place or business the whole thing would be condemned, in my view. I cannot see and understand why it is allowed to happen. There has been some money, probably through what Queechy has done itself and perhaps hopefully through some of my rantings and ravings as well, some small amount of money provided to go towards doing some work in that area. It is an appalling place and if you want look at it, see for yourself what it is like. It really is less than ordinary.

Health - a lot has been said on health and I do not think I need to go into too much more, other than to say if you look at the Budget, as my understanding of it, almost a third of the Budget goes towards health. That is an extraordinary sum of money and let us hope that can do something. I raised here during the State of the State address and on other occasions, I am of the view this Government ought not be proceeding with the State Service review it is doing, but ought to take a good look at what is happening in the hospitals.

I had it said to me again on the weekend, if you look at some of these archaic systems they are working with within the hospitals, some staff carrying papers around and dropping them off somewhere and picking them up and dropping them off somewhere else to look busy and the rest of that. It does need an overhaul. People who are working in these systems are saying we need to take a good look at that place. I urge the Government and the Health minister to start to take some action in that regard.

I can give an example of a situation on the weekend, and I am not going to identify the hospital, where a person close to me was admitted, for fairly serious injuries and in that hospital, it was difficult to find out what was going on. The staff kept changing over all the time. One lot were saying this has happened, the X-rays and different things have happened. The next lot would come in and say no, that has not happened. It has to be done. It went on and on.

Ms Forrest - Comes down to communication by the sound of it.

Mr DEAN - Communication breakdown and the partner of the patient was absolutely beside herself and provided information to me and my wife as to what was going on and how bad she felt for the patient. It was an ordinary situation. There needs to be work done in relation to our hospitals.

Police - the police have done okay out of this Budget. The one area I was expecting support for was to provide more help for police in the area of mental health and wellbeing. The Premier mentions the subject at page 17, and recognises the susceptibility of police to traumatic stress disorders and mental health illness. An extra \$250 000 is provided and it is to support our volunteers in emergency services. That is very important indeed.

Mention is not made of the commitment of \$6 million already made to the proactive and preventative health and wellbeing program. Is that money holding out to address the increasing case load for police alone? I am not sure if it is. This is the only profession in the country called upon to fill the gaps in other government agencies. This is occurring - I keep saying that here as well - during holiday times, weekends and during the night. As the president of the Police Association of Tasmania says -

... they are not trained in these areas, police, nor equipped to do it and it caused undue stress, an area currently significantly impacting on members.

Police are called on to do the work of so many other organisations. It is not fair, in my view, it is not right that it should happen. A good example here is the work of ambulance officers and child welfare officers and other welfare officer tasks. You only have to look at the police and the work that they are doing to support ambulances and paramedics, it is a huge amount of work. Are those people and the other organisations called on to do police work? No, because it is only police who can do police work. It is not as though police have the spare time to do

everybody else's work. An obvious fallout from all of this is that no proactive policing would be really occurring at the present time. Most of it is just reactive policing. If you talk to police on their shifts - their night shifts, their day shifts and weekends - they will tell you exactly that, that they are reacting almost the whole time to calls, to activities, to actions and not doing the proactive policing that we used to see at one stage. There used to be proactive policing done, but today, now, there would be very little real proactive policing being done.

With a small team of police - we have what, 1330 members - currently there are 94 officers on workers compensation claims, that is 7.1 per cent of the service. If you were then to remove all of those police from those numbers that are not out at the coalface, the ones that are in office functions, duties, prosecutors, forensic personnel, the senior police that have other functions, administrative duties and so on - that percentage, of course, would be much higher. They are coming from the working police at the coalface.

It is absolutely tragic that four serving members have taken their lives over the past four years. This is sending a strong message. Policing is a hard job, a very stressful job, and much more needs to be done to manage the health of these police officers. I was expecting a lot in the Budget to address this situation. No doubt during the Estimates I will be questioning, as other members will be as well. I ask that they do that.

When you talk about stress levels of people in the workforce, police are at the very top. That is the figure that has come back recently, at the very top of that. I guess having been there and done it, I know exactly what the situation is. I know just how it mounts up and gets on top of you. I still have my bad times, I do not mind admitting that, but I try to keep on top of it as best I can, because during my time there was no support, no assistance at all.

The Special Operations Group - and in mentioning this, as I always do, just to be fair and open about this, I have to declare an interest here because I have a son in the Special Operations Group. As the president of the Police Association says, and it is what I have been saying for the last 18 years, the SOG must become a full-time operation and there should be a component in both the south and the north of the state. Having SOG available to support high-risk and dangerous activities would and will reduce the stress and rigours currently experienced by members who are not trained to the level of SOG members to deal with these operations. Neither do they have the similar resources that are there and available to the SOG to attend these serious matters. They have the right resources, the right weapons, the other things they need to take control of dangerous and volatile people. It is gradually being set up but it is high time and the time line was identified, a time line like tomorrow and, yes, it is going to happen.

There is money in the Budget for, I think, 20 additional police who will work on the COVID-19 requirements who, I understand, will come in and take the place of those officers who will become full-time in the SOG over a period of time. That is a step in the right direction. Where there is an emergency the SOG response needs to be as close to immediate as possible and that is why there needs to be a unit in both the south and the north of this state. It is very important in my view that happens because when you have a matter that requires the SOG to attend, it is normally an emergency and they are normally required as quickly as is possible to be at that scene.

The president of the Police Association said in relation to this -

A full-time SOG, on a day to day basis, will greatly reduce the incidence of first responders and detectives having to undertake high risk and dangerous searches and arrests. This will now be done by the SOG with a far higher level of expertise and protection.

This was a piece in the paper and I quote -

Mr Riley said when a high-risk critical incidence occurs, first responders will have the ability to call upon a timely, effective and proportionate response from the full-time SOG to resolve the matter.

'The announcement of an additional 20 officers will provide for a full-time SOG of 24 members - 12 in Hobart and 12 in Launceston, the latter to deal with the prevalence of serious crime in the North of the State.

'When police need to call for assistance now, they will have access to a highly trained and responsive full-time SOG.'

I am not quite sure they will have that right now, but when this gets up and running that will be the situation and, sadly, much of the serious crime in this state is committed in the Launceston area unfortunately, in the north of the state. Launceston has unfortunately had the name of the crime capital of the state for quite a long time and we hope they could lose that mantle, and get on top of it all.

The member for McIntyre mentioned police infrastructure and keeping police houses in good condition and that is important. It is vital and I am pleased to see that the Budget provides money for that to happen - houses in Queenstown for instance, are a good example - the member for Murchison's electorate.

Ms Forrest - Queenstown and Rosebery, they are going to spend some money on.

Mr DEAN - In all of those areas you require good accommodation. That helps attract police to those locations as well, because most go with their family and it is important that they have the best of accommodation. I am pleased to see that is there. There is money there for the Launceston Police headquarters. Launceston Police headquarters has probably had more makeovers than Michael Jackson ever had. It had a makeover before I got there. It had a part-makeover while I was there. I know of one or two since then, renovations and changes to it. It is almost high time that they started again with the Launceston Police headquarters.

Hobart had a lot of renovations done down here, new buildings put in and the old buildings renovated right through. That was a good result. I don't know if Devonport Police Station, in the member for Mersey's area, was even older than the Launceston Police headquarters when it was, of course, pulled down, moved, then they went to a greenfields site. It is about time they took a longer and closer look at Launceston Police headquarters.

The Tasmanian Government Radio Network was well and truly on the move when I was with Tasmania Police and it will be interesting to see what comes to fruition or finishes

first - the radio network or the Macquarie Point Development Corporation. I am not taking bets on it, Mr President, I am not sure which one will end first, but they have been about for a long time, particularly the radio network. As I said, I was working on that when I was there so it has been about for a long, long time.

Prison, Corrective Services, again I am not going to labour these points because they have been referred to previously, but all I want to say is I am hoping the moneys provided to the Prison Service, the extra money, are used where it will make a real difference and real changes that will assist with the running of the prison that will assist with rehabilitation and getting prisoners back on the right level they should be on. I would hate to think that extra money is going to go into more overtime.

When you have people earning in excess of \$70 000 in overtime, something is horribly wrong. It is sending a very strong message like, 'What the hell is going on? Where is the management?' Changes need to be made so I, no doubt, will follow that up later in Estimates. It is horrendous and has been going on for years despite inquiries, recommendations and many other things happening.

What is disappointing, as I said, by way of interruption to the member for McIntyre a while back, is that our prisoner recidivism rate is - on my figures it is 56.5 per cent. The member for Elwick last week mentioned 47 point-something per cent but the latest figures are 56.5 per cent, which is very ordinary indeed. That is more than half of prisoners are continually coming back into the system. Something is wrong.

I raised here - and other people have raised it too - if you look at what is happening with the new prison they are talking about, it needs to be built totally differently to any of the prisons we have currently in the country. It needs to be built as a rehabilitation premises.

If you look at the one they have in Austria - and I guess most people would be aware of that and it is what Mr Barns might talk to us about later this week or whenever it is. He will probably talk about what is happening there and their recidivism rates have dropped from 60 something per cent to about 25 per cent because of the facilities they are working in.

These people are all introduced to trades. They even have a shop, prisons with a shopping complex in them, so they can learn and be able to run their lives as everybody else does. Also, accommodation for overnight stays from a family member - wife, husband, partner. That is the type of facilities we need. I am hoping that does happen.

The member for McIntyre mentioned the Ashley Youth Detention Centre.

Ms Rattray - That is \$6.5 million.

Mr DEAN - Yes. In my view, they should pull Ashley Youth Detention Centre down and start again. This place has had a number of renovations done over a period of years. It is built too much like a prison. It should not be a prison. It should be a secure place, of course, because there are some problems with some of the youth who come in there for a period of time, but they would be much better off to pull it down, start again and build a new greenfield site for youth - and that is probably where the northern prison or complex should be built, the rehabilitation centre should be built. That would get social licence, and I am confident it would

be supported by the people in that area as well. I am not quite sure why it has not been considered, but maybe the minister might tell us that during Estimates.

Mr Willie - If they spend that money on Ashley, they are not moving it, are they?

Mr DEAN - No, you are right. They are not.

Support for the Tasmanian community. It is good to see \$1.6 million has been made available to emergency food relief providers over two years. There is one organisation that seems to be left out of a lot of this, and probably not a lot is known about it - the Launceston Benevolent Society.

The Launceston Benevolent Society is a great organisation. It is providing great services to those people in need. During the 2019-20 financial year, the LBS gave away 1038 food parcels to people in need. They are continuing to service these people with furniture, and with other things as well, so I am hoping that an organisation like the society can get some further support from the moneys that are made available. I am hoping it just does not go to City Mission or to Salvation Army, that they get all of this money. I hope it is proportioned through the other organisations involved as well.

I am going through these in no order, but just a couple of other matters.

Family violence. I did not see too much emphasis on family violence in the Premier's speech, but \$2.7 million has been provided for family violence. What will it do?

Ms Forrest - It was the extra COVID-19 response just for that.

Mr DEAN - This year we had 3576 family violence incidents recorded. That is three less than for 2018-19. We had 2328 family arguments - 49 less than last financial year. Family violence is not really decreasing, and until we start getting really serious about it and treating it as a crime, it is unlikely to decrease, in my view.

We had a session last week on strangulation -

Ms Forrest - Non-fatal strangulation.

Mr DEAN - Non-fatal strangulation. I thank the member for Mersey for organising that. It was an interesting session. However, I have real concerns when we start differentiating in different methods and ways of family violence. I really do have some concerns with that. Any family violence should be indictable, in my view.

I see it this way. What we are doing, by identifying and singling out particular actions of assault to be indictable, is to really say to those perpetrators that, if you are going to assault your partner, do it by punching them. Do it by some other method. Do not do it by some form of strangulation, or attempting to strangle. Do not do that, because that is an indictable offence. That is a crime, and you will do time.

I think that is what happens. It is if you attempt to strangle, use a stranglehold when you are assaulting people.

I think what they were saying, in this session we had, was that you would go to the Criminal Court. That is fair enough, that is good. But if you assault them in some other way, it would be seen as a more minor offence and probably finish up in the Court of Petty Sessions, and what have you.

I really have concerns with that. I understand what they are getting at, but we need to be very careful we do not create a monster or other problems as a result of doing that.

Ms Forrest - There are monsters out there, that kill women.

Mr DEAN - There are monsters out there. You are right. Absolutely right. I could not agree more. It is a despicable crime. I just get upset and annoyed because we are not decreasing the incidence of family violence.

It may be working to some extent, but it is not working the way it should be and the way we would like it to. We just have to do a lot more.

The electorate of Windermere - we have a lot of things happening there. I have talked before about Bell Bay and its importance to this state. In fact, Bell Bay, as we know, and I will just repeat again, produces about 59 per cent of Tasmania's man-made exports in its manufacturing output. There is a huge amount of work going on in the Bell Bay area at this time. It is an important area to this state. It is, of course, very important to George Town.

The Bell Bay site has no permanent residents living there at all, but the daily workforce at Bell Bay is around 3000 people, who converge on the Bell Bay site daily.

Mr Valentine - Are you saying no permanent residents?

Ms Rattray - No permanent residents?

Mr DEAN - People do not live at Bell Bay in the precinct itself.

Ms Rattray - They live in George Town.

Mr DEAN - Not in the Bell Bay precinct.

Ms Rattray - I used to live in George Town.

Mr DEAN - No, George Town has a population of about 5000. It is a very important part of this state.

TEMCO, we know, went through a bad period a while back when it was offered for sale. At one time it was suggested it might close, and all of those things. The smelter now employs about 250 people, whose jobs are now understood to be safe. The company had been looking at whether to mothball, sell or close TEMCO due to a shift in global markets. South32 confirmed in a statement - and we all would have read that statement, or some of us would have done - that it entered into a binding agreement to sell TEMCO to GFG Alliance. It is great to see that has occurred, and that is going through the processes as I understand it. Great news for George Town.

I was right, I had the notes here - the resident population of Bell Bay is zero, absolutely zero.

The Bell Bay Port of Launceston, again, is one of the four publicly owned ports in Tasmania. It is the port that moves the most bulk freight volumes in the state. In 2018-19, the port moved 4.26 million tonnes of product, and approximately 61 per cent of these products are produced at, or destined for, the adjacent Bell Bay industrial estate.

This is also the port that was planned to receive around four cruise ships later this year.

Ms Forrest - Let us hope not.

Mr DEAN - That is, if cruise ships start sailing again. I am not quite sure what the position will be there. It is great.

Bell Bay is critical to this state, and there are lots of other businesses operating there now. The employment there, with the hydrogen plant that is likely to come online with - what else did we have there? - the woodchipping plants. There are just a number of them occurring in that area. It is a great spot.

I wanted to mention Definium Technologies. I have raised it here before. Definium Technologies is an advanced manufacturing company. It won the Pearcey Foundation award. The award was founded in 1998 in memory of Australian ICT pioneer, Dr Trevor Pearcey, and it recognises the entrepreneur of the year in ICT.

I urge people, if you are in the Launceston area, go and have a talk to Mike Cruse, the managing director, and have a look at Definium Technologies. It is worth a look to see the equipment and the technologies they have, and some of the things they are doing.

Their philosophy is not having a client come with a solution, but to have them come with a problem and we can solve it. That is their philosophy, and that is exactly what they do. If you have a technology problem, or an issue you want to work through or get on top of, you take it to them and they will work out the solution for you and build the equipment for you to do that.

Currently they have a big contract in America and also one on mainland Australia. Some big contracts - Definium Technologies at Invermay.

I will just mention the mountain bike path being built in George Town. That is happening and is going to be about 105 kilometres in length when finally completed.

Ms Rattray - I am exhausted thinking about that, let alone riding it.

Mr DEAN - A sum of \$4.4 million has been already available to the George Town Council made through the Commonwealth Government. Today's council meeting dealt with a part of this to approve certain parts of it. It covers the Mount George and Tippogoree Hills, in that area. It covers quite a big area.

Another good thing about this is they are going to reuse the RSL building, as you drive into George Town, which has been vacant for a number of years, on the right-hand side. They

are going to develop that into a mountain bike hub area, where people will come into that centre. I think they propose to have a coffee shop there. They propose to have other activities in that centre also. They are hoping to use it also as a training area for TAFE students. They are trying to work on that. We will see the RSL club once again, up and being used. That is a good part of this cycle track.

When we look at these mountain bike tracks, I will ask the question probably of the Minister for Sport and Recreation next week regarding the number of crashes occurring on these mountain bike tracks.

Ms Rattray - I can help you out there. The air ambulance arrives at Derby at least every weekend.

Mr DEAN - There are many crashes. I was told our Tasmanian Chamber of Commerce and Industry leader was airlifted out of there by helicopter.

The Latrobe mountain bike track has had its number of crashes, I might add. I am aware of one from the weekend. In fact it happened to -

Ms Forrest - People getting their ambition mixed up with their capability.

Mr DEAN - Right. In fact, it happened to be my son who crashed on that side, about a kilometre or 2 kilometres from anywhere on the track. They had to get him out of there. I think he walked out. He is still in hospital, I might add. He has four broken ribs, badly broken ribs. He has a collarbone broken in two places. They just pinned that today, and he punctured a lung.

Ms Forrest - Who are you talking about?

Mr DEAN - My son.

Ms Forrest - As I say, maybe ambition and capability.

Ms Rattray - I suggest the member takes the bike off him.

Mr DEAN - It is interesting. He probably will not like me mentioning this here. His little five-year-old daughter, Elly was talking to her nan yesterday and she said, 'Are we are going to sell his bike?'

Mr PRESIDENT - Maybe you should install one of those special seats like you have.

Mr DEAN - The previous member for McIntyre, or one of the members for McIntyre, that special seat he has on his bike.

There are a lot of crashes on those tracks and it would be creating some problems.

Mrs Hiscutt - Before the member moves on, I respectfully ask whether it was the intention to finish at about 6.30 p.m? If the member only has five minutes, please feel free to continue, otherwise you might consider adjourning the debate. I am happy to adjourn if you have more to do.

Mr DEAN - Mr President, I have slightly longer than that to go, so I move -

That the debate stand adjourned.

Motion agreed to.

Debate adjourned.

ADJOURNMENT

[6.29 p.m.]

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

That at its rising, the Council adjourn until 11.00 a.m. on Wednesday, 18 November 2020.

I remind members of our briefings tomorrow morning, starting at 9 o'clock. We will run through those three briefings. It is my intention to do those three bills tomorrow because I need the third reading done on Thursday. I will not move Standing Orders to adjourn that. We will do those three bills tomorrow, then we will move back into the debate on the Budget, beginning with the member for Windermere. Depending on our finish time we might even move back to the Thursday morning; we will play that by ear tomorrow night.

Motion agreed to.

The Council adjourned at 6.31 p.m.