



PARLIAMENT OF TASMANIA

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

REPORT OF DEBATES

Wednesday 23 June 2021

REVISED EDITION

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Wednesday 23 June 2021

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

MESSAGES FROM THE HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

Committee Appointments

Mr PRESIDENT - Honourable members, the following messages regarding committee appointments have been received from the House of Assembly:

Joint House Committee

Mr President,

The House has appointed the following members to serve on the Joint Committee of both Houses known as the House Committee to control Parliament House and grounds including catering for Parliament: The Speaker; the Chair of Committees; and Mr Winter.

Mark Shelton, Speaker
House of Assembly
22 June 2021

Joint Library Committee

Mr President,

The House of Assembly has appointed the following members to serve on the Joint Committee of both Houses to manage the library: The Speaker; the Chair of Committees; Dr Broad; Ms Dow; Mr Ellis; and Mr Tucker.

Mark Shelton, Speaker
House of Assembly
22 June 2021

Joint Standing Committee on Integrity

Mr President,

In accordance with section 23, subsection 4 of the Integrity Commission Act 2009 No. 67, the following members have been appointed on behalf of the House of Assembly to serve on the Joint Standing Committee on Integrity: The Speaker; the Leader of the House; and Ms O'Byrne.

Mark Shelton, Speaker
House of Assembly
22 June 2021

Public Accounts Committee

Mr President,

In accordance with the provisions of section 2, subsection 2 of the Public Accounts Committee Act 1970 No. 54, the following members have been appointed on the part of the House of Assembly to serve on the Parliamentary Standing Committee of Public Accounts: Ms Ogilvie; Mr Street; and Ms White.

Mark Shelton, Speaker
House of Assembly
22 June 2021

Subordinate Legislation Committee

Mr President,

In accordance with the provision of section 3 of the Subordinate Legislation Committee Act 1969 No. 44, the following members have been appointed on the part of the House of Assembly to serve on the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Subordinate Legislation: Mr Ellis; Ms Finlay; and Ms Ogilvie.

Signed

Mark Shelton, Speaker
House of Assembly
22 June 2021

Public Works Committee

Mr President,

In accordance with the provisions of section 3, subsection 2 of the Public Works Committee Act 1914 No 32, the following members have been appointed on the part of the House of Assembly to serve on the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works: Ms Butler; Mr Ellis; and Mr Tucker.

Mark Shelton, Speaker
House of Assembly
22 June 2021

ADDRESS-IN-REPLY

Continued from 22 June 2021 (page 9).

Mr WILLIE (Elwick) - Mr President, before I start today, I acknowledge the traditional owners of the land upon which we are gathering and pay my respects to elders past, present

and emerging. This land always was, and always will be, Aboriginal land. An acknowledgment of country is about respect and recognition of Tasmanian Aboriginal people's survival and continual connection with the land spanning more than 50 000 years. It is quite remarkable that all of us are lucky to share in and be proud of one of the world's oldest continuing cultures.

I was very impressed with the Premier's words yesterday, particularly about land hand backs and treaty and I hope those words come to fruition and that reconciliation can be advanced during this term of parliament.

Mr President, in congratulating yourself and the member for Windermere yesterday, it was remiss of me not to congratulate the member for Mersey on his re-election unopposed. I put that down to him slipping under the radar without the fanfare of an election. The fact that he was unopposed is a testament to his work in this place. I am proud to work with him and I look forward to that continuing.

Whilst I am at it, I also extend my congratulations to the new members of the House of Assembly: Janie Finlay, Dean Winter and Kristie Johnston.

It feels a lifetime ago that we were participating in a similar debate to this during the Premier's Address in March. The issues I discussed during that debate remain - issues like poorer employment and wages than the rest of the country. Wages in Tasmania are \$12 000 below the national average, a gap which has grown by \$1000 since the Liberals came to office.

We have the worst ambulance response times in the country and we are all aware of the terrible ramping that occurs outside our hospitals almost on a daily basis. We have the longest surgery wait times in the country. Tasmanians on the public and social housing waitlist are waiting 53.9 weeks to be housed. The housing waitlist stands at 3813, an increase of 75 per cent since the Liberals came to government. Part of the reason for this is that they have failed to live up to their commitments in this critical space.

In 2014 they promised 900 new homes which they did not meet. In 2018 they promised 1500 new homes which they did not meet. In 2021 the promise is 2000 new homes and I think we know what happens next. In our child safety system, too many kids and families are not allocated a case worker within priority time frames and, just like ambulances, we have the worst response times in the country.

For the December quarter 163 children had not been allocated a case worker within recommended times. In this space we have also had the ongoing debacle around the Brahminy Program. We are still keeping Tasmanian children in the Northern Territory, in some instances with no or very little contact with their families.

Ms Forrest - And no indication when they are coming home.

Mr WILLIE - Exactly. In our justice system, of the adults released from prison 47.1 per cent of them returned within two years. That is nearly half. In this area of government we have the ongoing saga that is the northern prison. Will it ever be built and will it be a best practice model that helps rehabilitate offenders? They are key questions. We need to make the community safer by reducing offending.

Then there is the ballooning debt and budget position that, according to Treasury, is not sustainable over the long term. That is where I will focus much of my attention in this address, in particular the recently released Fiscal Sustainability Report.

I am also pleased to report to the Legislative Council I have been reappointed shadow minister for education, together with other responsibilities, including sport and transport.

I will talk about education today. Arguably, education and fiscal sustainability are the greatest long-term challenges of our state. Internationally renowned Finnish educator, author and scholar, Pasi Sahlberg, has a strong, often-quoted message to education policy makers. Pasi was here during the state election endorsing our school lunch policy. He says:

Always ask yourself if the policy or reform you plan to initiate is going to be good for children or teachers. If you hesitate with your answer, do not do it.

The Tasmanian Liberal Government has taken to the last part of this message with unbridled enthusiasm, do not do it.

In fact, apart from a woefully misguided determination to transform TasTAFE into a government business enterprise - which will be bad for students and teachers - they will not be doing very much at all this parliamentary term in the vital education space, or providing Tasmania's next generations with the best possible start. That is despite Tasmania having the lowest year 12 retention rates of any Australian state, dipping to 73.9 per cent in 2020 compared with the national rate of 82.1 per cent. That is despite containment rates for year 12 students declining for the third year in a row to a low of 58 per cent, significantly poorer than the national average of 72 per cent. That figure remains the same as 2008. This is despite NAPLAN's figures showing over the past decade Tasmania has gone backwards in half of the indicators across grades 3, 5, 7 and 9.

It is public knowledge and often discussed that a shocking 48 per cent of Tasmanians are functionally illiterate. What that means is the reading and writing skills of almost half the state's population are not developed enough to enable them to read, digest and understand the documents people engage with on a daily basis. It is equally astonishing that recent mathematical testing in the program of international student assessment indicated that Tasmanian students are up to four-and-a-half years behind in schooling compared to their peers in other countries.

What is the Liberal Government plan? In short, there is not one. In the Liberal's policies released in the lead-up to the May state election there was no additional support for mathematics. In fact, there was no mention of mathematics at all in their policies. In the weeks since a newly minted Education minister, Sarah Courtney - and I congratulate her on that very important role - has appeared before television cameras a handful of times. It is clear there is no urgency to address the staggering inadequacy which has seen Tasmanian children leave the classroom without the fundamental ability to map out a rewarding future.

To address our shocking literacy rates, the Liberals have a commendable and ambitious goal that by 2029 no government school students would enter year 7 without being above the national minimum standard for reading. This is something the Labor Party supports. However, the Liberals' commitment to hire 40 literacy coaches does not reach nearly far enough. It lacks ambition and is vastly inferior to the Labor commitment of 357 highly trained teachers that

would work within a three-tiered instructional model Dr Lisa Denny described in the paper today, in her opinion piece.

It means the Liberal Government is unlikely to achieve its 2029 goal. They are also not going to require schools to undertake phonic screening checks in a mandated way. As I said the other day in *The Examiner* - actually I said this on Twitter - schools will accept the mandated check if they are actually given the resources to respond to it, and that is the problem.

We have been bombarded with targets before from this Government but have seen no true action. Before the 2018 election the Liberals claimed that by 2020 Tasmania would be at or above the national standard in every single NAPLAN measurement and meet national benchmarks in reading, writing, maths and science. The COVID-19 pandemic saw NAPLAN cancelled in 2020 but there is zero chance that they will achieve this goal in 2021 because they have not provided the interventions required.

Conservative estimates say that each year in Tasmania about 500 children start high school unable to read and another 1000 have extremely poor reading skills. This is a social justice issue. You cannot access the curriculum if you cannot read. You cannot read about a science concept, you cannot read a worded mathematical question. There are too many kids starting high school who do not have these foundational skills and we know what happens: from around year 5 to year 10 there is significant disengagement. In all cases the literacy skills of students have been identified but not addressed before completion of primary school. When the Government has already employed 80 literacy coaches to little effect, what impact will 40 more have? Students who are falling behind need intensive support and that takes significant resources.

The statistics I have quoted are in spite of teachers' expertise, hard work, and care for their students and there are many extraordinary teachers in our system. Anecdotally, I am hearing from a lot more of them and the struggle that they are facing each day. The member for McIntyre had an excellent opinion piece in the northern paper the other day on that particular topic and she is obviously hearing the same thing.

Ms Rattray - It is very challenging - even a message overnight.

Mr WILLIE - Yes. One of the greatest challenges I deal with in my office, actually, as shadow minister is the pressure that our school students are under in terms of lack of support, parents and teachers. At the end of the day, the teachers and the school staff can only work within the policy decisions and funding of the Government.

The Premier, Mr Gutwein and the former minister, Jeremy Rockliff, did not seem to understand that it is an investment in students, teachers and support staff, not politicised investment in new buildings, that helps students learn, and that is the crux of their policy.

After Labor announced a neglected schools fund to repair and rebuild critical school infrastructure that has been ignored by the Liberals for the past seven years, they ran around the state dishing out much needed and much required funding for schools like Montello Primary - and I know the member for Murchison has raised this issue in this place, along with myself, and in the media - Exeter High School, Lauderdale Primary, which has had huge capacity constraints, and Cambridge Primary.

A cynical observer might see the politics in that. Why did it take an election campaign for them to finally deliver the money for learning spaces that were well overdue in these communities?

The Liberal Party election commitment in education was a major disappointment. Once you get to the bottom of the document, it becomes obvious how little the Liberal Party values education. For the next term of government there is just \$14.9 million of state recurrent funding, \$13.9 million in bilateral funding - this is additional - and \$105 million for capital funding. This is a major portfolio of the Government, a key area to drive future prosperity, and that is the investment commitment.

I wish the new minister, Sarah Courtney, well and I will certainly hold her to account for what little promises there are because unless she can lobby her colleagues and Treasury for greater investment, very little is going to change in this space in this parliamentary term. Nothing will change to improve education outcomes for children, which in turn can improve other social indicators in health, housing and justice. There is every chance the gap will continue to widen when we should be throwing the kitchen sink at improving education outcomes for kids and Tasmania's future prosperity.

The next topic I will address is the Fiscal Sustainability Report recently released by Treasury. It is the third report of its type, there being a bonus one in 2019 to clarify outcomes and to introduce different measures after questioning from the Public Accounts Committee; we were fortunate to have two very long-serving members of the Public Accounts Committee asking questions. The report also provides the long-term perspective on the state's fiscal outlook under a range of scenarios. It covers a 15-year projection period that includes the 2020-21 Budget and associated three years of the forward Estimates.

Treasury prepares the report in accordance with section 14A of the Charter of Budget Responsibility Act 2007. The report considers the state's finances under four different revenue and expenditure scenarios. Any way you look at it, it is far from good news. The four scenarios are historical trends, forward estimates, high expenditure and low revenue. The pre-election financial outlook report published in April demonstrated an improved outlook for the Tasmanian economy and for key fiscal indicators from the figures in the October Budget. However, page 2 of the report states that Treasury cannot use these more recent figures because they are not presented in the same level of detail as a budget.

Using those existing figures, under every likely scenario over the next 15 years, spending will exceed income. The three major indicators used are the net operating balance, the fiscal balance and net debt. As John Lawrence explained in a recent opinion piece in the *Mercury*, two are measures of annual outcomes - the deficits each year. Neither include all of the spending. The operating balance excludes capital outlays and the fiscal balance includes infrastructure outlays, but not government contributions to government businesses. Both measures exclude significant payments to retired members of the Defined Benefits Superannuation Scheme, which will increase over the next 15 years.

John Lawrence suggested the third measure, the cumulative measure of net debt, should be the message and the measure conveyed to the wider audience because it includes all of the spending, operating expenses, infrastructure spending, investment into government businesses and payments to retired public servants.

Ms Forrest - Some of us have been banging on about this for years.

Mr WILLIE - Yes. Some of us have not been around as long.

Based on historical trends over the past 10 years, net debt will reach \$20 billion in 15 years' time - \$20 billion. It is projected under the historical trend scenario, a two-percentage point increase in debt-servicing costs over the projection period would increase the annual debt servicing cost by approximately \$612 million in 2034-35. That is a lot of doctors, nurses, teachers, police, frontline workers simply going in annual debt-servicing costs. In a high expenditure scenario, those annual debt-servicing costs would rise to approximately \$859 million. There will be some departments of government that would not require that much money to operate. Treasury states all scenarios are manageable in the short to medium term, however, it does say that the size of the corrective action required to maintain fiscal sustainability increases over the projection period. In other words, the problem becomes larger and much harder to resolve over time.

Ms Forrest - Which is exactly what they said in the last fiscal sustainability report and you would remember being on Public Accounts Committee. They just keep banging their head against the same wall.

Mr WILLIE - I joined PAC as that updated report was released. In direct conflict with the Premier's statements, it is not possible to rely on economic growth to maintain fiscal sustainability because many of the state's revenue streams are not linked to state-based economic outcomes. The current budget revenue breakdown is as follows:

Total general government sector revenue for the current year is estimated to be at \$6.4281 billion. Of that, GST payments to Tasmania are expected to be \$2.2123 billion. In 2020-21 Tasmania will receive an estimated \$1.8051 billion payments for specific purposes. Total state taxation revenue is \$1.2206 billion. Goods and services \$433.4 million. Fines and fees \$102.2 million. Dividends from government businesses \$413.1 million and other revenue \$177.9 million.

As you can see from the breakdown Tasmania's most significant source of funding is grants revenue including GST revenue and Australian government payments for specific purposes which comprises 66.3 per cent of the total revenue in the 2020-21 Budget. State-owned source revenue accounts for 36.7 per cent of total revenue. The Premier is wrong to say that economic conditions mean our finances are strong.

Ms Forrest - It is completely contrary to what Treasury says.

Mr WILLIE - It is just plain wrong. The report states there is no single solution, for example, constraining health expenditure - it would be a brave government to do that at the moment - but will require a range of measures. This ominous statement is contained within page 8 of the report:

Early action to correct fiscal deterioration will mitigate the severity of the measures required to effectively maintain fiscal sustainability.

Mr President, reformist government is not a term you would use to describe the last seven years of this Liberal Government. What the report and the Premier's comments in relation to

it show is this is a Government currently living beyond its means with an intent of passing the problem to future governments. Even on the presumed Government's preferred measurement using last October's budget projections as a starting point, there is an operating deficit of around \$500 million per annum. Under that scenario net debt is projected at \$16 billion, and this would be the preferred measure for the Government by 2034-35 also under the forward Estimate sittings.

Yes, GST is being revised up and obviously giving the Government some comfort in the short term but that is going to be swallowed by election commitments and it is exposed to significant risks. The states growing dependence on its share of GST is also a risk. Under all scenarios modelled by Treasury the GST share of Tasmania's total revenue rises from 37.4 per cent in 2019-20 to a minimum of 40.3 per cent by 2034-35 and possibly as much as 43.3 per cent under the forward Estimate scenario under page 29. There are two reasons behind these risks. Saul Eslake says:

While projections of revenue from GST have been revised upwards over the past six months, historically that is a relatively rare occurrence and it is likely a temporary factor because of the overseas travel ban and the redirection of people's spending here at home which people have to pay GST on.

The other risk is that Tasmania has been sheltered from changes to the GST sharing arrangements that was implemented by the Morrison Government but the protections will expire in 2026-27. These changes will ensure Western Australia does not receive less than 75 per cent of what it would otherwise get under an equal per capita distribution. In layman's terms that means Western Australia will get a greater share at the expense of the other states.

Ms Forrest - Because the federal Liberal seats are very important.

Mr WILLIE - They probably need those ones because they do not have many state ones left. In summary, the Fiscal Sustainability Report states that corrective action will need to be taken. According to the report and the projections within it, we are far from sustainable. Based on the current comments from the Premier, we will continue to see a lack of reform and no acknowledgement of the problem during this term of government. That approach is effectively saddling future generations with difficult decisions and mountains of debt. They might not be able to enjoy the same level of services we do now and, as I highlighted at the start of my contribution, there are serious issues in key areas of government already.

I was pleased to be appointed to the Public Accounts Committee again yesterday. No doubt I will spend a significant amount of time on this issue over the term of parliament, along with the issue of education. In my view, these two issues are the greatest long-term challenges for our state. I am sure the member for Huon might challenge me on that statement - it is what it is.

Education and budgets might not always get the headlines like health and they may not always be sexy to talk about but we need parliamentarians of all persuasions and community leaders to push for change. I know many of us are supported by the community to do just that and I look forward to the challenge.

[11.32 p.m.]

Ms RATTRAY (McIntyre) - Mr President, it is my honour to second the motion that was put forward by the member for Elwick. We had a conversation about that and, given that it did not really matter who moved it and who seconded it, it did not take long to sort that out.

In doing so, on behalf of the people of McIntyre, I offer our congratulations to Her Excellency, the Honourable Barbara Baker, on her appointment as Governor of Tasmania and extend our best wishes for a successful tenure. I also acknowledge and thank our former governor, Professor Kate Warner AC, and her husband Dick for their dedication and commitment to Tasmania and wish them a wonderful future as they head back to New Norfolk.

It is my privilege to speak to the Governor's Address following the opening of the Fiftieth Parliament of our great state. In doing so, this process is part of the practice and custom of the Legislative Council that the next two members up for election move and second the motion.

It also brings home to me and, I expect, the member for Elwick, that our elections are less than 11 months away - the date being 7 May - as we prepare for a busy year ahead. Not long, it will fly, I know it will.

Speaking of elections, I congratulate you, Mr President, on not only your re-election as the member for Derwent, but also as your re-election to the role of President, well deserved. You should be extremely proud of your efforts. I look forward to working with you in your roles over the ensuing years and beyond, if I am fortunate as you to be re-elected in 2022.

To the member for Mersey, a wonderful and not unexpected result to be re-elected unopposed given your work in the electorate and your stellar efforts in taking through the end-of-life choices legislation. Congratulations and all the best for the next six years.

I also extend my congratulations to the newly elected member for Windermere and wish the member all the best in his new role, and offer any assistance and advice you should choose to take up. I certainly genuinely offer that support in any way I can. I have already given him a couple of tips this morning, when, after he is able to speak - I think tomorrow afternoon is the maiden speech - I look forward to hearing a little bit more about the member for Windermere and what he sees as his role and aspirations.

Mr President, we did not have an opportunity, given that it was quite an unexpected call of election, to acknowledge the former member for Windermere. I certainly congratulate Mr Dean on 18 years of service to the parliament, to the people of Windermere and, more generally, all Tasmanians. Mr Dean had an extraordinary work ethic. He was here first up of a morning. I have taken over the seat he sat in for, I believe, 17 years.

Ms Forrest - He would not move.

Ms RATTRAY - He never moved, no. I have taken over that seat, a move from this side to this side. I am starting to feel like there is not a seat in this House I have not sat in at some stage. I am happy to keep moving around if that is what it takes to stay. I look forward to offering a contribution. It will never be in some areas as fulsome as the former member for Windermere, particularly when it comes to policing matters and justice. But I hope I have listened hard enough over those 17 years that I took on board a number of areas he was always forensic with when he spoke to legislation and particularly drilled down into those clauses.

Mr Valentine - No one can doubt his commitment.

Ms RATTRAY - Absolutely not.

Ms Forrest - Are you telling me you are taking on the fox issue?

Ms RATTRAY - I do not believe I will be taking on the fox issue as hard. I say that with the greatest respect, again because of his extraordinary work ethic. He never let it die.

Wild fallow deer is something we need to be more focused on, particularly in those rural communities. I will be looking for the Government to give me some feedback about what they are doing in regard to addressing that really serious problem. When I drive around the electorate at night I see wild fallow deer on the road where I have never seen them in my previous 17 years. There are no second chances when you hit one; you pretty much lose the front of your car. It is not a pretty sight.

To the newly re-elected Liberal Government under the leadership of Peter Gutwein, on behalf of the people of McIntyre, I offer my congratulations and wish all members of the Government and the team all the best for this term of government. It is clear from the election process there is a lot of work to be done across many areas of responsibility. I intend to speak about quite a few of those during my contribution today. I listened to the member for Elwick when he talked about education and I will touch on some of that as well. It was interesting to hear his comments about the finance area as well. The member for Murchison will be pleased to have that really inquisitive mind when it comes to that area because she has always excelled in that area. I am sure she will appreciate that, as will we all.

I take this opportunity to acknowledge those former members of the parliament, Alison Standen and Jennifer Houston, who will not return to the parliament and offer them both my sincere best wishes for where their future journey takes them. Alison was a strong contributor to the work of the Subordinate Legislation Committee. During the suspension of parliament through the COVID-19 time when the Subordinate Legislation Committee continued its work examining the notices that were being issued, Alison was a valuable member of that committee and this needs to be acknowledged. I wish them both all the best.

I acknowledge the new members as well, Janie Finlay MP, Kristie Johnston MP and Dean Winter MP. He got a wonderful personal vote first time up. I am sure he and his support team and family would have been very proud of that.

It is also important for any government that there is a strong opposition to challenge and provide a contest of ideas. I extend all the best for strong and constructive scrutiny to all House of Assembly opposition members, that being the Labor members, the Tasmanian Greens and the Independent, Kristie Johnston.

It is clear from the reams of data available and the general media commentary that Tasmania is doing well in areas such as population growth, building and construction work, just to name a few.

Vehicle registrations are doing okay but it does appear that a Dodge Ram is the flavour of the month, which will equate to an increase in fuel consumption by the look of the size of the vehicle. I heard briefly a couple of days ago, they are around \$90 000. These big utes are

very popular and they are taking as long to arrive as any other vehicle. It is virtually a six-month wait for a vehicle to come into Tasmania at the moment if you have one on order; if you are lucky to have something available that you are willing to take, it is not so much. If you want something specific, like a colour, or a few extras, then it is around a six-month wait. People are choosing, we cannot travel overseas so much, so perhaps holidaying interstate, around the state or buying a new car.

Mr Willie - Boats, caravans.

Ms RATTRAY - I do not think you can buy a caravan; they are like gold at the moment it is very busy. They might be buying fishing boats - I might find that out tomorrow when the member for Windermere makes his contribution. He will know what is happening in the boating world.

When I see the figures for the building industry I am not surprised. It is very difficult to find anyone in the building industry who is not booked up for around six to 12 months. Even landscaping is a six-month wait for somebody to come do landscaping. There are so many opportunities. Try to find a handyman or a handyperson, almost impossible.

We certainly do have some things happening in Tasmania. I had a look at the employment figures for Tasmania's industry sector by number of people recently as I was preparing this contribution. That data shows there have been significant increases in health care - in terms of number of people in that industry sector since 2011, over a 10-year period - and education. There has been a much smaller increase in a few of the other areas. Retail trade has declined. This may be related to online shopping, the way we sometimes buy now. That is perhaps to the detriment of retail. I know that in the city of Launceston, a number of store locations are no longer there. They have either pulled out or gone out to the suburbs or were duplicated in the suburbs and have decided that one premises in and around the city of Launceston is enough. Scottsdale is no different. The member for Launceston and the member for Rosevears may support me in that observation.

Deloraine is a little bit different. As far as I am aware, only the jewellery store has closed its doors more recently but everything else is going reasonably well. It is always difficult to get a car park in the main street of Deloraine. It is heartening for the local member to see that it is a busy place.

Mr Valentine - Especially outside the op shops.

Ms RATTRAY - Absolutely. There is nothing wrong with preloved.

The graph I was looking at showed increased employment of people in the agriculture, forestry and fishing industries - quite a considerable increase since 2016 and about a halfway increase from 2011. That is a good sign for those industries, and it is certainly positive from my perspective. I am very interested in these industries, as are the people who live in the McIntyre electorate and beyond.

Moving on to employment by industry, again I looked at Australia versus Tasmania in relation to accommodation and food services. We were doing better than the rest of the country, which is not surprising - people are staying home, and also still eating out, still travelling around. Possibly half of Tasmania has been to Bruny Island over the last 12 months. Every

second person I talk to says, 'I have just had a week in Bruny Island and it was fantastic'. I am sure Bruny Island has been feeling the love. Sometimes the love can be a bit overwhelming for some small communities. I know my Flinders community has also felt the love, with people going there. I acknowledge the former member for Windermere, who has the Flinders community well and truly in his heart. Some of the Flinders Island community may not be keen on having every man and his dog over there at the moment, but I know plenty of businesses are very pleased.

When I have driven in and out of Bridport at various times, I have noticed the number of cars in the grounds of Flinders Island Aviation, as well as Sharp Airlines in Launceston and Frank further out past Barnbougle. There must be plenty of people on the island because otherwise their cars would not be sitting in the car park. Again, it is terrific those places are getting the attention they are. We just have to make sure we support the businesses to grow and meet the needs of those visiting. Often, as the member for Windermere would know, Sunday on Flinders Island, around Whitemark and Lady Barron is pretty cruisy and not much open. If you do not have your loaf of bread and whatever you think you might be putting on it the day before in your supplies, it is going to be pretty tough to find anything. We have to make sure people are well prepared for that and send the right message to get your supplies on Saturday by lunchtime or else know somebody in the area.

Again, retail trade Australia versus Tasmania is neck and neck on this graph I have. In construction, Australia is doing a little bit better than Tasmania, but we know there were a few years when the building and construction industries were perhaps at a lull and generally not taking on as many apprentices. It might well be people in the industry do not have the qualified amount of construction people they need to deliver and meet the needs of the boom at the moment. I am hoping there are a lot of new apprentices, particularly tilers. I have said it before in this place and will say it again, they are like gold, you cannot find them. It is really difficult to pick one up, particularly if you live outside the CBD of Launceston and Hobart, probably Devonport and Burnie also. If they have work 10 minutes away from their home they are not going to travel an hour and a half if they can get out of it. They would rather have something closer to home. You cannot blame them when there is so much work on offer.

Interesting on education, it talks about employment in the industry sector. We are doing a little bit better than the Australian figures. I am not sure where those jobs are and what sort of roles people are filling in that area. I do have some concerns about our education system and the real pressure on particularly the teaching fraternity. They can only do their job with the support of the people around them, the people who clean, the people who work in the offices, the support personnel, just like this place. We could not do our job without the people who support us. I congratulate Mr Rockliff who has taken over Health. I will be interested in having more conversations with the new minister Ms Courtney and the Government on where these positions are within the education system, because it says we are doing better than Australia itself.

Health care is always a debatable situation. We get some really good stories about our healthcare system, then we get the not-so-good stories. Of course, there is always somewhere in the middle that is probably the fact. In his contribution, the member for Elwick talked about the ambulance wait times. It is something I have feedback on from the communities I represent. You will get a horror story: someone waited five hours from 4.00 a.m. for an ambulance to arrive. There is one stationed in this particular town but they were on a 4.00 a.m. break so could not attend. They had to wait for one to come from Launceston. I found that really

interesting and it was quite distressing for the family. Surely with some of these issues if someone is there and they are not on a sleeping break - I am not sure how the ambulance service works - wouldn't you grab your cup of tea, have a gulp and then get out the door? Perhaps there are some other reasons why that ambulance could not leave their depot and get 500 metres up the road and collect this person who needed ambulance attention and ended up in hospital. It was not a false call. It was not something that they did not need to call the ambulance for.

I have touched on vehicle numbers already. I actually have some registrations so it might be worth putting them on the record. I apologise to members because my contribution might be a bit longer than would normally be the case. However, I did not make a contribution to the Premier's Address in March. I have probably coupled mine all together, so I have a bit of what I had ready and I have added a bit in as well. I will not apologise for representing my electorate; I hope members will stay with me on the journey.

In April 2020, and we know that was pandemic time, new vehicles registered were 3022 and in the same month in 2020-21, 5440. So I reckon 440 were those big Rams. That is a significant increase. Even an increase of around 1000 going back to March of this year, 5980. People are choosing to upgrade their vehicles and that is a good thing because as we know, new vehicles are safer than any of the older ones. Every time you get an upgraded model on your vehicle you will find another safety feature or another airbag.

We can only be pleased that that is the case and we hope as a community that those safety features help prevent injury and death from accidents. These can be super traumatic, not only for family but for those people who attend those events. Your heart goes out to the ambulance officers who arrive, the police, the SES and the fire brigade who turn up to those significant events, and wonder how they go home and try to rest after that. I have no comprehension of how they might do that but I extend my sincere thanks for the work that they do.

I am always interested in vehicles. I do not own one myself any more but I had the pleasure of driving something that I always feel very safe in. I feel a lot safer after the nail comes out of the tyre, that it was spotted after I had arrived in Hobart on Monday afternoon. Thank goodness there are some people looking out for us around this place. It is up at the tyre place as we speak having some new tyres fitted. I am thankful to Mr Scott Wiggins for taking notice of what is going on with my car.

Our population is growing with the annual growth rate to the end of September 2020 of 2.1 per cent, and this is consistent growth over the past 10 years, and that equals 5284. This figure includes the natural increases of Tasmania which is great, albeit at this rate it is going to be a long time before we reach the magic million number which has been so often talked about especially by the former premier, Mr Hodgman. He often talked about the magic million. We are still quite a way off it.

We welcomed a new great nephew to our family just a couple of weeks ago, little Henley; he is just gorgeous. We are very happy to be helping the increase in population in our family.

As I said, Tasmania's growth was 2.1 per cent, and the national growth rate is 1 per cent per annum of Australia's 0.9 per cent. That equates to more interstate arrivals than departures by 1213 over the past 12 months, plus a net inward overseas migration and natural increases. People are choosing Tasmania, which is great to see. I am not sure how that will affect the

housing situation in our state. We already know how tight that is. I will talk about that later on in my contribution.

Certainly, if people come from interstate they have often been able to secure a much higher price for their property, come to Tasmania and we still probably look quite affordable. People even have some change in their pocket if they come from somewhere around Sydney or some of the bigger areas, where they have managed to sell a million-dollar property, pick up a \$500 000 or \$600 000, which is significant in our state, and perhaps have some money left over to put towards their retirement or whatever they might do.

It is swings and roundabouts really, isn't it? Then it puts pressure on our market if you have someone who is able to pay that higher rate. I noticed on Facebook last night, when I arrived home and did the usual ritual, had a look to see what was happening elsewhere, that somebody who I know in my home town had put their house on the market. It sold within four days and for \$50 000 over the asking price. In the good old days, if it said offers over \$399 000, I would probably have offered \$400 000. Recently, with offers over \$399 000, a friend offered \$465 000 to secure a home in West Launceston. She is thrilled to bits with her purchase.

Ms Forrest - They are selling for that price in Wynyard.

Ms RATTRAY - They are offers over. Think about our kids getting into the market. I know that your family has been fortunate and got into the market, but there will be some of our families who are probably wondering how they will ever get into the housing market. It is hard yakka for people. Certainly, those people are picking up those prices, but then if they are looking to buy somewhere else it is going to take that extra \$50 000 to buy, isn't it? We know that but that is what is happening.

Mr President, additional information from the population and employment and domestic information I have is that the unemployment rate is up but the participation rate is down. This is for Tasmania, the highest of all states. Seasonally adjusted from 5.9 per cent to 6.2 per cent, the participation rate is down from 61.8 per cent to 61.3 per cent and the under-utilisation rate down from 15.4 per cent to 14.7 per cent. When those figures were released in May the trend rate of underemployment data was unavailable. It is interesting to talk about the female rate being up and male rate is down. Whether the female workforce is getting back into the swing of things from the COVID-19 situation -

Ms Webb - It depends what kind of jobs they are.

Ms RATTRAY - Yes, that is right. When I talked about figures, increased numbers in the employment industry, I said health care. Obviously, aged care because I know a lot of people who have been picking up work in various aged care facilities around our communities. I see that is predominantly female employees. There is an odd male person wandering around, but generally more of the female gender are working in the aged care facilities and it is possibly something we will talk about at another time.

On the negative side of reporting it shows employment is down. In May 2021, the participation rate is down and unemployment is up to 6.2 per cent, the highest of all states. Is that the underemployed factor or fallout of the pandemic? Is there an element of lack of desire to take on work which is not the preference or the type of work some people are seeking? And we often hear that - I don't want that job, that's not what I want to do. In my day, and I know

it is going back a while now when I was looking for work, you took what you could until you found something else you felt was more suited. Now, I am not sure that always happens but I do not necessarily have a lot of evidence to support that statement.

As I said, you may be able to secure a job but there are very few options - if any at all - for housing in so many areas around the state. I have already touched on the housing issue. I have said this before in this place, you are lucky if there are one or two rentals in some of the rural towns. They are just not around. You cannot get a rental property. They come through my door because, for some reason, people seem to think I must have access to somebody's house and might be able to get them a rental, but it is just not the case. The hoops you have to jump now - particularly through a real estate agent - and they have every right to be particular about who they choose to put into a rental property especially when there is such a high demand. I will touch on housing and the challenges being faced across McIntyre a little bit later.

The next area I was planning to touch on is industries where the jobs have been won and lost between 2016 to 2021. There has been job gains of around 18 000 in Tasmania and the biggest portion of the graph I have in front of me is health and then about the same amount in forestry, fishing and agriculture, education obviously, and public servants. They are the gains in those biggest areas.

The job losses - around 5 000 between February 2016 and February 2021. Interestingly, job losses are right across the board in property, financial, media. Obviously with a lot of that, there was not much activity for 12 to 18 months. That could change when we have a look at the next lot of graphs. Manufacturing, just a bit in wholesale, quite a big portion in retail and a small portion in transport. They are all interesting figures. There was a loss around science, technology, engineering and mathematics of some 3.77 per cent. That was one of the areas that showed a loss of jobs, which was disappointing. As we know, when there is not so much activity then, perhaps, engineering falls away. Although, I know of a number of businesses that certainly seem to be fairly busy. If you want a spud trailer built, you have to get in line. You cannot just walk in and say, 'Here is my deposit, am I looking at it in the next two months?'. I know about a grain trailer that has been on order for about nine months - not actually built in Tasmania, but from the mainland - and that is taking nine months. You would not want to be holding your breath.

I will now turn my focus to issues, concerns and the delivery of election promises and some general comments following the recent election result. I recently read in one of our dailies under the hot topic section, a call for health and education to be governed by an independent commission, thus removing them from the political process. The call went on to suggest a commission would not be beholden to political persuasion and would need a guaranteed level of funding which should result in effective, constructive and well-informed decision making.

This suggestion drew my interest as I recalled the many times, particularly through the budget scrutiny process where members, namely the member for Hobart and the member for Murchison amongst others, have spoken about the benefits of having long-term plans where election cycles cannot alter or derail the long-term strategic plan. Think about the benefits of a long-term strategic plan - for example, the redevelopment of one of our 213 public schools assessed and identified as requiring an upgrade.

Ms Forrest - Or a complete rebuild.

Ms RATTRAY - Or significant redevelopment or a full new build. Funding is approved, planning takes place, work commences and is completed - all on a priority need basis without any election commitments. How good would that be?

Mr Willie - That was our commitment.

Ms Forrest - Were you going to get rid of the pork barrel?

Ms RATTRAY - I am but one vote as a Tasmanian. We have heard from the member for Hobart about this concept - that you have a 10-year plan and the election outcome does not derail the plan. People then have hope, they know their turn will come. It is not about whether you live in a marginal seat, or pork-barrelling; it is about priority need and certainty that our community's time will come. If this process was a normal and accepted practice, I am sure that for many projects - whether a new build, a redevelopment or an upgrade - having the confidence in the established process would in my humble opinion remove the politics. That would be well received and generally accepted by the community as a legitimate, 'without influence' process.

A 10-year time frame for a strategic plan has often been put forward as being reasonable. I know the member for Hobart supports that time frame. This covers the usual four-year election cycle, with the exception of the rest of the House of Assembly which fell short of the March 2022 required date by 10 months. It may be worth having that conversation, as there has been a call for the expected four-year term to be legislated. That would eliminate the opportunity for a government of the day to call an early election. I do not know whether that is to the mind of any of the parties in the other place, but it is food for thought. There might be a notice of motion sometime.

Perhaps the other place would like to take some notice of this place. A long-term strategic plan would be beneficial for road infrastructure. For example, if the road between St Helens or Priory through to Ansons Bay and beyond was going to be sealed in that 10-year plan, you would think, 'We are a priority. We are not cap in hand to the federal government trying to get a few dollars out of this or that bucket.' You know your turn will come. I know the benefit of the road being sealed between the Tomahawk turnoff and Gladstone. I recently went out there to join a come-and-try day held by the Gladstone fire brigade. I signed up as a social member - I think that is an inactive member.

Mr Gaffney - Was that before or after?

Ms RATTRAY - It was during. Travelling on that road between Bridport and Gladstone as a sealed road meant I did not have to borrow a ute to get out there. Previously, I have quite often had to borrow a ute to go over the Mathinna Plains Road to get from the north east over to Fingal or Avoca. Perhaps I should have a ute but I prefer a sedan or a small SUV. It made such a difference, such a difference to the enjoyment of travelling around the state. If I am enjoying it, what about visitors to our state? They would just love it. I would very much like to see that 10-year strategic plan put in place and complied with by incoming governments.

I referred to health and education as the two major issues. The health system is certainly front and centre in the minds of Tasmanians. I trust the newly appointed minister, Mr Rockliff,

with his many years of experience, including as a former shadow of the minister for Health, will be exploring the many suggested changes to the delivery of health services in this state to better meet the needs of our communities.

That is a tall order, to say the least, and one I expect will not be entirely addressed in the short term but I trust it will happen in the medium to longer term. Surgery waitlists are one of the most confronting aspects of measuring the health of Tasmanians. It is difficult to see the significant numbers on those waitlists decreasing without a lot of change.

I spoke to the member for Huon last night about some of the very good initiatives that were put forward by Labor in the run up to the recent election and said here is an opportunity to work together. I have also spoken to the Minister for Health, I just happened to collar him in the car park a few weeks ago. I congratulated him on his new role and talked about some of the initiatives put forward that I genuinely saw as a positive way of addressing some of the health concerns around service delivery we have. I trust there is some good will from both sides.

Acknowledging that - I heard on the screen this morning before parliament resumed, the independent member for Clark, Kristie Johnston, said she wanted to support good ideas and good initiatives no matter where they come from in the parliament. Tasmanian Greens, independent, Labor and Liberal, all looking out and wanting the best for Tasmanians. Let us work together when it comes to health.

Interestingly, there was an article in *The Examiner*, 14 May, referring to a report compiled by the Gratton Institute warning of the death of private health unless the federal government takes serious action to prevent rising premiums and implement controls over specialists charging - not my words - unreasonably high fees. It goes on to state that Australians are paying more but getting less, with private health insurance premiums rising faster than wages and inflation. Most of us would have heard our friends or relatives and/or constituents talk about dropping private health insurance and relying on the public system for their healthcare needs. This in turn will put even more pressure on the overloaded health system.

Turning the health system around, reducing waitlist numbers and times will need a full and concentrated effort from the minister and his department and certainly, some conversations with the federal government. If they continue to lose the numbers of people who are not paying private health any more, then it has to put more pressure on the public system. I cannot see any other way. I will provide that quote to *Hansard*, I have it tagged up ready to go.

Mental health - I want to talk about the lack of qualified health providers to work in this important area. I was recently invited to be a panel member for a presentation by three year 11 and 12 students at one of my schools. They provided a well researched presentation about the lack of services people were facing in the communities. This is a more rural community - that is pretty much what I have - but certainly outlying from the cities. They gave some examples of taking three weeks to see a GP in their area, where they live, for a basic healthcare appointment and weeks and months for mental health service.

These are year 11 and 12 students. We know the pressure of young people and what they deal with on a daily basis. They need support. As parents or support people in the community, we do not have the skills. I do not have the skills. If somebody comes through my door and says they cannot access mental health services for themselves, their children or somebody they

know, the best I can do is ring and call somebody or contact the minister's office or some of the services that are available. If you are waiting three weeks for a basic GP healthcare appointment, and in this particular instance, a young person was wanting some birth control, well three weeks might be too long to wait. We know what the consequences are of that particular situation.

Ms Forrest - You can buy condoms straight away.

Ms RATTRAY - You have to have someone willing to use those as well. I am not making any judgment about this but I am saying there is a consequence. It is unacceptable to have to wait up to three weeks for a basic GP healthcare appointment. I am relaying the message that I received from a well-researched - and they also provided me with the details, real examples, of their lack of services in this community. I have contacted the new minister because I want to work towards a better outcome for this. It is important that these young people feel supported, or anybody else in our communities.

I congratulate them for their work. They were very nervous and they did an excellent job. As members would expect, I sent back an email a couple of days later and asked their teacher to pass on my feedback about how impressed I was with the fact that they invited me and that they wanted to share the research that they had found. They put together a great little leaflet that they wanted to leave around the community so that at least people had some contact numbers that were quickly available when people were in need. I take my hat off to them and I wish them all the best. I hope to go back to see how they are progressing, three great young people.

Moving on now to education. The education union and I have an article from one of the small but meaningful papers in my electorate that I subscribe to, 'education union claims schools are missing out on extra teachers'. It named a number of northern-based schools, and I will not read them all out, but it talks about the shortfall in dollars - and this is from the education union - and then also equivalent to how many teachers a school is possibly missing out on because of the funding for education.

The Deloraine Primary School, \$2.8 million, which equates to 8.3 teachers; Deloraine High School, \$2.1 million funding shortfall; Hagley Farm School, \$2.7 million which equates to 8.1 teachers; Launceston College, \$11.4 million which equates to 34.1 teachers; Prospect High - not in my electorate but people from the McIntyre electorate possibly have students there - \$3.5 million, 10.5 teachers; Mole Creek Primary, small but a fantastic little school, \$413 000, which is a lot to a small school, 1.2 teachers. Imagine what 1.2 teachers extra in a school like Mole Creek can deliver. It might be a music lesson, it might be an art class. I do not know what they are but I found it interesting that the education union had done some figures, had a quantum, then equated it to the number of teachers that the funding would deliver to a school.

If that is across the north of the state, imagine what it is across the rest of the state. They were just some that were highlighted in this particular article. We need to support our teachers and our teachers need support from within. Perhaps we also need to better educate parents and carers about their responsibilities. The stories I hear sometimes when teachers make contact with parents and carers and get at the end of the phone, 'not my problem, they are in your care'.

I know I am showing my age a little bit here, but I would not dare have wanted the school to be ringing my parents. I would have been grounded for I do not know how long if they received a call to say that I was being disruptive or was not applying myself.

Ms Forrest - Didn't your parents ever get a call like that?

Ms RATTRAY - No.

Ms Forrest - You have not lived.

Ms RATTRAY - Certainly not for being disruptive and that type of thing. Obviously, at times I think we have all had that line on your report 'could do better', or 'not reaching their full potential'. Everyone at various times might have had that. I am looking around and nobody is nodding, oh my goodness.

Mr Valentine - I might have to go back to the books to have a look.

Ms Forrest - They report it differently now. It is like this child is overly sociable, or something like that, it is very nice.

Ms RATTRAY - It has been a while since I have had a school report. Perhaps I should ask my grandchildren if they would like to share their school reports.

Mr Willie - Through you, Mr President, I have worked with a teacher who taught me. When I was moving some things around home I found a school report that she had written about me, saying that I distracted the class. I brought it into school and she said, 'nothing has changed'.

Mr PRESIDENT - And nothing still has changed.

Ms RATTRAY - The member for Elwick talked about the opinion piece that I wrote in last week's *Examiner*, Friday it was published. I have received a number of contacts from various people in the community, not just people who work in the education system at various schools, but people who have contact with our education facilities, just talking about the concerns that they have about the way that things are operating in some of our education areas.

I have shared this with people who I feel may be able to assist. I do not have the answers, you would not expect me to have the answers. At least I want to reach those people who are in learning services and the minister's office who have the answers to these things, or at least some solutions that might be put in place. Otherwise I feel like we are going to lose some very good teaching, professional teachers, through the system. That is going to put a lot of pressure back on teachers who are just one, two or three years out. There needs to be a really good hard look at some of those facilities.

I would be very surprised if there are not other members in this place who have also received phone calls from time to time about some concerns that they have within that. We want those learning places to be the best they can. We want the best for our students, we do. I think we all do. That sets up their future, it is so important.

While I am in the area of education I would like to progress the need for a new classroom at the Scottsdale school farm. This school farm, like many others across the state are so valuable to the students, especially in those rural areas. I want to touch on the fact that under the fine leadership of the agriculture studies teacher, Kylie Rattray-Cassidy - yes, Kylie is related, she is my cousin and does a wonderful job at the school farm, particularly with the Stronach View stud cattle and the fantastic cattle-handler students who compete and do extremely well at events.

The current classroom facilities at the school farm - you will know Mr President - consists of a small cottage repurposed for classes or in the shed used for storage and inclement weather events. It is certainly not adequate and up to the standard of other school farm classrooms. Mr President, you would be well aware of that classroom at the school farm and not much has changed since your time down on the farm.

There are some designs put together and I look forward to working with the school, the farm students and support people along with the Department of Education and, most importantly, the minister, Ms Courtney, to progress this vital addition to this important facility for our rural students in the north-east.

The Sheffield School Farm has the most fantastic facility and when the students from this area go to the other areas and see what they have, they are feeling pretty dejected about how their classroom and learning centres look. But that has not impacted, as I said, on their cattle-handling ability and their Stronach View stud cattle but they deserve the same quality of infrastructure.

Moving to the St Helens Police Station, finally receiving a \$7.5 million funding commitment to establish a new police station at St Helens is great news. I have put 'good' and now have changed it to 'great'. Surely, my long-time advocating has contributed to this announcement - it was not mentioned but I am sure it was. This will include a designated secure area for the marine rescue vehicle which will be a much better arrangement than parking the vessel on the nature strip beside the council offices. The member for Windermere has seen it many times and he is probably thinking, why isn't that in a decent shed? It is a significant vessel. Gosh, he would be struggling not being able to add a contribution in my speech, wouldn't he, but there will be plenty of time. That is fantastic news and I congratulate the Government on finally making that announcement.

Break O'Day Council offered up the land. It is a greenfields site adjacent to the hospital. It puts all those services together and I believe Break O'Day is keen to take over the existing police station building and perhaps expand their offices because it will make it a more effective and efficient place.

Anyone who has been to the St Helens Police Station - and I expect not many of you have visited it unless you were just popping your head in to say hello, I hope you were not there too long and questioned in regard to any matter - it is like a rabbit warren with tiny little cubicles and not at all productive for working conditions for our police officers, so, well done.

I recently did a drive-by to see how the new Longford Police Station was progressing, albeit I have been reliably informed there are some delays around the supply of building materials which from all accounts is an issue right across the building industry.

There was a bit of media about how it was progressing quite well, so I look forward to being on the invitation list for the opening of the new Longford Police Station, when that is. I have been missed off a couple of invite lists lately and leading up to an election, you get pretty anxious thinking, why was I not on that list?

Ms Forrest - It does not only occur then, it happens all the time that we do not get invited to stuff. This is the federal government and the state is the same.

Ms RATTRAY - Often they say it is the feds that do the invites, but surely they ask the state who needs inviting?

Mrs Hiscutt - It is not only Independent members.

Ms RATTRAY - It is not very hard to have a look at the Tasmanian Parliament of 40 members and work out who belongs to what electorate and send them an email. Emails are pretty quick and effective. We do not need glossy invitations, we just need an email.

Ms Forrest - We do need a bit of notice though.

Mrs Hiscutt - Sometimes it is an instantaneous or the day before thing, so have a little bit of leeway.

Ms RATTRAY - I am sure an event such as the redevelopment of Ashgrove Cheese, a significant event, was organised earlier than two days beforehand.

Industry is certainly experiencing a very busy time with the shortage of available tradies. A good problem for the industry, not so good for those wanting to progress a project. I look forward to Longford Police Station moving along fairly quickly.

Housing, is becoming more and more of a challenge for all Tasmanians and those in the McIntyre electorate are no exception. Real estate prices have gone through the roof, excuse the pun, and while this might seem like a positive, that is only if you are selling and not if you are a first-time homebuyer trying to enter the home owners' club.

I read a recent article around resolving the housing crisis which I assume Shelter Tasmania sent around to all members. Thank you to Pattie Chugg who does a wonderful job for Shelter Tasmania, advocating on their behalf and those in Tasmania who are looking for housing. She suggested five priorities for 2021 when it comes to housing and talks about a comprehensive Tasmanian housing strategy, recommended by the PESRAC committee, that prioritises social and affordable rental housing and includes a housing focus in all policies approach; commits to an ongoing and sustainable funding to enable the homelessness sector to provide support and tenancy services to meet increasing demands across Tasmania; commits to affordable housing in all neighbourhoods, including an infill development in established inner city suburbs and measures to ensure the local government planning schemes and infrastructure, power, water, sewerage do not delay the delivery of affordable social housing, and talks about setting a time line to strengthen, reform and modernise the Residential Tenancy Act to improve conditions in the Tasmanian rental market.

There is a lot of expertise in Shelter Tasmania and I suggest the Housing minister meets with these groups and really nuts out some of those initiatives that are going to be so important.

There certainly needs to be more land available for development, whatever that looks like across council areas. Just because there is existing land identified for a subdivision, it does not always equate to blocks being available. An owner has to be in a position to want to develop land and if this is the case then more land should be identified to meet community need. In one particular area I know well, there are a number of blocks available earmarked for housing development but the owner does not want to develop them at the moment. There is this problem because the Planning Commission says, no you cannot have any more land for developing because you already have some. You have to use that first. That is all right. They are not paying for the development. It is not cheap to develop and you have to have the funds to do so. It is a bit of a catch 22 here.

I am really keen to explore this situation a little bit further and work out what we can do about putting more land into supply for developers who are willing to develop. They might not be able to buy the person who has 10 acres and I know that is the case in one particular area that I represent. There is a 10-acre property, one house on it, earmarked for subdivision and the owner does not want to develop it. You cannot make them.

As far as I am concerned that is off. You take that number off, 35 or whatever it might be - it might even be more. It all depends how big the block sizes are and you need to look at something else that is available. Otherwise how are we going to build more houses to meet the needs of the Tasmanian community and those who are choosing to be Tasmanians?

In my paperwork I had the pledges for rural sector in numbers from the Liberal Government and I have them all earmarked and I will be looking for delivery of those. I know the Government will know that I am watching and it is my job to watch so I will not bother reading them out. They know what they are. I know what they are and the people who they have committed it to, those communities, they know what they are.

I am interested in how much movement there has been in the public housing arena to the policy of moving people from properties where their circumstances have significantly changed. For instance, a person living solo or a couple in a three-bedroom home moving to a smaller property and freeing up a family home.

Sometimes that has been talked about during previous budget Estimates and there is a question in the system right now about this and I look forward to seeing the numbers as to how many people have been able to be moved from a family home situation perhaps into a two-bedroom unit, freeing up that public housing. That is really important. Again, that question is in the question without notice - but with notice - process.

Those members who have been here for some time will have heard my calls over many years for designated and appropriately signed slow-moving vehicle lay by areas - that is the only way I am going to refer to them - between Launceston and St Helens, around 160 kilometres. A couple of weeks ago when I was travelling to the east coast, I caught up to and subsequently followed a tourist for kilometre after kilometre with no safe opportunity to overtake. Clearly, it was a hire car with tourists on board enjoying the scenery. Slow down, speed up, slow down, rubbernecking. As I have said to myself previously on many occasions, if only there was another member of parliament regularly travelling this part of the highway network I am sure action would have been taken now - 160 kilometres of main highway in our state and there is not one designated slow-moving vehicle area where they can pull off and let other people move on -

Ms Armitage - If they will; often they do not.

Ms RATTRAY - It needs to be well signed, in a similar way as overtaking lanes. So that a car with a caravan or a car with a boat, or a larger vehicle or truck, can move out of the road. As I said, in 160 kilometers of National Highway, not one designated lay by has been constructed. Many years ago, I drove that route with the minister of the time and his adviser, and the minister agreed with me. And what do we have? We have a few from Dianas Basin onwards, and that does not help the 160 kilometers between Launceston and St Helens. That is a pretty frustrating drive at times with nowhere to get over. There is the occasional informal area, but people may not know it is coming up and have virtually passed it before they realise they may have been able to pull over there and get off the road.

I am sure at least one more member, particularly a Government member, driving that road may get as frustrated as I do and understand that it will not be very hard to fix. I know where the areas are - I could show them to you tomorrow. We are not asking for millions of dollars for dual lanes, or three-lane highways. We are merely asking for some safety improvements to make our journey comfortable and safe.

I was recently asked what frustrates me most in my role. Well, I can tell you that the lack of attention to this stretch of our road network is on the top of my list. You may have gathered that from my passion on this particular matter. It frustrates me most of all because it is not that hard to fix. I will be talking with the minister for Infrastructure.

I am also concerned about litter on our road verges. Right across our communities it is getting worse. I do not know who else is looking around our road verges. I did the Clean Up Australia Day event, and my awareness of litter has heightened considerably. You are picking up for kilometers with your friends and your family, and then three or four weeks later, it does not look as though anyone has done anything.

As I came in on Monday, the road in from the bypass around Brighton was just as bad. You know, how many kilometers out of Hobart? Shocking. It is not just the rural areas - it is right across the state. Sadly, a couple of the roads that we collected on seem to have more litter than prior to our clean up. I am at lost to understand why people actively wind down a window, or now push the button probably, and throw their rubbish out. The Litter Hotline for anyone who is listening is 1300 135 513. Take the time to act. It is an awful look when you drive around our roads. I will be ringing up, if I see anybody.

On a positive note, the Tasmanian nature conservation organisation, the North East Bioregional Network (NEBN), ably led by Todd Dudley, recently won an international award for the restoration of the Skyline Tier project. The project involves restoring radiata pine plantations - some failed or not economically viable to harvest - back to native forest on a landscape scale. Some members of this Chamber have visited this site at Scamander on the east coast. I am sure all members will join me in congratulating the small and hardworking team involved in the restoration.

It was a pleasure to recently attend an event on the east coast; that was not the day I became cranky about the lack of slow-moving vehicle areas. I attended an event at St Helens along with a significant number of participants. To see the rewarding outcome of receiving an international award was tremendous. I know the member for Hobart came to Scamander to the event.

There were not many of us but we were enthusiastic. It was terrific to see that the project won an international award and I am very proud of Todd. We were able to thank the people involved in the project, as they attended the event. We acknowledged that the work they had done makes such a difference. If you are driving through the east coast please look up to that skyline to your right, if you can, heading to Hobart from the north. It is a picture, with the revitalised native vegetation. They use the same seeds from the same area, replanted and it has grown a treat. Congratulations Todd and your team.

Mr Valentine - It is a huge task.

Ms RATTRAY - This is acres and acres, not just a little plot. We are very fortunate to have people who are so passionate about the areas where they live and the work they do.

I now turn to the Westbury prison, or the northern correctional facility as I refer to it. I support the establishment of a purpose-built facility in the north of the state, but I take the opportunity to support the Greg Barns initiative about having a facility for rehabilitation for those people who find themselves in that situation. It is important that the process is not rushed and that the design is not rushed. The Leader might organise a briefing to bring us up to speed.

I receive correspondence mainly from the people who are opposed to a facility being built adjacent to the Westbury township. I read those with interest and I continue to monitor what is happening in that space. However, I do not know the current status of that development. It could be with the federal government, looking at environmental issues. I would be interested if the Leader could facilitate a briefing in the near future.

Mrs Hiscutt - Through you, Mr President, I have made a note of that and I will see if I can pursue that for you.

Ms RATTRAY - We had the briefing from Mr Barns last year after I had gone to a public meeting in Deloraine and there was general community support for a facility that does not necessarily look like our Risdon Prison. We may also want to get them closer to their family and friends. There will more than likely need to be a secure unit because of the nature of some of the offences. Perhaps we could examine some of those concepts that Greg talked about.

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

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE

WorkSafe Tasmania - Issue with Correspondence

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

[2.31 p.m.]

With regard to requests for information from WorkSafe Tasmania regarding industrial safety matters, I am informed that WorkSafe Tasmania uncovered a 'systemic issue that impacted numerous correspondence, across a significant period of time'.

- (1) How long was this system not working properly?
- (2) How many correspondees are likely to have been impacted?
- (3) What actions were taken to inform the public of this issue to enable re-lodgment of inquiries/matters?
- (4) Is this system now operating normally?
 - (a) If not, when is it expected to be correctly operating?

ANSWER

Honourable members, can I just say the word 'unprecedented' has been used an awful lot in the last 18 months and I have had an unprecedented number of questions given to me in the last couple of weeks. We will endeavour to work our way through as many as we can but we may have to extend question time to get through them all between now and tomorrow. I am trying to keep them quite simple so we can get through as many as we can.

Member for Murchison, the answers:

- (1) November 2020 to April 2021.
- (2) A total of 20 incoming documents were impacted.
- (3) All items were addressed with no requirement for documents to be re-lodged. Where follow-up actions were required on documents, individuals have been contacted and action taken to address the matter. All matters have either been addressed or are in the process of being addressed, depending on the complexity.
- (4) The system has been rectified and is operating effectively, therefore, (4)(a) is not applicable.

Deloraine East Barrack Street - Sycamore Tree Removal

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

[2.33 p.m.]

For 10 years the Deloraine East Barrack Street residents have battled with Housing Tasmania and the government to have a sycamore tree, which is an introduced species classified as a common environmental weed, removed due to the damage that this tree causes to adjoining properties and the government Housing Tasmania property.

- (1) Is the new Housing minister aware of this situation and considering the action necessary to address this matter?

- (2) If so, when can these adjoining neighbours expect the tree to be removed?

ANSWER

I hope this answer will satisfy the inquiries for you to pass on to your constituents:

- (1) The office of the minister for Housing has been updated on local residents' concerns on this matter;
- (2) The removal of the tree in question has been scheduled for completion at this stage no later than 16 July 2021, conditions permitting.

Ms Rattray - A 10-year issue resolved.

Van Dairy VDL Farms - Workplace Health and Safety

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

[2.34 p.m.]

With regard to workplace health and safety for workers at the Van Dairy VDL farms owned by Moon Lake:

- (1) Has the department received any notifications of concern regarding worker health and safety on the Van Dairy VDL farms owned by Moon Lake in Circular Head in the last 24 months?
- (2) Have any workplace health and safety assessments been undertaken on the Van Dairy VDL farms owned by Moon Lake in Circular Head in the last 24 months?
- (3) What matters were considered in assessing worker health and safety?
- (4) Was the safe functioning of all equipment, including farm vehicles, included in any assessments?
- (5) What were the findings of these assessments?
- (6) If no assessments have been undertaken, will an assessment be undertaken?

ANSWER

Mr President, I thank the member for her question.

- (1) WorkSafe Tasmania has received four complaints about workplace safety issues and two notifiable incidents since 31 May 2019.

- (2) WorkSafe Tasmania inspectors have conducted inspections of the workplace on seven occasions since 31 May 2019 and multiple inspections in response to each of these notifiable incidents.
- (3) WorkSafe Tasmania inspectors have considered the following issues when inspecting areas of concern at the workplace. They are:
 - (i) general housekeeping;
 - (ii) maintenance and repair of farming plant, tractors and other farming machinery;
 - (iii) machine guarding;
 - (iv) quad bike safety, including maintenance and repair;
 - (v) hazardous chemical storage and handling;
 - (vi) electrical hazards;
 - (vii) workshop safety issues;
 - (viii) livestock handling; and
 - (ix) water tank structural integrity.
- (4) Safe functioning of equipment, including farm vehicles was included in assessments, as indicated above.
- (5) Improvement notices were issued in relation to the maintenance and repair of tractor components and quad bike maintenance and operation. Investigations are ongoing in relation to some matters.
- (6) As indicated above, assessments have been undertaken.

Longford - Traffic Safety Issue

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

[2.37 p.m.]

What progress has been made by the Department of State Growth with the Northern Midlands Council to find a mutually agreed solution to installing a suitably designed roundabout to address traffic safety issues at Longford's accident-prone Sticky Beaks corner?

ANSWER

Mr President, I thank the member for her question.

The Department of State Growth has met with officers from the Northern Midlands Council on a number of occasions regarding the intersection of Marlborough Street and Wellington Street. The Northern Midlands Council recently engaged engineering consultants, JMG, to investigate the feasibility of a roundabout at the intersection at Longford. The department has provided technical input to ensure that the option appropriately manages traffic on the state road network, including B-double trucks. The council has provided a copy of the consultant's report to the department for comment. They will continue to work together to identify a suitable treatment for this issue.

Animal Welfare in Agricultural Operations

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

[2.37 p.m.]

- (1) With regard to the assessment of animal welfare in agricultural operations:
 - (a) How many employees/officers are engaged by the Department of Primary Industries, Parks, Water and Environment to assess and investigate animal welfare concerns?
 - (b) What qualifications does each employee/officer have relevant to the undertaking of this task?
- (2) With regard to animal welfare concerns raised at the Van Dairy VDL farms owned by Moon Lake:
 - (a) What assessments have been undertaken on the Van Dairy VDL farms owned by Moon Lake in Circular Head in the last 24 months?
 - (b) What findings were made regarding these assessments?
 - (c) What is the time frame between notification and physical assessment?
 - (d) What collaboration with the RSPCA has occurred during this period?

ANSWER

Mr President, I thank the member for her question.

- (1)(a) Statewide, DPIPWE employs nine officers appointed under the Animal Welfare Act of 1993 with special responsibility for administering the act. In addition, three animal welfare officers will be recruited soon, making a total of 12 specialists in animal welfare matters. In addition, the Office of Racing Integrity has two officers

appointed under the act. Biosecurity Tasmania and the RSPCA inspectorate have a formal agreement in place in relation to responding to and investigating allegations or reports of cruelty. The RSPCA currently has five inspectors. They are officers under the Animal Welfare Act 1993.

- (1)(b) All officers undergo in-house specified training and assessment of their knowledge of the Tasmanian animal welfare legislation. There is also in-house training in relation to compliance and enforcement procedures, animal welfare standards and guidelines. Officers include veterinarians, there are currently four who possess a veterinarian degree. All officers are experienced in livestock or supported by experienced officers, all with either formal relevant qualifications and/or extensive experience.
- (2)(a/b) The Van Dairy VDL farms have been visited 14 times in the last 24 months by Biosecurity Tasmania staff. There have been eight animal welfare reports which have been investigated with a site visit, with one requiring a revisit to confirm structural modifications. All other visits were liaison and extension visits with a focus on animal welfare training and awareness for farm staff. Many of these events focused on calf sheds and calf management.

There have been no prosecutions under the act relating to the Van Dairy VDL farms in the 24-month period. Biosecurity Tasmania continues to monitor the current situation and engage with VDL property managers and owners in relation to their obligations under the Animal Welfare Act.

- (2)(c) Generally and dependent on exact circumstances an inspection will be made within one week, but often it is more immediate. Dependent on exact circumstances an inspection will be made with immediacy or generally within one week.
- (2)(d) The first point of contact for all animal welfare complaints in Tasmania is provided by the RSPCA. By agreement, complaints relating to commercial production animals are referred to Biosecurity Tasmania for investigation. The RSPCA undertakes investigations and implements appropriate actions in response to all other complaints.

The RSPCA is not precluded from any investigation if they wish to participate. The RSPCA is not known to have visited any of the Van Dairy VDL farms in this period. Joint training is conducted with the RSPCA.

Police Dogs

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

[2.42 p.m.]

I am of the understanding that Tasmania remains the only Australian state or territory without any general-purpose police dogs and uses only six Labradors - four for the purpose of drug detection, one for the purpose of firearms detection and one for the purpose of explosive detection. Will the Leader please advise:

- (1) Why Tasmania is lagging behind the rest of the country, which uses a broad range of general-purpose dogs and breeds such as Rottweilers for siege events?
- (2) Does the Government have any plans to broaden the range of police dog breeds and purposes?
- (3) Does Tasmania Police currently possess the resources and capacity to obtain and adequately train up general-purpose police dogs? If not, why not?
- (4) Does the Government have plans to obtain and train up general-purpose police dogs for Tasmania. If not, why not?

ANSWER

Mr President, I thank the member for Launceston for her question. I am advised that Tasmania Police has six detector dogs all of which are Labrador breed - four for the purpose of drug detection and two trained to detect both explosives and firearms (including firearm parts and ammunition).

Tasmania Police is currently planning for a seventh dog and will undertake consultation with relevant stakeholders as to what type of dog will be trained. The dog will be provided by 30 June 2022.

I am further advised that should Tasmania Police have a need to utilise a dog for another specialist area (for example, cadaver, cash detection, tracking or take-down), Tasmania Police has prompt access to dogs from other jurisdictions. Should these be required they are quickly available and will be transported accordingly.

Tasmania Police considers the available options in respect to particular dog breeds and uses of the animals. As previously stated, Tasmania Police currently operate with six Labrador dogs.

Tasmania Police maintains strong cooperative relationships with many interstate and national agencies to support the acquisition and training of police dogs. For example, detector dogs are frequently acquired through the Australian Border Force breeding program. For training support, South Australia Police are often called upon to assist, but there are other agencies, including the New Zealand Police, who can assist and have generously offered such

assistance. The 2018 Capability Review conducted by Tasmania Police did not identify the need for general-purpose dogs. However, Tasmania Police will continue to monitor the need for such capability into the future.

Van Dairy VDL Farms - Environmental Regulations Breaches

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

[2.45 p.m.]

With regard to breaches of environmental regulations predominantly related to the management of effluent at the Van Dairy VDL farms owned by Moon Lake:

- (1) What actions has the EPA undertaken to assess these breaches?
- (2) What actions have been taken by owners Moon Lake to directly address these breaches?
- (3) How have these actions been monitored?
- (4) Is the water above and below effluent outflow into the Welcome River now being monitored? Was it before when I asked earlier before the election?
- (5) What is the result of this monitoring if conducted?
- (6) If monitoring has not been conducted above and below areas of effluent outflow, why has it not been done?
- (7) What if any penalties have been imposed on Moon Lake for breaches?

ANSWER

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

- (1) The EPA has conducted onsite investigations into Van Dairy Limited farming operations to determine compliance with nine environmental protection notices issued by the Circular Head Council. Investigations have also been conducted to assess the presence or any evidence of any other environmental harm.
- (2) Van Dairy Ltd has responded positively to the EPA and the Circular Head Council investigation and auditing processes and it is working constructively towards compliance with the issued environmental protection notices.
- (3) The EPA investigation has been conducted as part of a wider inter-agency response including Circular Head Council, Tasmanian Dairy Industry Authority, Biosecurity Tasmania, and Water Operations

Branch. The investigations and auditing processes include continued onsite monitoring of farming activities undertaken by Van Dairy Limited.

- (4) Yes, DPIPWE is utilising the resources of the EPA to undertake a monitoring program of the Welcome River.

Ms Forrest - You did not actually answer the questions that were above and below. Maybe you are going to get there.

Mrs HISCUTT -

- (5) Monitoring of the Welcome River is in its preliminary phase and remains an important focus of DPIPWE. Testing results will indicate what, if any, pollutants are present in the Welcome River.
- (6) Not applicable.
- (7) Penalties have not been issued, and Van Dairy Limited is continuing to work constructively towards meeting compliance with issued environmental protection notices and management of environmental issues.

Ms FORREST (Murchison) - Supplementary question (4) read: Is the water above and below effluent outflow into the Welcome River now being monitored? The answer that the Leader gave us is that it has been monitored. I would like that clarified, whether they are monitoring above and below. Do I need to resubmit it?

Mrs HISCUTT - The question says: Is the water above and below effluent outflow into the Welcome River now being monitored? The answer was yes, DPIPWE is utilising the resources of EPA to undertake a monitoring program of the Welcome River.

Ms Forrest - So I am taking that as yes, it is above and below.

Mrs HISCUTT - That is what the answer says, yes.

Racing - Point of Consumption Tax Funding

Ms RATTRAY question to MINISTER for RACING, Ms HOWLETT

[2.49 p.m.]

The point of consumption tax is a very important component to the sustainability of the racing industry in Tasmania.

- (1) How much has been paid to the racing industry through the point of consumption tax to date?
- (2) Is the point of consumption allocation of funding being paid twice yearly? If not, why not?

ANSWER

Mr President, I thank the member for her question and her interest in racing. I know there are many racing participants in your electorate.

The Tasmanian racing industry will benefit enormously from the point of consumption tax which commenced on 1 January 2020. The Government has announced that 80 per cent of the additional revenues raised by the tax will go directly to the racing industry and this contribution will be divided up across the three racing codes. It will help fund stakes, infrastructure and animal welfare. The contribution to the industry in the 2020-21 year is \$2.537 million based on 80 per cent additional revenue received in 2019-20. The point of consumption tax expands the taxation base to include other online betting operators, corporate bookmakers not licensed in Tasmania that offer wagering services to Tasmania.

Tasmania's point of consumption tax is set at a rate of 15 per cent of the net wagering revenue of betting companies. This rate is consistent with most other jurisdictions and there is an annual tax-free threshold of \$150 000 on net wagering revenues to ensure smaller betting operators, particularly Tasmanian on-course bookmakers, are not captured.

The reform was informed by the historical licence arrangement with UBET TAS Proprietary Limited for the provision of wagering services in Tasmania as well as an industry consultation. The 2020-21 Revised Estimates Report estimated that the tax revenue for the year would be approximately \$13.6 million - up \$1.6 million on the budget Estimates.

Ms Rattray - The question regarding the allocation of funding being paid twice-yearly?

Ms HOWLETT - It is being paid yearly.

Ms Rattray - And there is no consideration in paying it twice-yearly?

Ms HOWLETT - It is the first year that the tax has been introduced so we will always consider our options.

Ms Rattray - Thank you.

North West Integrated Midwifery Services

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

[2.52p.m.]

With regard to the North West Maternity Services Review:

- (1) When was this review finalised?
- (2) When was it provided to the minister?
- (3) When will the review report be made public?

(4) When can we expect to see a response to this important review?

ANSWER

Mr President, I thank the member for her question.

(1) The review of the North West Integrated Midwifery Services was extended to enable greater opportunity for stakeholder participation. The Department of Health is expecting to revive the review report in coming weeks.

Ms Forrest - Provide it, did you say, or revive it?

Mrs HISCUTT - To 'revive', it says.

Ms Forrest - So it was put on hold?

Mrs HISCUTT - Because there were so many questions I did not get time to read this one but I am thinking it is a typo. I will read the rest of the question and clarify that for you.

(2) The report has not provided to the minister.

(3) The report will be made public once it has been received.

(4) The report will be provided to the Department of Health and the Minister for Health accordingly. The Government will respond as soon as possible following receipt of the report, with any such response made public.

Mr President, with the answer to question (1), I really think that is a typo. I will clarify that and if I do not get it back to you -

Ms Forrest - I am not so sure if the answers to the others are accurate so -

Mrs HISCUTT - I will just clarify that.

Ms Forrest - That would be good if you could do that tomorrow.

Mrs HISCUTT - If I do not get it to you today, it will be tomorrow, but I will get that clarified.

Public Housing - Under-Occupancy

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

[2.54 p.m.]

This is the question that I referred to in my previous contribution to the Governor's Address.

- (1) What progress has been made on the Government's policy or action on moving public housing tenants where there are solo or perhaps couples from a three-bedroom home, where family have moved out, to a two-bedroom unit to free up those three-bedroom homes that are more suitable for families?
- (2) What number of transfers have taken place under this arrangement to date?

ANSWER

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

- (1) The department has an under-occupancy policy which provides guidance on how to best match properties within the portfolio to meet eligible individual and family housing needs. If a tenant is assessed as ineligible for a larger property that they occupy, efforts will be made to relocate the tenant to a more suitable property in the location of choice, if possible.
- (2) In 2018 a review by the department found 25 tenancies were under-occupied. Those tenants were transferred to more suitable properties when they became available. The department reviews property allocations weekly and if there are tenancies identified as under-occupied, those tenants are offered a transfer to a more suitable property.

Ms RATTRAY - Supplementary, Mr President. Am I to take it that there has not been an assessment undertaken since 2018? Nothing in 2019, nothing in 2020 and nothing to date. Would that be correct? I will put it into the system.

Mrs HISCUTT - I do not have that information at hand. If you were to resubmit that would be helpful, thank you.

Tasmanian QR Code Check - Implementation

Ms FORREST question to LEADER OF THE GOVERNMENT in the LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL, Mrs HISCUTT

[2.56 p.m.]

With regard to the compulsory Tasmanian QR code check-in implementation, which I know is a much better app than that used in some other jurisdictions:

- (1) Has the uptake of the QR code check-in been monitored?
 - (a) If so:
 - (i) how are the compliance checks made?

- (ii) how often are checks, whether scheduled or random, conducted?
- (iii) what are the compliance rates with the implementation?
- (b) If not, will monitoring be undertaken?
- (2) Has there been any monitoring of compliance of patrons regarding check-in requirements?
- (3) What training/advice is provided to all staff in premises required to use the QR code check-in app to enhance compliance?
- (4) Will the requirement be extended to all retail to maximise the effect of contact tracing should Tasmania experience a COVID-19 outbreak?

This was sent in a while ago. Things may have changed since I sent the question.

ANSWER

Mr President, I thank the member for her question. Yes, we have had lengthy notice of some of your questions.

Ms Forrest - I was trying to get in early so you had plenty of time.

Mrs HISCUTT - Answers to (1) and (2).

Yes, the uptake of the QR code is being monitored. As at 15 June 2021 the total number of registered venues was 19 418. There have been 527 000 Check In Tas app downloads and almost 5.2 million check-ins using the app.

Use of Check in Tas, (CIT), is required under the Public Health Direction - Contact Tracing (the Direction). WorkSafe Tasmania monitors workplaces for compliance with COVID-19 safe plans. Workplace inspections are conducted on a random basis with high-risk workplaces. WorkSafe Tasmania has conducted 204 inspections since the requirement to use CIT was introduced on 1 May 2021. WorkSafe Tasmania reports that availability of contact tracing through CIT and other means is high.

Under section 169 of the Public Health Act 1997 an authorised officer, a police officer or a council may serve an infringement notice for noncompliance with the Direction. The applicable penalties for noncompliance are a fine of \$774 for individuals and \$5117 for businesses.

Currently, the primary focus is on promotion of the use of CIT and provision of education and support for businesses and patrons subject to the Direction.

As we transition from an educative approach to a greater emphasis on compliance, the Department of Health is working with other agencies in relation to additional resources to conduct checks and issue infringement notices for noncompliance.

- (3) Since mid-March 2021, the Department of State Growth's Small Business Unit has been providing businesses and organisations with educational support programs and advice aimed at increasing statewide uptake of CIT. This support includes providing personalised assistance and working one-on-one with those businesses in communities where digital literacy is low and poor connectivity are major barriers to active participation.

In April and May 2021, representatives from the Small Business Project team visited approximately 40 regional Tasmanian towns and cities providing face-to-face support to mandated businesses. The total number of businesses visited to date is more than 1000. The Small Business Unit produced a number of documents and frequently asked questions (FAQs) providing businesses and organisations with easy to understand resources explaining CIT and its related processes. These materials have been produced to appeal to a variety of audiences and with an emphasis on being easily understood by those with differing levels of digital capacity, capability and literacy.

Promotion included a statewide paid media campaign targeting patrons and businesses with advertising via daily and community newspapers, television, buses, radio and social media. Online information about CIT was consolidated on the Coronavirus website for ease of access and additional instructional and promotional resources were provided. A second phase of the promotional campaign is under development by the Public Information Unit in the COVID-19 Coordination Centre and Business Tasmania, as are additional resources to support businesses.

Additional resources and best practice industry-specific videos and guides are being developed by the Small Business Unit to further support businesses to use CIT. Once completed these will be shared with businesses statewide.

- (4) Consideration of the extension of the Contact Tracing Direction to other premises is a matter for the Director of Public Health based on a detailed risk assessment. The minister is aware that the Director of Public Health is currently reviewing the Direction to consider whether the scope of premises should be expanded.

Suspension of Standing Orders

Extension of Question Time

[3.02 p.m.]

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

That so much of Standing Order 49 be suspended for this day's sitting to allow for a further period of 15 minutes for questions without notice.

Mr President, if we do that today and maybe tomorrow with what comes then we should be able to cover everything.

Motion agreed to.

Polystyrene Production

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

[3.03 p.m.]

In 2008 a production plant was set up to make a concrete void out of polystyrene. This subsequently ceased through the Global Financial Crisis (GFC). There has been a call again from builders to recommence this production.

- (1) What future does the Tasmanian Government envisage for the re-use of polystyrene?
- (2) Have there been any discussions regarding re-use or ban of polystyrene?

I have an interested constituent.

ANSWER

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

- (1) The Tasmanian Government supports the use of any innovative building product or technique that will allow better buildings to be built more cost-effectively and efficiently, providing that they comply with the requirements of the National Construction Code and the Building Act 2016 (Tasmania).
- (2) The use of polystyrene as a cladding material on certain buildings has been prohibited in Tasmania since December 2017, unless a product has been accredited by the Director of Building Control. At this time no polystyrene cladding product has been accredited. The use of

polystyrene in other building products or applications is not prohibited providing that they comply with the requirements of the National Construction Code.

COVID-19 Vaccination Rates - Aged Care Sector

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

[3.04 p.m.]

I imagine the answer will provide a lot of numbers so I hope to have this one tabled if the Leader suggests that.

With regard to COVID-19 vaccination rates in Tasmania, acknowledging the aged care sector is the responsibility of the federal government, what are the vaccination rates, actual numbers and relevant percentages broken down by partly vaccinated (that is, received the first dose) and fully vaccinated (received both doses) for:

- residents of residential aged care;
- older Tasmanians who are recipients of Aged Home Care Packages, living at home;
- aged care workers;
- people living with disability in Tasmania;
- disability workers;
- healthcare workers;
- workers engaged in frontline border control measures and quarantine;
- other frontline workers;
- Tasmanians over 50 years of age - maybe I should have said 60 after the recent changes - this was sent a little while ago;
- Tasmanians under 50 years of age who are eligible to receive the vaccine?

ANSWER

The answer does have some numbers in it but it is not overly onerous and lengthy so I am happy to read it if the member desires.

Ms Forrest - I do not mind. Whatever is easiest, yes.

Mrs HISCUTT -

1. The minister has been informed that by 11 June 2021 all aged care facilities in Tasmania will have been visited by Aspen Medical who have been contracted by the federal government to deliver the service. All residents who were present at the time of the first visit to the facility will have been offered a first and second dose of a COVID-19 vaccine.

I can advise that as of 5 June 2021, 10 665 vaccine doses had been administered in aged care facilities by the Commonwealth, including first and second doses. Between

the first vaccination on 23 February 2021 and the end of 15 June 2021, over 86 709 vaccines were administered in state government clinics, including 62 370 first doses and 24 339 second doses.

In total, over 179 000 vaccines have been administered across Tasmania, including aged care and Primary Health. I have had my first dose, Mr President. All frontline health workers, quarantine, and border workers have been offered the opportunity to be vaccinated.

People living with disability in Tasmania are being offered vaccination in one of the following ways and they are:

- Those who are able to access a state-run clinic or visit their GP have been encouraged to do so.
- Those living in support living arrangements or group homes where there are two or more residents, are currently being visited by Aspen Medical under contract from the Commonwealth.
- The Tasmanian Vaccination Emergency Operations Centre is working with service providers to establish vaccination hubs for people with disability who are not included in the Aspen Medical contract.
- The TVEOC is working with service providers to identify those for whom a home visit will be necessary.

All aged care workers and disability workers have been invited to make independent arrangements at a state-run clinic or their GP. Some may be vaccinated at their workplaces as part of the Aspen Medical contract.

There is currently no visibility or breakdown of the numbers available as to how many workers have taken this opportunity.

As at 6 June 2021, 103 202 Tasmanians aged 50 and over have received dose one, which is 43.6 per cent, and 11 968 have received dose two, which is 5.1 per cent.

As at 6 June 2021, 23 175 Tasmanians under the age of 50 have received dose one - it is 9.6 per cent - and 12 562 have received dose two, which is 5.2 per cent.

Wicking Research for Dementia and Education - Funding

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

[3.08 p.m.]

- (1) Can the Government confirm that the Wicking Research for Dementia and Education has received funding?

- (2) If so, what is the quantum of the funding?
- (3) Again, if so, when will the research be available?

ANSWER

Mr President, I thank the member for her question. Wicking Research for Dementia and Education receives core funding from the Wicking Trust with significant contributions from the University of Tasmania. I am advised the Department of Health does not currently fund the Wicking Research for Dementia and Education and has no record of funding being provided to the Wicking Research for Dementia and Education.

Ms Rattray - So they have not seen the report then, either.

North-West Community Rapid Response Service

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

[3.09 p.m.]

With regard to the north-west Community Rapid Response Service, (ComRRS), trial due to complete in June/July this year:

- (1) What outcomes have been measured from this trial to date; and
- (2) When will a decision be made regarding continuation of the ComRRS in the north-west?

ANSWER

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

The Community Rapid Response Service - I will shorten that to ComRRS.

- (1) The north-west ComRRS trial commenced in December 2019. The north-west trial currently receives around 60 or 70 referrals per month. Between December 2019 to January 2021 ComRRS north-west trial delivered 4630 hours of care. The Department of Health has advised a formal evaluation of the north-west and southern trials will be occurring in the next few months. The Department of Health has engaged KP Health to support the evaluation.
- (2) A decision has been made to continue the north-west ComRRS service. As part of its election commitments, the Government will provide \$52 million over the next four financial years to support care in the community, including \$27.5 million to continue Community Rapid Response, Hospital in-the-Home-type service in all regions of the state, and to further pilot Hospital in-the-Home services.

GP Services

Ms FORREST to LEADER OF THE GOVERNMENT in the LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL, Mrs HISCUTT

[3.11 p.m.]

On 29 April 2021 the Leader tabled a response to a petition related to medical services, particularly access to general practitioners. I am aware that GP service is not the responsibility of the state government, but the then Minister for Health, Ms Courtney, stated in response to the petition:

Ochre Health notified the THS in late 2019 that in response to patient demand it is trialing a change in operational service model that involved relocating unutilised GP resources between Strahan and Zeehan, as well as a change in clinic service hours, with its Strahan service operating three days a week and its Zeehan service operating five days a week. This interim trial model is being assessed monthly. Ochre Health will continue to monitor activity and advise the THS as required.

Further, the minister stated:

In February 2020 Ochre Health further advised the THS that they had seen an improved alignment of GP service to the region, in particular at Zeehan. The THS and the Government will also continue to engage regularly with primary care organisations such as Primary Health Tasmania and Health Recruitment PLUS to support the primary health sector where possible.

My questions are, what advice regarding service level has been provided to Ochre Health, to the THS since February 2020? Is the minister aware that recently, when I sent this question through, there were weeks where there were no GP services available in Strahan? How often does this occur? What action is the minister taking to address this matter? Is there a service level agreement in place that requires a base level of service in both Strahan and Zeehan?

ANSWER

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

- (1) Ochre Health meets with representatives from the Tasmanian Health Service on a quarterly basis to discuss service provisions.
- (2) The minister has advised that over the preceding 12-month period there has been only one instance where the local GP was unavailable for their normal weekly appointments due to unforeseen circumstances.
- (3) As previously outlined, the minister is advised there has only been one occurrence.
- (4) The Minister for Health has met with the federal Minister for Regional Health, Mark Coulton MP, in relation to the provision of GP services in regional areas. The Tasmanian Government also committed \$3 million

during the recent election campaign to incentivise GPs and pharmacies to provide after hours services for their local communities. This will help access and complement the \$1 million Hospital Avoidance Co-Investment fund previously announced to match dollar for dollar capital upgrades to allow for improved after hours care.

- (5) The Minister has also advised there are no service agreements in place with Ochre in relation to provision of private GP services.

Huntington's Disease Tasmania

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

[3.14 p.m.]

With regard to funding to support the important work of Huntington's Disease Tasmania, (HDT), I acknowledge the current support of \$15 000 - not a lot of money - per annum to enable the volunteer organisation to operate and the three case workers employed in addition to that to assist with client care and advice. Further, as Tasmania is the only jurisdiction in Australia without a funded CEO and the highest rates of HDT in the country:

- (1) Will the Government consider funding an additional \$80 000 per annum as requested in HDT's budget submission to enable the engagement of a CEO, and administrative support to ensure the increasing numbers of Tasmanians with HDT are adequately supported? Members will know, this condition is indiscriminate, it can pop up anywhere, with any family history that is not known about.
- (2) If so, will this funding be provided in the 2021-22 financial year? I may have to wait till the budget for that answer.
- (3) If not, how will the growing needs of Tasmanians with HDT and their families be adequately supported?

ANSWER

Mr President, I thank the member for her question.

- (1) The Community Budget Submission and Strategic Plan provided by the Huntington's Disease Association of Tasmania makes a case for a review of the funding that is provided to them. The Minister for Mental Health and Wellbeing has asked the Department of Health to meet with the Huntington's Disease Association of Tasmania to fully understand how they can meet the needs of Tasmanians experiencing Huntington's disease, and their families and carers.
- (2) One of the outcomes of this meeting will be a recommendation on the level of funding required to allow Huntington's Disease Tasmania to

meet the identified needs. This funding will be considered for provision in 2021-22.

- (3) The meeting between the Huntington's Disease Association of Tasmania and the Department of Health will make clear the needs of this community and how HDT can best support them, which the Tasmanian Government will consider funding in 2021-22.

Ms Forrest - I assume the minister will contact HDT to arrange that meeting.

ADDRESS-IN-REPLY

Resumed from above.

[3.17 p.m.]

Ms RATTRAY (McIntyre) - Mr President, I will outline a couple of summary items that I have picked up over the break, before I conclude my contribution. As I have indicated earlier, we know we have a housing crisis in Tasmania, and resolving the housing crisis is a more complex matter, and it will not be just one single aspect of the whole approach that needs to be taken. At the end of the day, the crisis has been market-driven, with demand far outstripping supply.

There are two approaches - reduced demand and/or increased supply. Increasing supply is a matter that will have to be fast-tracked and will require amending planning laws. I spoke earlier about the need to change some of the zoning to make more land available for housing stock; freeing up the land, determining line and grant policies and allowing for quick build accommodation. This is an important issue, not only to the social wellbeing of our communities, but also around the economic drivers. If you do not have housing in areas where there might be employment opportunities, it is going to be difficult to take them up. Let us work together and particularly focus on some of those issues.

I also spoke about the list of promised election commitments. From my information, Liberal spending promises total almost \$1.3 billion, equivalent to just under 4 per cent of Tasmania's current annual gross state product. That was their commitment during the campaign. A lot of that money has been promised to communities and I expect none of them would be unworthy of receiving that funding. However, I would like the Government to consider a 10-year, long-term strategic policy direction plan for various infrastructure upgrades, replacements, renewals and redevelopments. I believe that would be a very useful approach for our Tasmanian community. At an earlier time, I touched on the northern correction facility and how important that facility is to the northern population of the state. Over the lunchbreak I found a call by one of the leading voices in the Westbury area for not having a correctional facility in and around the Westbury region. It talks about that reform of rehabilitation and the type of facility that would be more acceptable for a northern community. I am not saying that that needs to be the Westbury community, wherever that is decided upon.

I am still disappointed to this day that the Tasmanian community was not able to look at all the options that the Government considered before they identified the first site in the industrial area outside the Westbury township, in the Westbury industrial area, and then the announced site further down Birralee Road. I think if the community had had the opportunity

to look at and have their view on the other sites that were contenders and had a look at the for and against, there would have been more acceptance of why that site was chosen and then the subsequent follow-up site.

It is going to take more work with the community. I encourage those in the Attorney-General's office and others who make these decisions to work with the communities, whichever that community is. It has been suggested that there are some very good minds that would - it talks about a group of eminent Tasmanians, including former Legislative Council president, Jim Wilkinson, former premier, Lara Giddings, former Greens leader, Christine Milne, Hobart Lord Mayor, Anna Reynolds, eminent criminologist, Professor Rob White and Professor Terese Henning, who ran the Tasmania Law Reform Institute. It talked about minds of those with that stature getting together and working through what a new-look, contemporary correctional facility might look like. A facility for Tasmania, situated in the north of the state to assist those families who have friends and loved ones in the Risdon complex they find difficult to access on a regular basis.

I want to leave that with the Government because it is important that we keep talking through this. As I said earlier, we need to get it right. You do not establish a correctional facility in your state on a regular basis. We do not want people to be incarcerated but regrettably that is the case for some people who do not obey the laws of our state and the expectations of our community. Let us continue to work together on that.

My positive note - and I hope there were a few positive notes in my contribution - particularly was that international award received by the Skyline Tier restoration project. Interestingly, there is a lot more that could be done in this space. I will continue to lobby through the appropriate avenues to have funding for this type of initiative to enable not only this award-winning project to be replicated in other areas of our state. To have an internationally-recognised project in the rehabilitation of a failed radiata pine plantation is something we need to strive for. The Flinders Island community has an area - what we call up North East River - that would absolutely benefit from a restoration project like the Skyline Tier. It has been harvested now and just sitting there and not being used. It is certainly not being replanted but would benefit greatly from having a restoration project.

From my understanding, the west coast is another area that also would benefit. I have seen the North East River on Flinders Island area. I have not actually seen the west coast, but from all reports and people on the ground tell me they would both fit very nicely. A great opportunity and I am sure with some support from the state government we could get some funding from federal government. That would enable some employment opportunities in those two and other areas around the state where they can use some skills. This could be particularly for people who had been in the timber industry and lost employment opportunity through the initial demise of that industry. Perhaps, they do not see themselves as milking cows or some of the other areas of outdoor work and the manual labour a Skyline project like the one at Scamander has generated may suit.

Again, there is much more I could share with members and I will do so on the more opportunities we have in the future now parliament has resumed. I will continue to be a strong voice and advocate for the people of McIntyre and look forward to other members' contributions during this important opportunity. Again, I appreciate the honour of being invited to second the motion to note the Governor's Address.

[3.27 p.m.]

Ms ARMITAGE (Launceston) - Mr President, the last time I spoke in this place I was noting the Premier's Address and commenting on the progress being made after the significant events the COVID-19 pandemic has had on Tasmania. Since that time, we have had a closely contested state election, a change in the leadership of the Opposition and the appointment of a new Governor of Tasmania.

At this opportunity I will take a moment to reflect on the death of Her Majesty's husband, Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh. His Royal Highness' life was a long one of support to Her Majesty and in his own right, a life of service to our Commonwealth. No matter one's opinion on our constitutional monarchy, it is undeniable Prince Philip's mark on our country and our state, his character and his service, has left a mark that is irreplaceable. Her Majesty has been in my thoughts since Prince Philip's death and I am pleased to see as always, she continues on with her duties as ever with commitment and grace.

In a similar fashion, I also extend my sincerest thanks to Professor, the Honourable Kate Warner AC for her tenure as Tasmania's governor. The past seven or so years have had their ups and down for Professor Warner. However, she has served Tasmania with a great deal of dedication supported by her husband Dick. I believe we can look back at the past seven years with significant pride.

So, too, I wish Her Excellency the Honourable Barbara Baker AC who I believe, given her background and priorities, will likewise perform magnificently in this important role, and her husband, Professor Don Chalmers, whose own distinguished career in academia and the law will place him well at Government House.

I extend my congratulations to the Premier, Mr Gutwein, on his return to government; David O'Byrne on his ascension to Leader of the Opposition; and my warmest wishes to Rebecca White for the impending birth of her second child. My best wishes also to the new Speaker, Mark Shelton. I am sure he will perform the task admirably, as I have already noticed by watching some vision of the House of Assembly this morning. Congratulations also to new and re-elected members of the lower House.

I offer my congratulations to our President, the member for Derwent, on his re-election, and the member for Mersey on his deserved re-election unopposed, with his contributions obviously well recognised by the people of Mersey. I also welcome the member for Windermere, Nick Duigan, to this place, and look forward to his inaugural speech this week.

Given the speed with which the Chamber finished in March there was no opportunity to recognise our previous member for Windermere, Ivan Dean, and his enormous contribution to his electorate and our state over the previous 18 years. Ivan and I often clashed, both on local council and in this place, but we were also good friends. I will miss our banter and often heated discussions. I do not think anyone can deny, whether you agreed with Ivan on certain stances or not, that he was a passionate advocate for the community.

In my observations of the Premier's Address back in March, I spoke about the findings and recommendations of the Premier's Economic and Social Recovery Advisory Council and the Government's planned response to them in the months and years ahead. During the election, a recovery-focused approach was taken to the policy promises of both the Labor and Liberal

parties. At this point I want to look at how they have translated to tangible outcomes for my constituents in the electorate of Launceston.

Having developed a strong relationship with Playgroup Tasmania, I was most pleased to see the Government commit \$350 000 towards the playgroup site at Holbrook Street, to improve disability access, upgrade its kitchen and training areas, and add a better heating system. I work with Playgroup Tasmania and their volunteer coordinators across my electorate and assist in any way I can to improve the delivery of these services. The positive multiplier effect that good preschool care has for children and their carers and families is significant. Ensuring that it is a priority will pay off in the long run.

I also work closely with the playgroup at Hadspen, which I have seen turn around in the last 12 months. This playgroup went from struggling, with almost no participants, to having dozens of mothers, carers and children come along for their weekly sessions. They are coming not just from Hadspen, but also other areas, Carrick, Legana and Kings Meadows. This emphasises the demand for access to quality preschool care and socialisation. Anything the Government does to promote this over the next four years will earn a big tick from me.

It is clear that what will make our state recover and grow is a focus on what goes on at the local level, what makes an actual difference in the day-to-day lives of the people who live in our communities. Nothing reinforces this more than when I get out and about in my electorate and see the fantastic work that is being done by some of our local organisations. The Independent Living Centre is one such example, which is an organisation that provides advice and information about assisted technology and has a showroom in Launceston. On site are health professionals, including occupational therapists and a speech pathologist, who provide consultations over telephone and email, and provide education and mobile outreach visits to all parts of Tasmania.

On a recent visit to the showroom I was surprised when advised that with all the equipment, it is not actually available to purchase from them. It is by referral, which I think is a great shame for many of the people who actually attend. I am quite sure that, when they go in, to be able to purchase the equipment, or actually at least order it from the Independent Living Centre would be a great bonus for people, rather than having to go away and try to take a little barcode and do it themselves. I plan to keep working with them to see how we can provide assistive technologies to people in the simplest, most streamlined way possible.

The Kings Meadows Men's Shed is another organisation that I like to look after in my electorate. It is always a hive of activity whenever I visit. A few weeks ago, I had the privilege to head out there and give the men a good morning tea of cakes, slices and treats before their AGM. I had some furniture made at the Men's Shed, including some that sits in my office here in Hobart. The craftsmanship that has gone into its construction is second to none. I must admit it is a beautiful piece of Huon pine. They certainly have some great timbers out there, and are always ready and willing to make furniture for anyone who happens to call by. It is certainly worth a visit.

For men of all ages, the Kings Meadows Men's Shed offers a great deal of fellowship and friendship for those who attend. I am so pleased to be able to get involved from time to time. I really enjoy heading out there to see what they are making. Another cause which is quite close to my heart is raising funds and awareness for Fragile X. For any here who are unaware the Fragile X group of disorders is the family of inherited conditions caused by the alterations

in a gene located in the x chromosome, hence the name Fragile X. These disorders include a wide range of physical, intellectual and behavioural symptoms and some 90 000 people are impacted by Fragile X in some way. Some are carriers and some have the condition itself.

I am sure many from northern Tasmanian would have come across Ben Gower who works at Coles in the northern suburbs. It is fabulous he has a full-time position. If you go into Coles, I am quite sure you will come across Ben. Ben Gower, who I have spoken about in this place before, shaved his head to raise \$5500 for the Fragile X Association of Australia to continue with their awareness raising and advocacy activities. With the help of the talented people at Mr Clyde's Barber Shop and Ben's mum, Jo, I was so proud to cheer Ben on and contribute to this fantastic cause. He was so delighted to have his head shaven he could not quite stop looking in the mirror.

Ms Rattray - The Facebook post was just delightful.

Ms ARMITAGE - He is the most delightful person and he must be in his 20s now and so proud to have his job at Coles and they are so proud to have him.

I was also extremely pleased to note the Royal Flying Doctor Service, now based in my electorate since the redistribution of boundaries, was announced as Australia's most trusted charity based on the Australian Reader's Digest Trusted Brands survey of 2021. The Tasmanian RFDS officers are doing incredible work in Tasmania worthy of noting. Building on the telehealth services that were so integral during the pandemic, RFDS Tasmania recently entered into a statewide agreement with Cardihab and the Tasmanian Department of Health to provide digital cardiac rehabilitation services that connect to public hospitals around the state.

This is a part of the Prime Mover Program, an exercise and education-based therapy program developed by the RFDS, Tasmania's primary healthcare team designed for people living in rural and remote areas with stable heart and lung conditions. The aim of the program is for participants to return to an active and satisfying life and to help prevent the recurrence of cardiac and pulmonary events. This is world-class service delivery and it is happening right here in my electorate. John Kirwan who, I am sure, most of us know from his previous life with the Launceston General Hospital and his incredible team at the RFDS do a wonderful job and I like to see them acknowledged for their hard work and the innovative approach to service delivery.

With the election came a decent spend on roadworks and upgrades and Launceston was certainly not neglected on this front. Road infrastructure is a favourite vote winner that seems to be consistently short-sighted. A nice shiny new or upgraded road or highway is not unwelcome, but it makes me question what the longer term road and freight plans for Tasmania actually are. It seems to get worse and worse for Launceston's arterial roads. I also noted the President did have some pictures up on Facebook of some of the traffic problems in the south of the state. It does seem to be worsening.

The volume of traffic consistently seen on Wellington Street, Bathurst Street and the Southern Outlet takes a punishing toll on the existing infrastructure. The heaviness of the traffic is unpredictable, so scheduling becomes a nightmare. You could be stuck for half an hour or more or you could get a clear run, the unpredictability is a significant issue. In the future, we will need to have a better understanding of personal travel patterns, where, why, when and how people travel and better match that demand. Services will need to be more

integrated and continuous. More people will be using public transport and active transport such as walking and cycling.

Through improved land use planning and the provision of services we can better meet these needs. The construction of high frequency public transport corridors and more integrated services will improve public service levels to the areas that need them most. It is getting rather tiresome that options are being investigated and not being acted upon. For decades now, ring-road and bypass options have been explored to no end. Meanwhile congestion, pollution and hazards worsen. The longer we put off implementing a solution, the harder and more expensive it will be. Of course, I do understand that reaching a consensus on an issue like this is very difficult, but the sooner leadership is shown in this area and a solution is enacted, the better off we will all be. I do recall from my many years on Launceston City Council - and I believe it went back to the 1960s - when they started putting reports together on a bypass. We have many, many reports but, unfortunately, we have very little action and I believe it is time the reports stopped and the action started.

Ms Forrest - Yes. Hear, hear on so many points.

Ms ARMITAGE - While I am on roads, I almost missed my latest little foray into roads. On a recent visit to Hadspen in my electorate the road patching was brought to my attention. The concern, I can assure you, is not understated - the road looked like a patchwork quilt. I went out there and a long section of road had many, many new patches on it. I am told by the people who live there they are very dangerous, particularly in the wet weather and early in the morning when it is frosty. Hadspen is really up and growing area with many new houses being built.

However, I must say I am very pleased that the minister for Infrastructure, Michael Ferguson, has agreed to come out to Hadspen with me in the next week or so and meet with a couple of residents to look at the road, so I certainly cannot complain. I have been very proactive and was very pleased he just said, 'Yes, I will come and I will look' and that is all you can ask. I am hoping I will get some action when he comes and looks, but at least he is prepared to come and speak to the constituents and have a look at the issue. I certainly could not complain about that and thought it was excellent.

I am pleased to see the Government's commitment to an \$80 million contribution towards the construction of a second Tamar bridge and it will put a case to the Australian government for a co-investment of \$320 million in line with the agreed funding model for National Highway projects to make the second Tamar River crossing a reality.

A \$400 million project is significant and will go a long way to easing traffic and producing a safer travel route in and out of Launceston and hoping very much we will see that before the next election. A further wicked problem is that of the kanamaluka/Tamar River and I would be doing my electorate a disservice if I neglected to mention it. I know members might be tired of hearing about it.

Ms Forrest - The silt in the Tamar? Surely not.

Ms ARMITAGE - It is not just silt, unfortunately.

Mr Willie - Is it still a river?

Ms ARMITAGE - At times you probably could walk across it but I think you would sink. I could say, Josh, if we were in Hobart I am sure it would be fixed. We do know Hobart is the centre of the universe, but apart from that -

Mr Valentine - I thought it was the other way around.

Ms Rattray - I think there's a standing order around promoting of quarrels.

Ms ARMITAGE - Someone should speak to the other members who are baiting me.

Mr PRESIDENT - It is good that the former member for Windermere is not here because he was very good at backing you up with that.

Ms ARMITAGE - The former member for Windermere would have agreed with me on this occasion - probably one of the few occasions he would have agreed with me.

Mr Valentine - I have no doubt he would have.

Ms ARMITAGE - Yes. I know members might be tired of hearing about it but I become very disappointed when I hear people talk about how in their lifetime the river has gone from having sandy banks and healthy water to the mire we have today. Like traffic issues, approaches to improving the health of the river have been discussed for years with very little follow-through.

Many people have ideas about how water quality can be improved but the costs and lack of consensus are prohibitive. There have been a multitude of committees and organisations who have investigated the issues and developed possible solutions, but there has also been a lack of follow-through with these. Few are willing to take responsibility for the task and as a result, no one wants to take it on. Someone needs to take leadership on this issue because we should not be having to live in conditions where our estuary has raw human sewage in our river during severe stormwater events.

I am quite aware that TasWater has said they will improve it at some stage. It was \$80 million or \$90 million, but only recently - it might have been last year - that was put out again because of the lack of funding. The former member for Windermere was very concerned that Macquarie Point did not get funding to move their tanks before our Tamar River is cleaned up. A clean river would make the world of difference to our city. We would possibly be the capital if we had a clean river.

I cannot really talk about Launceston without speaking about the Launceston General Hospital. In the previous months we have seen staggering accusations of abuse and neglect, with personal horror stories coming from a number of my constituents. I welcome Jeremy Rockliff to this portfolio. I acknowledge he will have a significant job ahead of him as a minister, but I am sure he will perform admirably. Ambulance ramping, lack of beds, difficulty accessing GPs, long waiting lists - the problems go on. It is well known the longer a patient spends in the ED, the worse their outcome. I am always concerned about delays in procedures such as scopes, endoscopies and colonoscopies, as early detection is desirable. It is a waste of time for the federal government to send out kits for people to have tests, to have occult blood tests which lead onto further testing, if someone does not have private health insurance and that

testing is not available in a timely manner. I will continue, Leader, to seek answers to many questions on health, our hospital system and our waiting lists.

I also note that the Government has promised increased bed availability. I hope this is matched with the necessary nursing and ancillary staff, to enable the beds to be opened. My understanding is that beds and wards are often closed because of lack of staff.

Finally, I turn to education. I watched with keen interest the transition of the high schools in my electorate to extension of years 11 and 12. The previous Education minister knew well my feeling on that, as I am sure will the new Education minister. I have no problem with outlying areas and many of these places having year 11 and 12 at their high schools. However, I see little reason for every school in an area such as Launceston to have years 11 and 12. It becomes very difficult for our current colleges to attract students and become viable. I have previously spoken about some of the issues that our existing colleges, Newstead and Launceston, experience in terms of matching numbers of teachers with students. Ensuring that students have access to quality learning, and teachers are adequately resourced to deliver quality learning, has been a challenge. I am hopeful this will be eased with the high school extension policies. I know our teachers and schools do everything humanly possible to help our young people learn.

I acknowledge the member for Elwick's contribution on the important matters of education in our state. I still have concerns about years 11 and 12 and our colleges, and how trained teachers will be found to be able to cover some of the very important subjects in years 11 and 12 in our high schools. Improving educational outcomes from pre-school to year 12 should obviously be the new Education minister's primary goal. I again acknowledge the member for Elwick's contribution on this matter. You spoke quite a bit on it in your contribution and I listened to every word.

It is important to take a holistic approach to education policy - an approach that addresses the health and wellbeing of learners, their engagement with their school and wider communities, and ensures they receive adequate familial support. Providing access to services that assist with these matters all feed into education outcomes. I know the Government is looking to address these matters through a number of policies they announced during the election, including providing free access to speech pathologists, psychologists and social workers. Investing in additional school support staff and extending existing mental health programs will go a long way to addressing shortfalls where they currently exist. For the term of the new Government I will be keeping in close contact with the schools in my electorate to ensure their needs are being met, and that tangible, positive outcomes for our students, teachers, schools and families are being reached.

I am buoyed by the great work that is done by constituents, to make the Launceston electorate a great place to live and work. After many years as a local councillor, and now as a member of the Legislative Council, perhaps I could be forgiven if I had become cynical, but I am truly compelled by the fantastic people I represent in this place. There is so much going on in Launceston that it would take me a lifetime to mention it all here. But suffice to say that the spirit, hard work and innovation that is going on in our state's northern capital is inspiring. This is not to whitewash over the issues that are taking a toll on people.

Housing, health and transport are serious issues in need of serious responses. However, I am optimistic that the next four years will yield positive results for the people in my electorate

of Launceston. I will do everything in my power to ensure that the Government makes good on its election promises and to make positive change for the people who need it.

[3.51 p.m.]

Ms FORREST (Murchison) - Mr President, I congratulate Her Excellency the Honourable Barbara Baker on her appointment as our new Governor. I look forward to ongoing engagement with her.

Further, I acknowledge and sincerely thank our previous governor, Kate Warner, our first - and obviously not the last - female governor. She has held this position in an exemplary manner. Kate Warner was a trail blazer in the legal world, a wonderful role model for all women and girls. A strong and fearless advocate for Tasmania and the areas on which she focused her work. Her work promoting restorative justice, more effective sentencing options, and gender equality will not be forgotten. I am sure she is not done yet. I am sure we would all agree that she has been an exemplar.

Before moving onto comment more broadly in reply to the Governor's speech I will read some of our former governor's own words, as written in a book *Postcards from Tomorrow: A Collection of Letters from Inspirational Women to Their 21 Year Old Selves*, edited by Kim Chandler McDonald. The book was published to raise funds for Lou's Place, the only daytime women's shelter in Sydney. I will not read the whole letter as it is a little too long to read here. I encourage members to buy the book, because you will support Lou's Place. I will quote the closing paragraph of our former governor's letter to her 21-year-old self:

Working as a Judge's Associate was enlightening and the cases in the courts have alerted you to problems and issues you were not really aware of - issues affecting women in particular. The trial of Molly Savage highlighted the problem of lack of access to safe abortions in this state in 1970. Molly, a back-yard abortionist, was responsible for the death of a number of young women in Tasmania, who contracted septicaemia from abortions she performed. In the divorce court, cases where women petitioned for divorce on grounds of cruelty, and the petitioners were invariably women, shone the light on domestic violence at a time when this was not considered a serious crime, and the definition of rape precluded the prosecution of a husband for the rape of his wife. At the same time, the emergence of second-wave feminism was drawing attention to issues of gender violence, and so the first domestic violence refuges or shelters were being opened along with rape crisis centres.

You were pregnant with your first child in December 1972 when Gough Whitlam won the federal election. This heralded many changes, including the Royal Commission on Human Relationships, which sparked conversations on complex social issues and gender equality. The birth of the Australian Law Reform Commission under the leadership of Michael Kirby was another legacy of the Whitlam Government. It was exciting to be an emerging legal academic and law reformer presenting so many diverse opportunities and projects to be involved with.

While you seized many of those opportunities, you could have been bolder, and less worried about failure. You often wished to be smarter, quicker thinking, better at grasping philosophical theories, more original, and

particularly, better at maths and statistics, and better at telling jokes. And I think our family might wish you were much more sympathetic and patient when they were feeling unwell. However, determination, enthusiasm, persistence and a willingness to continue learning, have been your greatest strengths, and this has led to so many opportunities. As a result, there have been many of these - some surprising - not the least being given the opportunity to be the first female Governor of Tasmania, and you have learned that seizing opportunities, no matter how daunting, is rewarding. So here I am, signing off to you as Kate Warner, Governor of Tasmania.

I find it really quite an amazing reflection, her writing to her 21-year-old self, amazing stories in that book. I encourage you to get one. If you do not know how to do it, I am happy to help.

I also congratulate the Premier and his team for their re-election on the 1 May election. It was a lengthy wait for certainty of a majority and I wish them well. I always will work constructively with the Government to achieve the best possible outcomes for all Tasmanians. I will have more to say about the election itself shortly.

Importantly, I congratulate you, Mr President, on your re-election to this House and your re-election to the leadership role of President by your peers, a strong endorsement of your previous efforts in that role.

I welcome our new member for Windermere, who now sits to my left, and I wish him well in his role. I look forward to his inaugural address as soon as tomorrow, which is great. We will be quiet during that, but that ends there.

Also, in welcoming our new member for Windermere, I acknowledge our former member for Windermere who was robbed of the opportunity after 18 years of service to make a valedictory contribution. A dedicated member to this place, leaving on his own terms, making a decision to retire and being denied that opportunity was abysmal. I really felt for him in that. It has been said in this place Ivan Dean was a really hard worker and he was. He worked really hard in this place. He spent more time in the Chamber than many other members. He would beaver away through legislation, particularly police offences amendment acts.

Mr Willie - Or he would relate police to other fields that had nothing to do with it.

Ms FORREST - But when he got up to speak on those, you knew he was speaking from some sense of knowledge and authority on that and so we listened. We did sometimes accept his point of view and sometimes the House did not. But he was always well informed on those matters because of his long service in the police service.

I am not, obviously, a member of his electorate, a constituent of his in that region, but you talk to anyone in that area about how hard he worked for his constituents. And it was one of those things that many members would be aware of and certainly his constituents were aware of. I am sure the current member for Windermere would have heard about that a round the traps. I do acknowledge his contribution and think it is really sad he was not afforded the opportunity to make a valedictory speech, as he would have really wanted.

Third, and equally importantly, of note is the re-election of the member for Mersey - who has left because I got the call first. Although uncontested, which means he avoided some of

the stress of an election, it is a testament to the high regard with which he is held in the community of Devonport, Latrobe and surrounds.

Before commenting on the matters raised in the Governor's Address, I will speak on some of the matters raised in the Premier's Address because I missed the opportunity to speak when parliament was prorogued with the calling of the election, so I will speak about both together.

Before doing that specifically, I first note and commend the efforts of the Premier and his government, including so many of the extremely hardworking public servants who worked tirelessly over the last year-and-a-half to get through the most challenging time we have experienced in many, many years and probably in our lifetime, that being the COVID-19 pandemic.

I acknowledge again the leadership shown by the Premier and the collaborative approach he took working with the opposition leader, Rebecca White - as she was at the time, the Leader of the Tasmanian Greens, myself, and other members as we worked together to address the challenges that evolved and changed on a daily basis as we dealt with the COVID-19 pandemic.

Time passes and you can sometimes forget that really collaborative approach that was taken. I do take the point of other members that working together on things is always a better outcome and we should always strive for that. Establishing the Premier's Economic and Social Recovery Action - what is it called? PESRAC. Whatever it stands for - I have forgotten now - Advisory Committee.

Mr Valentine - Advisory Council, yes.

Ms FORREST - That is right, or council, yes, to bring together a range of stakeholders was an important and effective process, although I do have a couple of reservations.

First, I believe there were some sectors not directly represented there. It is a difficult thing to get that balance completely right.

Second, that, more importantly, there is a heightened risk that Tasmanians have become complacent about the challenges ahead, thinking that PESRAC was a root and branch review and that given the Premier has indicated he will implement all 52 recommendations, we will soon be back on track. That is about as far from the reality that we face as anyone could be.

PESRAC really only just tinkers at the edges. They had a task to do, a job to do and they did it, but it was not a full root and branch review that was going to provide the way forward. Bigger picture issues were sidestepped. To be fair, it was never the intention of PESRAC to tackle all the bigger issues. We must not forget this. I will comment a bit more on that later. I will not focus specifically on the PESRAC recommendations now as there will be opportunities to do this at a later time as they are adopted - or not adopted - as the case may be.

First, I will make some comments about the recent election, the bogus justification for calling the election and making election day coincide with the scheduled election for the Legislative Council. I know there are many who do not fully appreciate the significance of this decision and the disruption and the uneven playing field created, as the two elections have very different rules as to how they are run.

The Premier stated he needed to be assured of a stable majority government. The result following all the distribution of preferences means the result is exactly the same as it was on 26 March. I would argue the Premier had led a stable government over the most challenging 12 months in recent history. He then claimed he needed certainty as he had lost his majority in the House. In reality he had lost his majority some time ago. Yet the government had continued to be stable during that time, operating well, albeit with the defeat of some of its legislation in that House. It was legislation that would have faced almost certain defeat in this House, so the outcome was the same, except for the politics perhaps.

We all know Legislative Council elections are held on the first Saturday in May every year for two or three of the 15 divisions. The Premier had no lack of non-conflicting Saturdays to choose from. He chose the day that gave his candidates in Legislative Council elections a distinct advantage. The independence of Tasmania's Legislative Council has not only been maintained, but also highly valued for over 160 years. The important and significant difference between House of Assembly elections and Legislative Council elections, in that Legislative Council candidates have a strict spending limit which rises by \$500 a year, is a significant difference and creates a very uneven playing field. This year that limit was \$18 000, whereas a member of the House of Assembly election - we know in the past they have spent between \$200 000 or \$300 000. It is completely non-comparable.

A return must be lodged with the returning officer following the election recording all election-related expenditure. This means television advertising is beyond the reach of almost all candidates in the Legislative Council elections. However, party candidates have the benefit of their party advertising for the House of Assembly election. The same applies to mail-outs and newspaper and online advertising by the major parties.

As I wrote a little while ago now, in an opinion piece, there appears to be no mechanism to attribute costs to the vicarious benefit gained through appearances with the leader, the opposition leader or any other sitting member during the campaign period, which is obviously heightened during a lower House election. Additional promotion of and publicity for a party candidate is a clear benefit to their campaign and something not afforded to an independent candidate. This is exacerbated when the Premier, opposition leader or other sitting member is also contesting an election on the same day.

The decision to call a 1 May election means Legislative Council elections have become even more politicised, creating enormous disadvantages for Independent members, whose appeal for the need for sensible and measured review of legislation has been effectively drowned out by the over-hyped need for stable government. To deliberately tilt the playing field against Independent candidates is an appalling overuse of power.

Members will be aware there is a legislative provision to enable the Legislative Council elections to be moved to an alternate Saturday in May if a federal election is called on the first Saturday in May. I believe there is also a mechanism in the Constitution Act to enable that to happen with a conflicting state government election, but that requires advice from the Premier. In this case, the Premier would hardly have recommended that since he made the decision in the first place.

Back to the timing of the election, it may have convenient for the Premier, but as I have spoken about previously, spare a thought for our long-serving Independent member for Windermere, Ivan Dean, who is no longer with us. Mr Dean was not even afforded the

opportunity to make a valedictory speech in parliament, despite his years of service and the decision to leave parliament at a time of his choosing as the last sitting week of his term over 16 years did not proceed. This may be seen as a minor thing for some but I believe Mr Dean was let down unnecessarily. In my view, it is vital the independence of the Legislative Council is maintained to truly and effectively act as a House of review. This is not a criticism of the electors who have delivered an unprecedented number of party line members to this place. It is up to those of us who are Independent members to ensure the community is aware of the importance of independent scrutiny.

Despite what the Premier says, our role here is to question the Government's policy decisions expressed in legislation, undertake committee work to investigate more fully and deeply the policy decisions of government, to ask questions and hopefully get answers, and hold the government of the day to account. To hear the Premier say that is not our job was appalling. I do not know what he thinks our job is: to sit here and find the rubber stamp to join with the Liberal Party members and stamp it?

Ms Webb - It is literally in our handbook that that is our job.

Ms FORREST - It is. Not only in our handbook but any other historical information about the establishment of the Legislative Council will tell you that. I do not know what he was thinking but I did not ring him that day because I might have told him what I really thought. I was very disappointed to have the Premier state that this was not our role. It beggars belief that he would actually think that. If he thinks this House should also be a rubber stamp to government and their decisions, he is wrong. I hope we, as a House, demonstrate that we cannot do that, regardless of our party affiliation or not.

I have watched how difficult it is for a party member to go against the party line. I have seen a member kicked out of a party in this place when he chose to cross the Floor. No turning back, gone. That is it; that is how it works. Apparently, that is what happens in the Labor Party. If you upset them, decide not to go with them, then you are out of the party and you are on your own.

I understand with the Liberal Party it is slightly different in that you would probably never get promoted. The Premier did it once, way back, and he is now Premier, so I guess you never know, never give up hope. We just do not see it happen for fear of the lack of opportunity it gives to those party-aligned members.

I hope the Premier will find, in his sensibleness, to actually apologise to us for that comment he made that our job is not to hold the government of the day to account. He said that was the job of the opposition. We are not the opposition in this place. We are here to review legislation and government policy and for him to say that we are not to do that - that it is not our job - that was a very poor comment from the Premier.

Before commenting on some matters raised in the Premier's Address, which is still relevant and, in Her Excellency, the Governor's Address, I make some observations about the Cabinet reshuffle. I was very pleased to see Health and Mental Health and Wellbeing are being held by one minister, Mr Rockliff, who now has a very heavy workload but it was good to see them together. We should be taking a holistic approach to most things.

I was also pleased to see Mrs Petrusma given Minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Management as well as being Minister for the Prevention of Family Violence. It is entirely appropriate to have those two portfolios together; they must work in concert. Since her appointment in that area I have been in contact with her and I had a meeting with her this week. In spite of her busyness she made time for this, which I really appreciate. The meeting was about a tool used by the Victorian Police where 29 questions are asked or answered by a victim to police during an exchange with a victim of family violence or domestic abuse.

The ABC ran a very informative story on 17 May this year about this assessment tool and there was a great podcast that was done that I shared with the minister and with the commissioner. I want to read some excerpts from this ABC story and this model has also been referred to by Jess Hill in her SBS program *See What You Made Me Do*, the three-part series that is based on her book of the same name. The ABC article says:

The way police in Victoria gauge risk in family violence hasn't always looked so sharp. The new L17 was only rolled out in July 2019, having being completely redesigned as an actuarial risk assessment tool, the second of its kind in the world. The instrument allows officers to more confidently triage the state's tens of thousands of family violence incidents, eliminating some of the dangerous guesswork from what is becoming an increasingly critical part of policing in Australia. Until it was deployed, police attending callouts would simply make a professional judgement of whether future family violence was likely. A method that was found to have just 50/50 odds of success.

You might as well flip a coin. That is how accurate their assessment was over time.

Little wonder then that it led to catastrophic failures, its flaws and the officers who made the egregious errors dealing with family matters hauled over the coals of coronial inquest after inquest and later a royal commission.

I do feel for the police that they did not have the adequate tools in this case:

One of the most glaring problems was the L17, then made up of dozens of risk factors informed by domestic violence research, that officers ticked if they knew them to present. At the end they had to make a call, an educated guess: was future family violence likely or unlikely?

Troy McEwan is an associate professor of clinical and forensic psychology at Swinburne University, who led the development of Victoria Police's risk assessment tool. The article goes on:

McEwan designed a study to test how accurate that gut feeling was. 'It was essentially as effective as a coin toss,' she said. It was gathering some nice data, but in terms of its ability to predict which families would come back to police attention - an indicator of where police should be focusing resources, trying to prevent harm - it was pretty much a crapshoot.

Alarmingly, some of the risk assessment tools currently being used by other police forces are as effective as Victoria's Police's old one. In NSW police

use a screening instrument called DVSAT to work out the level of threat of future harm to victims of domestic violence, so those at greatest risk can be prioritised and supported, but an evaluation by BOSCAR in 2018 found it performed very poorly and often 'little better than chance'.

Madam Acting President I am informed that Tasmanian Police do not currently use a similar tool as Victoria. I hope the minister considers this as a matter of urgency. She was very interested to hear about it and has listened to the broadcast and read the article I sent. I know the commissioner, when I had a discussion with him, was also interested in looking at how they can better do that. I believe there was an incident in Zeehan yesterday; in the media that looks like it may have been related to domestic abuse or family violence. I do not know whether that will be confirmed over time. But although we have been seeing very highly publicised cases particularly in Queensland, with the tragic death of Hannah Clarke and her three children and too many others, it does happen here and it will happen here, unless we have the tools to prevent it.

The article continues:

And so, McEwan began the process of designing and testing an actual instrument developed from a random sample of 24 000 family violence incidents recorded by Victoria Police in the year to June 2014. While cases with standard risk stay with frontline officers and were referred to support services, most medium and all high-risk cases are sent to one of the states 31 family violence investigation units for further assessments, and if they need it, intensive risk management.

Interestingly, when McEwan compared the police division that was using the tool and managing cases accordingly with a neighbouring division that was not, the one that was using the new response were 30% relative reduction in high severity family violence over 9 months. That is the target -

She said:

- reducing severity, reducing the harms.

'Looking back at our history, member bias might have been, 'Oh no, not that family again, they're having a blue, it's just a verbal domestic, I am sick of this, I won't write up a report, because they really annoy me', he said. 'But that is being taken out now.'

...

Claire Bennett, whose team at Womens Health West responds to family violence referrals from police, says she's noticed officers' narratives on the new L17s are 'less victim blaming' than they used to be.

'We have also noticed that due to the new VP-SAFvR tool and the training police have had that they more routinely separate the parties involved before the assessment is conducted', she said. 'This is critical to avoid further coercion and intimidation by the perpetrator.'

'The new response does not replace the need for charging people or holding perpetrators accountable, it sits alongside it', McEwan said. 'It's a pernicious myth that all police can do is charge crime. In family violence cases ... the priority has to be victim safety. Are they safe when they walk out of a police station? In family violence policing the idea that police should focus their resources on prevention as well as prosecution is fairly new - it's a massive shift for police.'

In that way the new tool and the wider response model it activates is about building a system that can support that shift.

Madam Acting President, it is a lengthy article, and I have not quoted all of it, but it is very informative. It offers a real opportunity to do better in our state in dealing with family violence, particularly the coercive control aspects, which are very insidious. Women often do not know they are victims of it for quite some time. Sometimes the only physical violence that a woman in such a relationship experiences is when she is murdered. It is a bit late then. I commend the whole article to members.

Another matter that crosses over between prevention of family violence and the justice system is the impact family violence has on its victims and the likelihood they will end up in the justice system. Recent research published in *The Lancet* described an international study that found four out of five women in prison in Scotland have a history of head injury, mostly sustained through domestic violence. Debra Thompson's book will tell you all about that.

An article published by the Simon Fraser University reported, and I quote:

Researchers, including SFU psychology graduate student, Hira Aslam, say the study has important implications for the female prison population more broadly and could help to inform mental health and criminal justice policy development. 'The findings are incredibly sobering', says Aslam. 'While we anticipated that the incidence of head injuries among women who are involved in the criminal justice system would be high, these estimates exceeded our expectations.'

Researchers also found that violent criminal behavior was three times more likely among women who had a history of significant head injury, while women who sustained such injuries, generally had prison sentences that were three times longer. Two-thirds were found to have suffered repeated head injuries. Nearly all reported a history of abuse.

...

'The relationship between head trauma and both violent crime and length of incarceration suggests that there may be an important consideration in the assessment and management of violent offending, as well as in reducing the risk for reoffending,' said Aslam. 'There is need to consider these vulnerability factors in Canada and elsewhere in developing appropriate policy and interventions for this population.'

I do not think Canadians are any different from us. I believe if we look in our prison population, it would be very similar. Acquired brain injury is a feature of fetal alcohol syndrome disorder, an often-unrecognised contributor in our prison population as well. We really must adopt a primary prevention model in these areas to ensure we address both avoidable causes and contributors to criminalisation of victims through no fault of their own.

As I read the Premier's Address my thoughts wandered back to 2014, when the current Government was swept to power. The Liberals' plan for a better future was formulated early in 2013, and as I recall, by the time of the March 2014 election it was hopelessly out of date and needed serious updating, not least because of the rapid deterioration in the state's financial position during the last 12 months of the Labor government. But the Liberals did not bother to update the plan because they were certain to win the forthcoming election regardless. The purpose of the plan was to win an election, not necessarily put the state on an optimum path.

To do that, a more profound analysis of the underlying problems is a necessary prerequisite. To be fair, the task is often difficult in opposition - when the Liberals were in opposition - lacking both information and staff to help formulate a plan. Modern politics defers to media departments to fill the gaps. In the 2013 plan for a better future, the most significant new investment was \$76 million over four years to tackle elective surgery waiting lists. It seems like a pittance now, doesn't it? Anyone with the understanding of the state's fiscal challenge at the time knew the plan was a ridiculously inadequate offering, given the immensity of the problems facing the state. Remember that is in 2013. This is well before COVID-19. The pattern was repeated in 2018 - before COVID-19 - and again this year.

The plan presented to electors this year - not just the government's plan but the opposition's plan as well - an election manifesto is not a plan that will guide the state down this optimum path. But why not, you may ask - because all parties have their heads well and truly buried in the sand on this point.

That became glaringly obvious recently when Treasury released the latest report into fiscal sustainability. I know the member for Elwick spoke about this. Under no scenario will the state post anything other than cash deficits every year for the next 15 years. We all knew this was likely to be the case, but there was a conspicuous silence during the election campaign.

The 2019 Fiscal Sustainability Report painted a bleak picture, and things have got worse since, not least because of COVID-19. But we should not delude ourselves that COVID-19 is the reason for the predicted cash deficits in the future. The die was cast years ago on that.

Madam Acting President, in responding to Her Excellency's speech and the Premier's Address, I suggest we need urgent attention to several areas: access to safe, secure housing; timely access to health care both primary and acute; and access to skills and training for the model that attracts and supports the adequate number of trainers, not just trainees.

There are many factors that have negatively impacted on these areas. Whilst COVID-19 and the response to the economic and social impact have resulted in an increase in these challenges in some cases, policy decisions made in the absence of a holistic long-term vision and plan will always create imbalance, inequality, and a disproportionate burden in some areas.

COVID-19 brought the importance of safe, secure housing into sharp relief. It is impossible to stay at home and keep yourself and others safe if you have no home, and that was particularly evident in the north-west when we had the hardest lockdown in the state. The

instigation of more safe night spaces was a welcome initiative and much needed, but I believe these should be seen as a permanent solution because there are always people who find themselves in an emergency situation or homeless. I believe everyone has the right to safe, secure housing. Without this, children cannot regularly attend schools and adults cannot access other education.

This contributes to high rates of unemployment, poor literacy and numeracy, low health literacy, increased risk of intergenerational poverty and disadvantage, inability to access timely health care, and the list goes on. As a civilised society we can and must do better. I tire of hearing how many dollars are allocated to address this serious problem while at the same time watching the growth of waiting lists and waiting times to access safe, affordable housing.

I find one change in particular regarding the Cabinet reshuffle curious, to say the least. Mr Ferguson is now Minister for State Development, Construction and Housing as well as a few other things. I fear this risks Housing being considered only through an economic lens, without the dual approach encompassing the human and social aspects that housing represents. We need to build more houses and more homes. However, access to safe, secure housing, including public and social housing, is much more than four walls and a roof over your head. Housing of vulnerable Tasmanians must be considered through a comprehensive lens of access to essential services and community. This will be a matter I will take the opportunity to delve deeply into at a later time but, to me, housing is a human service, not a matter simply of its construction.

Madam Acting President, you talked about the difficulty of getting builders at the moment and they can pretty much charge what they like. Fair enough, that is what everyone does, I suppose, but it does make it difficult. Policy decisions, as well-intentioned as they may be but made without a clear, comprehensive, long-term holistic approach, can result in other problems that add to the challenge. This includes policy to address the significant challenges associated with access to safe, secure housing. For example, programs that have been implemented as part of the COVID-19 response such as the HomeBuilder Stimulus has in fact added to the challenge of ensuring that we have an adequate, skilled workforce to enable new homes to be built.

For anyone wanting to engage a builder, plumber, electrician, plasterer, painter or joiner at the moment, there is a very long lead time and the prices have increased significantly. This is good for tradies, but not so good for consumers. COVID-19 has also made many building products and supplies very difficult to source, adding to the challenge. You talk to any builder about getting building products whether it be timber or even just the hinges for the doors, it is nearly impossible for the cabinetry fittings and things like that.

As I mentioned a key and ongoing issue related to this challenge is the availability of trainers. I am not sure this is fully understood by the decision makers and the minister, Ms Courtney, will need to be fully aware of it if we are to address this massive challenge. There are not only issues in construction, it is also an issue in automotive, hospitality, aged care, et cetera. There just are not the trainers there to provide the training to increase the workforce in these vital areas.

This is not a new problem, this was a pre COVID-19 problem, so we need to do better and we need to do it really fast. I will keep an open mind of the plan to change TasTAFE into a government business, if that is still on the cards which I assume it is. It was in the PESRAC

report so I assume it is - the Government has been a bit quiet on it lately. There are so many unanswered questions about that proposal and that really is a matter for another time and I will leave it until then.

As I read through the Premier's Address - this is why I am speaking a bit longer because I am covering the issues that were addressed there as well as in the Governor's reply. With the subsequent election promises, I am pleased to see commitments on a number of other areas I have been seeking support for reform in for many years, including investment in mental health, especially in our regions. We need to be particularly aware of the very long-lasting, negative mental health impact that COVID-19 will have on so many people, Australians generally, and I fear for Victorians, and the very real challenge they will be facing. I know that the mental health impact on people in Tasmania is still significant and particularly on the north-west coast. If I run into my colleagues from the hospital, those who were in the front line are still very anxious and their mental health is even now very fragile.

This is going to go on for some time. We cannot think it will be gone in a year or two, it will not. There is going to be a long time with a long legacy. For parents of babies born in this period it is going to be an enormous challenge in getting used to that. Many parents who were in lockdown during that period are now getting sick themselves because the parents and the babies were not exposed to the bugs as they did not go to day care or child care and now are getting everything, the parents included.

The other areas I am pleased to see investment and commitment in are affordable dental care, and that is so important for social interactions as well as your general health and welfare. We know that dental care in early pregnancy can reduce the risk of premature birth. A service that was provided in the north-west as part of the review of the services when that happened a few years ago. Support for kinship carers, how long have we lobbied for that? Years and years and we could not do without them. Improvements to access to Tasmania's controlled access to medicinal cannabis. How long have we been asking for that?

We still need these things rolled out, progressed and support for regional events. I have a vested interest in some of these events particularly the young performative. We did all consume the arts for our own health and welfare during COVID-19 and we did it for nothing and I think it is to ensure these events can continue - David Walsh has made statements about Dark Mofo and we know Taste of Tasmania is up for grabs. We need to be really cautious we do not lose some of these things because it all seems a bit hard at the moment.

Another area I would like to touch on is that related to local government reform. I note this now sits with Mr Jaensch. It seems we have an awful lot to talk about with this perennial problem but very little action. Will Mr Jaensch have the strength of character to actually address this? Time will tell. For what it is worth we should stop talking about amalgamations and mergers. We know this goes nowhere and it is not the right approach anyway. We need to take a new and fresh approach and should have a statewide conversation led by a well-resourced electoral commission to consider and recommend a redistribution of boundaries of local government. At arm's length from government and local government with an independent electoral commission.

I will not mention the war to the member for McIntyre. Of course, such an investigation and consultation would need some guidance from the minister with regard to the areas to be

considered and the parameters of these matters. They should not just go off on a foray, it should have some parameters and guidance.

In my view, matters that should be considered include the overall number of councils, the number of elected representatives, any mechanisms that would be necessary to ensure adequate regional representation and council or municipal boundaries with consideration of communities of interest, road linkages and geographical features. These matters should all be considered through such an inquiry process to ensure recommendations are based on evidence, through research and broad and deep community consultation.

I am not saying it is going to be easy, but this gives a model for getting it away from this whole circle of no action that we have seen for years. After new boundaries or municipalities are established, the system of review, say every seven to 10 years, should be conducted, most appropriately through a legislative instrument, as it is for the Legislative Council and the House of Assembly electoral boundaries. Again, this should be undertaken through an independent process at arm's length from local government members. I believe this would be a more acceptable approach to most Tasmanians. I urge the minister and the Government to consider it. Otherwise we are just going to keep talking about it. If you talk to most people out there in public land, they actually want something to happen, they really do.

A parting word on the subject of local government, if I may. It is that time of year when local governments release their budgets for the forthcoming year and what rates will be required to pay the bills. We are starting to see some of that reported in the media of recent days. My observation is that some increases are greater than historical trends. This is not surprising: they are in the same business as state government, trying to deliver a greater level of service with low revenue growth. We are in this together really. There will come a time with local government where shuffling the boundaries of local government will be akin to shuffling the deck chairs on the *Titanic*. The elephant in the room, just as it is with the state government, is how to ensure a fiscally sustainable revenue stream which can fund the services which communities need. Councils need a reliable revenue stream, state government does, but we do not like to mention that because that is a dirty word.

There are times when we need to pause and look where we are going. PESRAC did a commendable job, but we should not kid ourselves this is a blueprint for the future; it was never intended to be, in my view. It has identified many concerns worthy of consideration. But when you stand back and look at the final report it is really just a few coats of paint splashed on a rickety old building. Nothing more, nothing less. The PESRAC report has a few specific recommendations about the biggest problems facing the state, the health system and affordable housing. Mental health had a mention.

In the case of housing, the recommendation was that we need a housing strategy. I actually thought we had a housing strategy. It is not just Hobart, the lack of housing. There is an extraordinary increase in my constituent base expressing concerns about housing or access to housing, public and private. Private is not available either. As other members have mentioned, they are selling for an extraordinary amount when they are on the market, and not for long.

I am certainly not belittling the efforts of PESRAC in any way. I am just trying to make the point that the PESRAC report should not be seen as a blueprint for the future. As I said, I do not believe it was ever intended to be. We should not suggest that it was. Rather, it was

a response to the social and economic impact of COVID-19, and that is what they did. They were tasked with that and that is what they did.

While the report refers to pre-existing challenges and structural problems, we are not told exactly what they are. You would have to know what they are to make sense of that. That is the perennial problem facing us. There is little widespread information and even less discussion and certainly no consensus as to where we actually are. If we do not fully understand where are, it is hard to know where we are going. The Premier's Address was of no assistance in this regard. To outline a bit of extra spending then admit there is more to do without specifying what this might mean is not a plan. The election campaign did not lift the fog.

Her Excellency, the Governor's speech will take me a little bit more time to actually fully consider, but I suggest we do not have a lot more clarity from that either. With all due respect to Her Excellency, she does not write that speech just in case you were not aware of that fact. Do we all accept the inevitability of the ongoing cash deficit, no net operating surpluses? I am talking about all government spending. How much extra will the election on top of the state of the state pledges add to the deficit? We will see this when we get to the budget, I guess.

I ask if this is even a problem, if the needs and welfare spending to support our communities adds to the deficit. If it is not a problem, then why not spend more if deficits are not a problem, especially in the areas where we desperately need it. There are many areas, we have all identified them. Maybe there are some who believe, as the Premier apparently does, as he noted on page 1 of his address, that the plan will, and I quote from this speech, '... generate the revenues we need to invest into health, education, housing, and looking after our most vulnerable'. It is a shame his Treasury department did not agree with that when they put up out the Fiscal Sustainability Report. With all the spending promised in the election period, I am not sure how relevant that comment now is. Admittedly, it was made back in March but, there we go.

The Fiscal Sustainability Report reiterated the reality expressed by the 2019 version of the same report that we need revenue sources to grow and that will grow as fast as the predicted growth in spending in areas such as health, which before long will represent 40 per cent of the state budget. The report noted that growing the economy will not grow revenue at the same rate and this is the elephant in the room that has been ignored for years. It was in the last Fiscal Sustainability Report, the rewritten Fiscal Sustainability Report when they realised the first one was not done right and then this one we have now under a five-yearly rotation. How much longer are we going to pretend? I am sure this is a matter we will explore in more detail in coming months, particularly when we get to the budget and I know the Public Accounts Committee will look at this as well.

I note and commend the efforts that have seen the unemployment rate fall. I know there are still some questions about participation rates and underemployment but it could have been so much worse. We do need to remind ourselves of that, it could have been so much worse but we are not over it yet either. We constantly see the border restrictions in other jurisdictions or with Tasmania to other jurisdictions - Sydney is a hotspot. I am surprised it did not happen yesterday or the day before. So now all the Sydney travellers who were coming for time in Tasmania have been stopped. Talking to tourism and hospitality operators in my electorate, they are just used to it now but it is still really hard. We are a long way from over - that is the point I am making.

The employment rates may have a lot to do with the closing of the borders and the fall in immigration and foreign students but it has certainly brought home to me the downside effects of recent arrivals on wages and unemployment. For the first time in a while we have seen youth unemployment fall and wages rise. It has been a long time since we have seen that. It is too early to tell whether this will occur over time further and, if it does, to what extent it will close the growing gap between those who need the support of government and those who are able to maintain and/or gain employment.

The number of people in our regions of Tasmania who are still in insecure employment, facing housing stress or who have become homeless, have been waiting for months, if not years, longer than recommended for essential surgery, has grown enormously.

That is not just part of COVID-19. We did shut down elective surgery for a period but that was a relatively short period in the big span of things and it has been a long time since that was the case, that we stopped all elective surgeries. These problems were present pre-COVID and they have been exacerbated by COVID, yes, but they are not new.

Following on from the Premier's comments in his Address and now following the election, will we close the health gap and the housing affordability gap or are the steerage passengers destined to go down with the good ship *Titanic*? Forgive the overblown metaphor, but that is what will happen if we let inequity run rampant. It is not something I wish to see but I know I am seeing growing need in our communities in the areas of housing and health care. We can and should address these.

The issue of increasing inequality in Tasmania is a matter I will be seeking to have understood better in the Fiftieth Parliament of Tasmania. This also encompasses gender inequality. I have often argued a gender lens should be applied to all policy decisions to ensure neither men or women are disproportionately disadvantaged and gender budgeting should be considered the norm.

In their recent budget Victoria had a gender statement with it. I have spoken to an economist who is preparing one as we speak. It may be done by now for the Queensland budget. We used to lead the world in this in Australia and have fallen well behind, so I sincerely hope we see a gender impact statement accompanying the money bills to be considered in this place. I have spoken to some of the female members of the Government on this. I have not spoken to the Minister for Women on this one yet, but I hope we do not get tacit approval to this sort of thing and then not do it.

To assist in this task of helping us focus on these things I have placed on the Notice Paper a motion to establish a joint House sessional committee with four members from each House on gender and equality. This committee, if supported, would examine and report on any bill referred to it by either House in order to examine gender and equality impacts, any matter related to gender and equality referred to it by either House, and any matter related to gender and equality initiated by its own motion. I will speak more about that later. I will do that not next week, but after when we get towards the budget session. It is about examining what is happening in other places. It is about understanding what we can, should and would be able to do here. It is about understanding the challenges we have, understanding where the gaps are. It is not about sending every bill to a committee to have a gender lens run over it and anyone who suggests that I tell at the outset it is not what it is about and you are wrong if you suggest that.

Chapter 8 of the PESRAC Report discusses lessons from COVID-19 and I agree that essentially the lessons that are to be learnt are from a disaster management point of view. The lessons from COVID are wider than that. Learnings for me include the fact that for the first time in living memory, unemployed persons received assistance so that they could live above poverty levels. What a wonderful society we lived in for that period.

Ms Webb - In the 1990s the dole was close to that. We have diminished it over the last 25 years.

Ms FORREST - Yes, it has not grown with wages. I accept this a federal government policy and responsibility, but it has significant impacts with health and wellbeing of Tasmanians and the economy of Tasmania. It seems, apparently, we cannot afford to continue that policy. I wonder if anyone believes we cannot afford that, that we cannot afford to ensure all people could live above the poverty line at least.

We saw free access to child care, a policy many other successful democracies have had in place for many years. This supports women particularly, but it seems we cannot afford that either, despite the positive social and economic impacts this policy had. Providing accessible child care enhances economic output. It does not detract it. It is such a misnomer to say that is an economic burden on society. It is an economic benefit to society. Anyone who wants to understand that more, tell me and I will give you articles to read.

Does anyone here believe, as a nation we cannot afford this, that we cannot afford accessible free child care? I would be happy to hear their views and discuss with them the cost benefit analysis of accessible child care for all.

Much of the increased federal government debt is owned by the Reserve Bank of Australia. What this means in practice is we owe this money to ourselves. So, what is the problem? We owe the money to ourselves. It is only us who we have to call in. It is all about priorities. People always seem to forget if the government increases public debt then private assets increase. It is the iron law of accounting. More public debt, more private assets. It cannot work any other way. We are collectively better off and if we owe money to ourselves then repayment is not an issue, but some say it debases the currency. That is a nonsense proposition. It has no validity in today's world.

We abandoned the gold standard years ago. That tied currencies to amount of gold held by central banks. But it will lead to more inflation others will say. Possibly it could, yes, it could, but few are in the least concerned about all the money created by private banks every time they make a new loan, invariably to finance housing and in most cases existing housing - buying a property that is already built - which is quite clearly leading to inflationary house price rises as we have seen.

So why should the federal government not create more money to spend directly on the people? There are many unemployed resources and a lot of demand. This should be part of a revamped federalism, to distribute more to the states, as they do not have the ability of the federal government to create money through a currency issue.

Inflation can be avoided by pulling back. Once the unemployment rate goes down there are fewer unutilised resources. However, that is a political decision and if you have an election coming, we know what happens. Therefore, it takes control from politicians, from those in power. It is unlikely to be inflationary, with so many unemployed resources in the community;

and increased government spending leads to increased private investments. If an increased debt is owed to ourselves - thus presenting no repayment issues - then why would you not do it? Again, it is about priorities.

I suggest our state and federal governments are happy with the existing way of doing things. They are happy with the way society's spoils are currently being split, based on the unsound pretence that there is a budget constraint in the federal system which limits government spending. Unless you have had your head buried in the sand that is exactly what has got us through COVID-19. If you did not believe it before, you cannot ignore it now. That is exactly what we did. We have seen for ourselves that the response to COVID-19 has been how money is created to support our communities through borrowed funds we owe to ourselves. We need to look above and beyond traditional ways of doing things and traditional ways of thinking.

Lessons from COVID-19 are that we have a much greater ability than we previously imagined to address some of our increasing trends towards inequality. It will require the abandonment of some old ways. It can lead to a better federal system where the states being much closer to the coalface are better at delivering the extra services that are needed, demanded and can be afforded. That is why I consider the vaccination program should be handed over to the states. Except they have not got enough - and that is what they will not admit. The Victorians said they would buy their own vaccines, but they are not allowed to do so.

Madam Acting President, that is why the Premier's Address and the election promises - despite the welcome funding commitments - are disappointing. It gives the reader little idea about the state's challenges and it wilfully ignores the discussion about any new policy ideas; nor does it provide a plan for the future. We have seen for ourselves the response to COVID-19. We have seen how money is created to support our communities through borrowed funds that we owe to ourselves.

Interestingly, the Premier recently announced a \$100 million government loan to Incat. The title of the media release stated 'Delivering Incat support to boost the economy and secure jobs'. This is not a loan guarantee which is often used to support businesses gain finance from nervous lenders seeking more comfort. That is the way I read it. It is an actual loan of \$100 million. So, given the state of our finances, this will of course need to be borrowed, before being on-lent to Incat. The loan - as I know it from the Premier's media release of 18 June - states it will secure not only Incat's current workforce of 500 employees but will also add up to another 120 to 150 new employees to its operation - which is great news for Incat and for other people who provide services to Incat and componentry to Incat.

Mr President, I am not arguing against the loan. It is interesting that the Government has no trouble justifying a large loan to support an extra 120 to 150 jobs. I am sure there will be even greater flow-on effects if that amount of money was spent on health or housing. It is about priorities. It could be borrowed to give it to Incat, or to spend on health or housing.

The loan will no doubt be from TASCORP. As we know TASCORP needs to borrow on the open market, usually by issuing bonds or government IOUs. As I have already noted, the RBA is buying state government bonds. Hence, after the loan to Incat is finally made and all the money shuffling, bond issuing and bond purchasing on the secondary market by the RBA, the ultimate lender may well be the RBA to Incat - the borrower.

What is fascinating is what a move like this can lead to. We need to understand the whole system. I am looking forward to learning more about this from the Government, especially in the coming weeks and months as we head into the delayed budget session. I reiterate the question - do we see a clear plan for the future in the election manifesto? Do we see a clear plan for the future in Her Excellency's speech, prepared by the Government? Will we see a clear plan for the future in the August Budget? I sincerely hope that we see much more policy debate, with a clear acknowledgment of the challenges we face and a plan for the future both now as parliament resumes and particularly in the upcoming budget.

I have guiding principles to my life and work both here in this place and also in my former role as a nurse and midwife. I will fight for everyone and work with anyone for the benefit of the individual and the broader community. I will call out injustice, prejudice and inequality wherever I see it. I commit to working with the Government as I have in the past for the benefit of all Tasmanians. I am a realist and a pragmatic optimist who lives in hope that we will see much more than promises to splash a bit of cash around to win an election.

I am eternally hopeful that we will have a meaningful policy debate full of explanation of the challenges ahead, a clear statement of priorities and a plan for the future.

Mr President, I note Her Excellency's Address.

[4.51 p.m.]

Ms PALMER (Rosevears) - Mr President, it is good to be back here in this place. It is a place where you have to fight pretty hard to earn your seat, and certainly a place where we should never get too comfortable. For those of us from across the north of Tasmania who spend time away from our family and our loved ones while we are here, this place is also where we reconnect with those who become our support network and indeed our family while we are away from home.

For me, in particular, what a joy it is to now welcome an old friend to this place, the member for Windermere. Nick Duigan and I go back to when his hair was black and mine did not need to be recoloured every five weeks. I extend my sincere congratulations to Nick and to his family, in particular, his wife, Amanda. It is apparent to all of us in this place that it takes a huge effort to be part of a campaign. It takes bravery on behalf of the candidate but also a total commitment from family, and Nick's family certainly did that - including three teenage daughters, which was no mean feat. I am not sure what was in the water at Southern Cross studios but there are now three of us in this place and one in the other place.

Ms Rattray - I am hoping they have run out of water.

Ms PALMER - I am not sure how to take that from the member but anyway.

Ms Rattray - With the greatest respect.

Ms PALMER - All of us though with a passion for service.

Mr President, I also congratulate you, not only on your successful election campaign but also your re-election as President in this place; and the member for Mersey. I stand here as the proud member for the beautiful electorate of Rosevears and in a moment, I will take an opportunity to speak about my home.

First, to the third and historic election win of a majority Liberal Government. The extent of this victory and the extent of the personal vote that was received by our Premier, Peter Gutwein, leaves no doubt that this Government's agenda resonates with the everyday person right across our state. During the election campaign I had the privilege of attending one of the numerous Leaders debates. These debates certainly covered a number of issues and perhaps none more heartfelt and poignant as the issue of family violence.

What a moment it was, when a facilitator of the debate I attended asked about the Government's legislative plans around non-fatal strangulation. Our Premier made it very clear this Liberal Government will work to strengthen Tasmania's non-fatal strangulation laws. This Government recognises that non-fatal strangulation, choking or suffocation is an abhorrent form of violence and often leads to further family violence behaviour. Having spent the last two decades in the heart of a newsroom I continue to physically shudder at the horrendous statistic which is continuously reported, that one Australian woman dies every week as a result of domestic violence, whether that is at the hands of a current partner or a former partner. Non-fatal strangulation is a red flag in this space. This would be the red flag that shows police what decision needs to be made, that shows magistrates what decision needs to be made. It is a clear indicator of the immediate danger that a woman would be in.

I have recently spent time with Yvette Cehtel, CEO of the Women's Legal Service Tasmania. Yvette works day in, day out in this space. Her stories and evidence do not come from textbooks or from reports. She and her staff hear directly from Tasmanian women trying to navigate their way out of dangerous and controlling relationships. These are women who are seeking advice. They are women of all ages, all races and of all social demographics. Yvette has shared with me that for many of the Women's Legal Service clients who live the experience of non-fatal strangulation, they are either living with permanent disability such as the impact on their ability to speak, the impact on their speech, the quietening of their voice, or they live knowing that they are seven times more likely to die from a domestic violence incident. To put your hands around someone's throat to attempt to cut off a person's airway is an ultimate act of power and an ultimate act of control. A new offence of non-fatal strangulation will give a clear warning sign of escalating violence. As Yvette very clearly pointed out, women are 13 times more likely to be the victim of this than men.

The Liberal Government's commitment to strengthen non-fatal strangulation laws needs to also send a really strong cultural message it is never okay to put your hands around someone's neck and suffocate them. This comment is actually made in reference to younger women, who are reporting this is becoming part of sexual practice, with thanks to certain violence pornography. Culturally a new bar must be set here. I strongly believe and hope that the Government's commitment will be a firm and solid step in ensuring that message is sent. We must ensure that young women know that under no circumstance, no circumstance, even within a sexual relationship, this is an acceptable form of behaviour.

Yesterday we heard from our new Governor of Tasmania, her Excellency, Barbara Baker. It was so pleasing to hear her Excellency's comments on family violence remaining a top priority for her Government, and that there is nothing more important than the safety and wellbeing of children and young people, in particular those who are our most vulnerable. I would like to take this moment to congratulate her Excellency on her appointment. Her biography is overwhelming, both academically and indeed on the sporting field. Until last night I had not had the opportunity to personally meet her, but of all the things I have read and heard, I loved reading in the *Mercury* newspaper that she has an ability to laugh at herself. I

have always found throughout my life that those who are able to do that are usually the most humble of humans.

I also acknowledge our twenty-eighth governor of Tasmania, Professor Kate Warner AC, an extraordinary woman who made her mark, not only on the role, but also on all of those she met, including my daughter, Lily, who by a complete coincidence spent her seventeenth birthday seated next to Professor Warner at a breakfast.

On a lighter note, Launceston and its surrounds have been alive to the sound of music, quite literally. In May just past we were delighted to host the Australian Musical Theatre Festival. This national festival brought to our region performances, workshops, nationally acclaimed artists and teachers with over 40 events in total. Over 57 per cent of those who participated came from outside Launceston, with 47 per cent staying in paid accommodation for four nights. This is a great boost to our city and its surrounding areas, a great boost to northern Tasmania, but also a great boost to those who work in the performance industry.

I was fortunate to attend the festival launch at the Princess Theatre. This included performances by heavyweights of the Australian musical theatre, including Natalie Gamsu, Simon Gleeson and Natalie O'Donnell. It felt more like a show really than a launch. It was a night filled with excitement and extraordinary talent, but also of great emotion, as it was acknowledged there are theatres across Australia and across the world, small and large, that continue to remain closed with the house lights off. Many of us in the industry remain unable to perform, therefore unable to earn their income. The joy of being on the stage at the Princess Theatre launching this festival was especially overwhelming for the executive producer, Mr Tyran Parke. I must add that the event was hosted by our very own John X who also delighted the audience with an awful little song entitled *Poisoning Pigeons in the Park*. It was, however, received well.

The other sound I do hope resonates throughout Launceston and the West Tamar is the pounding of Boots on the Ground, a partnership formed between Rotary Tasmania, Community Care, Tasmanian Women in Agriculture and Rural Alive and Well. Its prime objective is to raise awareness and give practical on the ground support to rural Tasmanians to improve their wellbeing.

I had the opportunity to work with the West Tamar Rotary Club and the rather remarkable Karen Burbury, herself a farmer and local restaurateur, to bring together a group of like-minded people to raise money to support this vital program. During a traditional Sunday lunch fundraiser, we heard heartbreaking and exceptionally honest stories from Tasmanian farmers who had reached their breaking point and somehow, they had found their way out of depression and desperation. They shared how they had suffered, primarily in silence, one sharing the role her dogs had played as her companions in the long nights that she walked across her property.

I thank my colleagues, the member for Launceston, Rosemary Armitage, the member for McIntyre, Tania Rattray and the member for Windermere, Nick Duigan for joining me in support of this fundraiser and this important cause to those working in regional Tasmania. I would like to acknowledge the role West Tamar Rotarian, David Annear played in ensuring the success of the lunch.

Having spent the past few months in my electorate it has given me the opportunity to attend numerous community events, which I just love. A highlight was being asked by the

Deputy Mayor of West Tamar Council, Joy Allen, to be the quizmaster at a trivia night at the Beauty Point Bowls Club raising money for an all-ability playground. I have never been a quizmaster before. I have had lots of different roles but never a quizmaster. I did my very best. I learnt some useful things and some not so useful things.

This was just one of the events that this community is holding to ensure we are able to provide equipment in the playground for all children, regardless of ability or disability. This community has taken great ownership of this project and I will be attending another function this coming weekend in aid of this. They are very proud of the efforts that they have made and what they will be able to achieve for all children in this area in the West Tamar.

With children as a driving passion for me, it also has been such a joy to spend a morning each month dishing up toast and Milo at the Summerdale Primary School Breakfast Club. As a new breakfast club volunteer, I made the rookie mistake initially of cutting off the crusts for the children. For the first few it was fine. I do this for my children at home but by the time I had 30 lined up all asking for the crusts to be cut off I knew I was out of my depth. I will not make that mistake again. I cannot tell you how much I love being at this school, if only for a short time each month, learning the names of the children, what they like on their toast and then the little thank you as you give them a nice warm Milo and place it in their hands. It is wonderful team of volunteers. Some of them are teachers. Some of them are teachers' aides. Some of them are mums and they are there every school day morning and I want to acknowledge their kindness and the commitment that they show to turn up each morning and to be part of this fabulous program.

I could not possibly speak of my electorate without mentioning 14-year-old Exeter High School student, Layla Seen. Layla wrote a letter to the state Government setting out the circumstances faced by some female students in not having access to sanitary items. As a result of Layla's efforts, from term 3 of this year pads and tampons will be freely available in all government schools. This is the power of one voice and it is quite possible we will never know the impact that her voice will have on young teenage girls, or those even younger, right throughout Tasmania who have had to deal with this situation in their school life. I congratulate Layla for her efforts and her bravery in speaking up and I congratulate her on the extraordinary change that has been made because of what she did.

Another great voice in my electorate has come from the newly formed Tamar Valley Leaders Lunch which is run by Tamar NRM, the Rotary Club of Central Launceston, and the Launceston Chamber of Commerce. This brings together such a diverse array of leaders from across the city and surrounding areas to hear from speakers, such as our Premier, entrepreneur Errol Stewart, and, most recently, Professor David Adams, the leading scholar in regional and community innovation who spoke on the various layers of West Tamar's history and the likely prospects for its future.

At this meeting we also heard briefly from the very passionate Sandra Astills. Sandra is the coordinator of the 2021 Sustainable Living Festival. I am very excited about this festival. It is going to be held at Windsor Park in Riverside and this is going to showcase diverse and inspiring living options aimed to teach and to guide us on a journey to a happier, healthier and sustainable future. Who would not want to be part of that?

Already the festival is being so well supported with businesses, organisations, community groups and individuals all getting involved. I am particularly excited at the

inclusion of clothes swapping and toy exchange. You take six really good quality items and you get to take six really good quality items back. It is a unique and fun activity and it promotes sustainability within our community.

Mr President, you may indeed wish to join us up north. I would love to host you with the exhibitors including market stallholders, workshops, activities, food vendors, entertainers, artists, garden gurus and master chefs. I would like to let anyone listening know that there are still options available for any exhibitors or any individual or business who may wish to get on board.

Ms Rattray - The dates again, please?

Ms PALMER - I will find that out for you and I will get back to you. I would love to see you there.

Ms Rattray - Six pairs of shoes. I might be laughing.

Ms PALMER - I thought you might be able to contribute in the shoe area, honourable member. In closing, I welcome the Governor's speech and the determination of the Government to address those issues that electors clearly indicated they had concerns about during the election campaign, issues such as health, housing and infrastructure and, for me personally, issues such as family violence.

I welcome the plan outlined by our Premier, Peter Gutwein, to continue to take our state forward and I especially applaud that this plan is underpinned by compassion and conviction.

I note the Governor's Address, Mr President.

[5.08 p.m.]

Mr GAFFNEY (Mersey) - Mr President, I acknowledge all the different contributions made by members in this place. It is fascinating to hear where the debate or offerings go and it is really good because we come from a diverse background. It explains and helps the people listening to know that the people representing them here come from a wide range of experiences and backgrounds and all bring to the table something different.

Sometimes, I think, 'I do not want to repeat what has been said before' so I am conscious of that when I make my contribution. As others have done, it is important to say thank you. I thank Her Excellency and congratulate the Honourable Barbara Baker. I thought her learned words opening the Fiftieth Parliament for the first time, her accomplishments as an individual are many, and I extend a warm welcome as she takes on that most important role.

As the member for Murchison spoke about Her Excellency, Kate Warner, we can all say that she did that position proud and while not speaking on behalf of all Tasmanians, all the ones I know held her in the highest regard. She has done an excellent job and has set the standard for those to follow. I congratulate her and wish her the best in her future endeavours.

I congratulate the Government and the new ministers, their achievements during their last term, and I acknowledge the Premier, Peter Gutwein and the former health minister, Sarah Courtney for their role in the pandemic.

It is interesting, whilst being the profile or the face of the government there is a lot of work done behind them and we know that in our roles and positions and acknowledge that as much as we can.

Winning the election - and the Premier's personal vote was quite amazing - was not surprising. The people have spoken. There was a substantial Cabinet reshuffle and I thank the member for Murchison for highlighting that. It is important to put those people in those positions who will be able to make Tasmania a better place. I congratulate the member for her election to the Deputy Leader. Congratulations on that, so well done.

Whilst I acknowledge the successful candidates downstairs - especially the new members - and true, whilst we are two separate Houses with our own responsibilities, we have to remember we are the one parliament. So, at the end of the day, a decision or any bill that comes out of this place is through the parliamentary process. So, whilst we might have disagreements about our role in that - or our review, our purpose or our amendment - at the end of the day we are responsible for the legislative framework and the bills going into the future that will guide our community for many years.

Somebody mentioned the 1860 act yesterday or today and I was quite amused by that, thinking the bills and the acts we introduce here will be spoken about in generations to come.

I also acknowledge Rebecca White for her role as the leader of the opposition. I congratulate David O'Byrne for his current leadership role and also to Shane Broad for putting up his hand for the leadership position and for providing the Labor community with a choice.

I also acknowledge Cassy's huge personal vote for the fifth time to be elected to the lower House. That shows that the people of Tasmania are supportive of those people being in those roles.

I welcome the member for Windermere, Nick, and I have written to him to offer our support, as many of us would, and wished him all the best. I am sure he will enjoy this place and this environment and I am sure he will have a lot to contribute.

Like the member for Murchison, I thought Ivan Dean's contribution to this place and other sectors of government - the police, local government and state government and his passion for foxes - cannot be understated.

Ms Forrest - And smoking.

Mr GAFFNEY - And smoking. Smoking foxes. We all feel a bit sorry he did not have the chance to have his say. I suppose that is politics.

I am pleased to see Mr President back in the chair. Perhaps, a little smaller than this time last year and I am pleased to see that too. I am really pleased that he has been working hard and buying some more suits and that Lee is getting some nice ties.

That was a long list of thankyou's and acknowledgements but at the start of a new parliament it is important to take a moment to note the new faces, those departing roles that these individuals have or will play in Tasmania's parliamentary system.

I also congratulate all those who nominated as candidates. It is not an easy thing to make the decision to enter public life - not for you and not for your family - and I respect their efforts in putting themselves forward and undertaking campaigns with decency and determination. Sometimes, it might take a number of attempts to generate a profile and so I would say never give up. Do not be discouraged from future roles if you believe you have something to offer your community and your state.

I acknowledge Janie Finlay's persistence in the lower House, in what she has done. She will do well for this state because she is a passionate and talented young lady.

The recent election was fascinating and perhaps closer than some commentators had predicted.

Mr President, from the moment the day it was announced, this in itself, coming as a shock to many - yourself included - the campaigns of the major parties were somewhat interrupted to say the least by a number of high-profile resignations. From the earliest days to the completion of the election politics can be a colourful business at times.

I must make comment: there are a number of members with local government experience and profile. I am one of those and sometimes I do get a bit concerned that people say oh, they have come from a local government background. All those who have come from local government background - most of them - have had careers in other places. I did so myself as a teacher. I was not a career politician, I was not a local government career person, I just happened to be a mayor for a number of years. That gives you a profile. That is why, when we sit in this place, there are a number who have local government experience. I believe that to be an asset, because it is the way of procedures, processes and knowledge of your community. That is an important thing. I do not think it has to be done that way, I think other people come from a whole range. I would like to just put on record that I think those who have come through the government process are also connected in other areas.

Ms Armitage - I agree. I do not believe it has ever been a negative, it has always been a positive, a huge network we have gathered along the journey because of our involvement with local government.

Mr PRESIDENT - It is also worth pointing out this Chamber has been called a retirement home for old mayors, but I think the other place now has more former mayors than this place.

Mr Valentine - Something to remember.

Mr PRESIDENT - Something about stones and glass houses.

Mr GAFFNEY - It has changed. When I came here 12 years ago the face of this place - and it has changed for the better. For me, I find this to be a more workable environment. That is not saying anything against past members, but is more reflective of our community, with more gender equity and different age groups, even though we have one still to yet have his jab. I hope they have a really big needle.

Can I make the commitment here today to serve those who live, work and play in the beautiful Mersey region and the north-west coast of Tasmania in general, to the best of my ability for the next six years and perhaps beyond?

When I was preparing this contribution, I returned to the speech I had previously made at the commencement of parliament. I was not surprised to find a lengthy passage that rings true for me today as it did in 2014. Some points of note were: I believe the primary challenge for this Government is to govern for all Tasmanians, to reflect the ideals of the majority and support and protect those who, in some circumstances, may be in the minority and experience some form of discrimination or inequity.

Secondly, I believe we must be cautious to interpret the election outcome as an endorsement of all policies. The idea of political mandate based solely on election results needs to be approached warily. Every government endeavours to make sound policy decisions based on and supported by thorough research and reflected in robust legislation. The existence or lack thereof of a mandate should never detract from these core ideals, not excuse rushed or poorly prepared legislative change. On a side note, I know there are people out there listening to it and say the hung parliament, when it was in process, was not good for Tasmania.

It is interesting in this day how we refer to it as a hung parliament. In other places they refer to it as minority government. I found being in this place, some of the legislation that came through when we did have 10, 10 and five was much better than some of the other legislation we have had in recent years, because it was more thoroughly assessed and amended and had to come through some consensus downstairs. I hope the Government of today, even though they do have a majority, takes that on board and listens to the people in opposition, whether they be Green, independent or Labor, and ask, would that suggestion they have there strengthen this bill? That is a really important thing, not just to get the bill through because it is what we propose, but to get the bill to the upstairs as good as it can be and let them work on what they want to do. It is a really important point not to lose sight of.

Regardless of the minority or majority government, it will always be the role of the members in this Chamber to carefully scrutinise all matters that come before us on its merits. It is the duty and the role of this Chamber to ensure that every legislative change, part of the Government's mandate or agenda otherwise, is supported by that sound judgment, reason and research. As a member of this House of review, I believe it is important in my role and part of my mandate to assist the government of the day to govern well.

In doing this I acknowledge that each new government has a different approach. I do not see it as my role to block or impede such progress just because I might personally do things differently or because there is not unanimous agreement within the community. Because of this, it is naturally my intention to support sound and considered legislation. However, each new government and each parliament creates an opportunity for positive change towards a brighter and better Tasmania and this, the Fiftieth Parliament is no exception.

I look forward to putting changes together in a consultative and collaborative manner that can benefit our state. I look forward to once again working constructively with the Government and as a member of this Council, providing a strong scrutiny and accountability required of a House of review.

Mr President, colleagues here have spoken at length about a number of electoral issues and I thank them for their views. I will confine my comments to health at this stage. I listened with interest to Her Excellency's reflections on the Tasmanian health system and the optimistic projections provided by the Government for the next term, in particular, the memorandum of understanding with a private provider to support the Government's plan to reduce waiting times, patient flow and access to care. I wish the Government well in their endeavours. There is a lot to do.

The election and Cabinet reshuffle has delivered us a new Minister for Health, the honourable Jeremy Rockliff, my friend and Braddon colleague. I wish the minister all the very best in his role which is arguably the most challenging and, for some, the least desirable of all ministries in any jurisdiction, state or federal.

Personally, I think it is the hardest challenges that give the most personal satisfaction, especially if one can effect and implement positive change and/or advancement. Indeed, if I was in the lower House, Health would be the one I would be trying to get hold of because from experience we know it is not possible to receive a tick of approval from everyone but at the end of the day I need to know, like many people, that I have given it my very best effort. Our health system, and I do believe it would not be an exaggeration to use the phrase most healthcare systems, have been for many years over-exhausted and underfunded to the detriment of some of the most vulnerable people in our community, those suffering from cruel diseases, physical ailments and mental health issues. Quite frankly, there never seems to be enough money dedicated to supporting this most vital function in a caring and involved society.

I completely acknowledge as an independent member, it is difficult to fully comprehend the complexities of competing economic priorities for Treasury, although I do appreciate how onerous the burden of making those decisions must be when faced with the reality of limited resources in order to keep taxes manageable, but this is of little comfort to many constituents who seek our help in some truly desperate circumstances.

I can almost guarantee I have never yet had a person approach me in regard to the health system unless there have been repeated delays, cancellations or less than ideal experiences. Most Tasmanians understand and accept our dedicated nurses, doctors and health professionals are doing the very best they can under the circumstances. I would imagine the detrimental stories or negative experiences we hear as members make up a tiny fragment of the bigger picture.

However, we must not lose sight of the advanced health system we do compared with many other countries in the world. Yes, whilst there will always be room for improvement, I personally am grateful for the wide range of health professionals and those working behind the scenes on our behalf. I am certain that the new minister, Mr Rockliff, will work collaboratively with our frontline health professionals to look at the current issues such as surgery waiting periods, overcrowding, ambulance ramping and securing permanent doctors and specialists to find creative and effective solutions to some of these long-term problems. I appreciate the comments I have read from Mr Seidel in recent articles where he has been advising or suggesting ways it could be done more effectively. That is good if it is done in a positive way to advance our health system.

While the major hospital and regional health system is under constant strain, another area which warrants attention is the palliative care sector. I made speeches on behalf of Palliative

Care Tasmania in this place before. Last time I spoke at some length about PCT I highlighted the fact that Palliative Care Tasmania like many organisations was required to present a budget submission effectively going cap in hand to the Government for its funding each financial year. This was not acceptable. I am very pleased to be informed that the Government's election commitment of \$4.25 million over a four-year period for Palliative Care Tasmania has been announced. No doubt this will remove a considerable administrative burden from the hardworking PCT team, currently headed by Ms Colleen Johnstone, who does a wonderful job with limited resources. Tasmania has an ageing population and it is vital that this service be adequately and repeatedly funded to ensure it can support the many who require it.

I will take Colleen's job for example. If each year she has to sit down and prepare a budget submission so that she can continue to employ the staff that she has to as a CEO, each year that is a stressful time for her and her staff to ensure that they get the funding. Now, over a four-year period she does not have to worry about that and she and the organisation can concentrate more on providing services. That goes back to where the member for McIntyre spoke about a 10-year plan. It does allow organisations to breathe because they are not always having to be asking for money. Then again, as with the budget Estimates process, we have to ensure that wherever that funding is going it is done in the right manner and is done with a secure and reliable support group underneath it.

I will take a moment to acknowledge the hard work of the voluntary assisted dying task force and implementation team. We do not know very much about that yet. Since the End-of-Life Choices (Voluntary Assisted Dying) Act 2021 was granted royal assent in April, the Government has been proactive in ensuring that the required recruitment process has commenced to form an organisation to develop the required procedures, protocols, forms, training modules and regulations to provide eligible terminally ill Tasmanians the opportunity to end their lives at a time and place of their choosing. I have met with the manager of the task force team and I am in regular contact in assisting where possible with the successful implementation of the act within the required time frame.

I am very impressed with the dedication and the passion displayed by the manager and that team. I am comfortable and comforted by the fact that the Government is taking this seriously and is investing in it.

I mention this as VAD now forms a large part, the large suite of the end-of-life choices for people who may have already engaged with the palliative care sector. The two concepts are not the same but they are not mutually exclusive. While VAD is not part of palliative care proper but a separately assisted and managed process, a person may be supported as stated by the CEO Palliative Care Tasmania, Colleen Johnstone, by palliative care until such time as the VAD event occurs.

I feel sure that the implementation team is already gathering information and feedback from many organisations such as the RACGP, the AMA and the ANMF who will be consulting closely with PCT to ensure the best awareness and outcomes for individuals and families facing terminal illness. Whilst my role with the legislation is finished to a certain extent, in the last month I have visited 14 of the year 11 and 12 colleges and I have presented 18 times to legal studies and philosophy students about VAD because it is one of the choices they have at their end of year finals. The inquisitive nature of these young people has been so wonderful for me

because they are very switched on to what is happening and this is the legislation that they need to be aware of.

I was a guest speaker at a national webinar about the Tasmanian process. I have met with the heads of the New South Wales Dying with Dignity and Go Gentle. One of those people I met with was Andrew Denton. He said he was so impressed with this parliament and with what he has witnessed. As you know, he is the sponsor or the patron of Go Gentle and he has been on this track for many years now and he spoke about how civil we were and how pleasant we were even in our disapproving of an amendment or a motion. He was quite impressed with the Tasmanian system both upstairs and downstairs. He said he was very pleased and that actually made me feel really good because this is my place of work and that is good feedback for the public listening in on this to think that we are highly regarded in how that process unfolded. I was pleased with that.

I also had the opportunity to speak at the ANMF conference here recently in Hobart and a number of nursing professionals came up to speak to me at the end about how pleased they were that the bill has gone through. Even those who would not be supportive or be involved voluntarily could understand the reason for it and they thought the debate was very good.

I am pleased with that and to those of you in local government land, it is important that once you raise an issue with the community, whether it be your own council or the wider community, that once a decision has been made and we have now a bill, that you go back to those government areas and offer another information forum. It was 18 months ago that I saw them about the start, and now we are here, what is the future? So, I am going back into those council areas now in the next month, doing information forums so that the community can come along and ask questions about what happens now.

In closing, I once again revisit the Premier's comments on his election in 2021 that the Government would be one of conviction, compassion and opportunity. I would assume that statement still stands. I wish the Premier and his Government the very best in delivering that promise to Tasmanians. Thank you, Mr President, and I look forward to other members' contributions.

[5.31 p.m.]

Mrs HISCUTT (Montgomery - Leader of the Government in the Legislative Council) - Mr President, I too will begin my contribution by congratulating you on your re-election as the member for Derwent and also as President of this Council. It is a welcome sight to us. Both results are a recognition of the esteem in which you are held by your constituents and by your colleagues here in this Chamber.

I pass on my congratulations to the member for Mersey who was returned unopposed. I am glad to see that you honoured the deal. Also, it is a reflection on the admiration and gratitude of your constituents for the good work that you have done and no doubt will continue to do.

Congratulations to my new colleague, the member for Windermere, Mr Nick Duigan. I have every confidence that you will prove to be an exceptional member of parliament and justify completely the confidence that the electors of Windermere have wisely expressed in you and your abilities. You have some fairly big shoes to fill. The former member for Windermere, Mr Plod as we called him, left some fairly big shoes but, having said that, I did

receive some fairly sage advice when I was first elected from the former Madam President, 'Walk in your own shoes'.

Ms Rattray - I got that advice as well. It is good advice.

Mrs HISCUTT - Yes, good advice. I am sure that we will have an opportunity in the future to give our gratitude to the former member for Windermere. Congratulations also to our new Governor, Barbara Baker, on her appointment.

I want to formally record on the Legislative Council *Hansard* the appreciation of the Government and this Chamber for the work that the previous governor, Her Excellency Professor Kate Warner, has done. The dedication of the outgoing governor was obvious for all to see during her term which I note she extended beyond the initial term to provide stability for the state as we responded to the COVID-19 pandemic. She is to be commended for a job well done.

As usual, I will take the opportunity as Leader of the Government to reiterate a few of the key messages and priorities identified by the Government for this term of government and then follow up with a few more personal observations as the member for Montgomery.

The victory by the Gutwein Government at the May election was undeniably both convincing and historic. Many outside observers may look at the numbers in the lower House and say, 'Well, the Government only has a majority of one so it is hardly a runaway win'. But, as we all know, under the Hare Clark system, the margins in terms of seat numbers will always be close and, to be re-elected in majority for a third consecutive time, is a truly impressive and significant achievement and it is pertinent to note here the extent of the Premier's personal vote. He topped the poll in the northern seat of Bass with more than 48 per cent of the vote in that electorate, that is 32 000 first preference votes. It is nearly double the number he recorded in 2018. That result is a personal triumph for the Premier. It reflects the regard for his leadership of our state, particularly during the COVID-19 crisis and the confidence Tasmanians have in his ability to lead our ongoing recovery for the months and years ahead. The election was held to give the people of Tasmania a clear opportunity to endorse the Gutwein Government and its strategies, to give them a mandate to continue their stewardship of our state.

The people decided, and here we are. I know there will be those who will argue whether the Government has a mandate for any particular measure. However, where specific policies or initiatives were clearly and deliberately referred to in the campaign, and have consistently been espoused by the Government over that period of time, in my opinion they should be allowed to be implemented through policies or initiatives when they go through this place. This is a House of review - it is the last stand.

The people have spoken and their collective voices should be recognised. The people certainly recognised that while COVID-19 was still a very real threat, and the government's strong and decisive leadership meant we weathered the storm fairly well, and we are well-positioned to move forward into the post-COVID-19 world. The figures bear that out. We are one of the strongest performing economies in the nation. The number of jobs in Tasmania continues to grow. Payroll jobs are now 1.7 per cent higher than before the pandemic. In the four weeks to May 2021 the growth was 0.4 per cent, the third highest rate of any state. Total wages are 1.9 per cent higher. Our hospitality jobs recovery is also the third highest of all the states. The unemployment rate dropped to 5.7 per cent in May, with an extra 18 000 people

finding work. The jobless rate is now the lowest since the start of the pandemic. Tasmanian job vacancies in May are a massive 67.6 per cent higher than the pre-COVID-19 levels - the third strongest growth rate in the nation.

Furthermore, job vacancies in all three Tasmanian regions are higher compared to before the pandemic - up 85.8 per cent in the north-west, up 71.1 per cent in the north and up 41.9 per cent in the south. State final demand data released earlier this month found that business investment in Tasmania is 6.4 per cent higher than before COVID-19, in stark contrast to a decline seen nationally over the same period. Business confidence is surprisingly resilient. Businesses are investing and hiring. National Skills Commission data released only today confirms this to be the case. Tasmanian farming confidence has hit a new six-year high, with the latest Rabobank Rural Confidence Survey showing farming confidence in Tasmania and New South Wales leading the nation. On a personal note, based on that confidence this is the first year that we have put a paddock of canola in, so we will put that onto the market and see how we go.

I will have more to say about the importance of the Tasmanian agricultural sector later in my contribution. Other indicators, such as exports and retail trade, are also on the rise according to recent figures. The preliminary ABS exports data for the year up to May 2021, released today, found that Tasmanian exports hit a record \$3.802 billion, which is higher than the previous 12-month record high of \$3.798 billion. At the same time, exports grew 4.3 per cent in the year to May 2021, compared to the previous year. That is the third highest growth rate in the country and demonstrates once again that Tasmania has what the world wants.

While we are doing very well relative to other jurisdictions, the Government is under no illusions regarding the challenges ahead. Ongoing issues such as health, housing and infrastructure development, together with the need to maintain a responsible fiscal strategy and manageable fiscal outcomes are, I assure you, on the top of the Premier's mind and priority list. It is a responsibility the Premier does not take lightly. In my own personal discussions with him, I have seen his personal determination to tackle the issues that are still outstanding in Tasmania and that continue to raise concerns for many Tasmanians.

The Governor's speech reiterates the Premier's personal commitment. It makes it clear that the priorities over the next few years will be areas such as housing, health, skills and training, infrastructure, renewable energy and the implementation of a robust fiscal strategy for a clear pathway back to surplus in a sustainable and responsible manner.

I was especially pleased to also see reference in the Governor's speech to the Government's determination to prioritise action against family violence and the development of Tasmania's first Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy. As the Premier said, there is nothing more important than the safety and wellbeing of children and young people, and supporting the families in which they grow, are loved and belong.

There can be no doubt that the Premier is absolutely committed to addressing these and other issues and delivering on the plan he took to the election. The Government has hit the ground running since the election results became clear. A number of key actions to deliver across the first 30 days of the Government taking office were outlined by the Premier and he has delivered on each and every one of them. This includes important actions in a number of vital areas of health, skills and training, job creation, tourism and building the infrastructure our growing state needs.

The Government heard from Tasmanians about their priorities and the Premier and his team understand the need to deliver on everything that was promised. Key actions already taken include meeting with each major private hospital, as well as the community nursing and home care sector, to discuss the provision of services to take pressure off the public hospital system. I particularly welcome the collaborative, solution-based approach embraced by the new health minister, to ensure we are best able to tackle the health challenges faced by Tasmania and the rest of Australia. I understand consultations to date have been constructive with a lot of goodwill shown by participants, and that augers well for the future.

We also started recruitment of the additional health staff needed for our elective surgery blitz. We have signed an MOU with Calvary Health Care, to remove any outstanding impediments to the \$120 million co-located private hospital adjacent to the Launceston General Hospital. We entered into an agreement to extend direct underwritten flights between Hobart and King Island and Flinders Island in March 2021. We have also delivered an MOU between the Government, TT-Line and the Tasmania Maritime Network to deliver up to \$100 million in local supplies to Tasmanian businesses in delivering two new replacement ships.

We have established the guidelines and parameters for the \$2 million Job Ready Fund to help jobseekers gain essential tools they need to get jobs. This fund will open on 1 July and is particularly important, because it recognises that a number of growth industries in Tasmania, such as building and construction and care services, have core requirements for new entrants that come with additional costs. That is why the fund will provide eligible Tasmanians with up to \$500 to assist with costs associated with becoming job-ready - such as Working with Vulnerable People registration or White Card accreditation and the purchase of protective clothing or tools.

We have commenced negotiations with the organisers of six iconic Tasmanian events to deliver multi-year funding agreements and secure their future here in Tasmania. We are also working with TasPorts on a \$240 million investment into the port of Devonport and we have commenced planning for all TasTAFE capital works, including \$12 million for trade spaces and new accommodation in the north-west; \$10 million in the north for campus upgrades; and new student accommodation in the south. We facilitated the provision of a no-interest \$100 million loan to Incat to construct a 120 metre, high-speed vessel, securing 500 jobs and further adding up to 120 to 150 jobs.

In coming weeks, the Government will continue this momentum and deliver the remaining elements of its 100-day plan.

Legislation has already been introduced that will enact Government election promises through the Treasury Miscellaneous (Cost of Living and Affordable Housing Support) Bill 2021. This bill will bring together the state of the state and election commitments and they will be including increasing the First Home Owner Grant from \$20 000 to \$30 000 backdated to 1 April 2021 until 30 June 2022, and increasing the threshold for more than 50 per cent stamp duty concession to apply to purchasers up to \$500 000 for Tasmanians buying their first home and pensioners downsizing their family home which will be backdated to 16 March 2021.

Reducing land tax costs by increasing thresholds, allowing payment by instalments on accounts over \$500 and reducing interest applied to deferred payments. Capping the Motor Accident Insurance Board duty as part of our new quarterly vehicle registration payment

options and providing a two-year waiver of stamp duty on the purchases of new and second-hand electric cars or hydrogen fuel cell vehicles. My office has already had inquiries as to when that will start, so there are people waiting to take that up. You will be pleased to hear that.

Mr Valentine - Someone will get an opportunity.

Mrs HISCUTT - Yes. Mr President, we will also be bringing back previous legislation that had not yet passed parliament before the election and there will be two supply bills to provide continued public funding through to the state budget on 26 August. Quite clearly, the Government is intent on getting on with business and delivering for Tasmanians.

One particular area very close to my heart, as the member for Montgomery, that I want to make particular reference to is the importance of the agricultural sector to Tasmania and the current and foreshadowed steps and strategies the Government is taking to promote that sector. As the first American President, George Washington, once said, 'Agriculture is the most healthful, most useful and most noble employment of man.' I will just add 'and women'. He did not say that but we will add that one, member for McIntyre.

Ms Rattray - We will.

Mrs HISCUTT - I could not agree more and neither could the Government. The Government is certainly continuing to deliver on its ambitious goal to grow the value of Tasmanian agriculture to \$10 billion by 2050. The Rabobank report I mentioned previously found that 45 per cent of Tasmanian farmers are tipping farming conditions to improve in the next 12 months with prospects of another big production year. They also note our dairy farmers are particularly upbeat on the back of a good opening milk contracts, hence our crop of canola.

This positive outlook comes on top of recent ABS commodity figures showing the total value of agriculture in Tasmania for 2019-20 was up by 14.7 per cent. That is \$240 million compared to the national figure of only 0.4 per cent. The dairy sector especially is a shining light. Milk production was at a record high last year and recent stats suggest we are on track to equal or break that record. Solid milk prices have also been announced by all Tasmanian-based milk producers for the coming 2021-22 season.

Backing our industry, the Tasmanian Government recently delivered a signed deed to co-invest \$5 million with the University of Tasmania towards a \$7.4 million upgrade of the Tasmanian Institute of Agriculture research farms at Elliott and Forthside, Elliott being very dear to my heart - I was born in Elliott. It is currently in the member for Muchison's electorate.

This investment will convert the Elliott dairy facility into a smart farm to deliver with partner Dairy Australia a new \$7 million research program with a focus on research, development and extension to sustainably grow Tasmania's dairy industry. To further support dairy and our other agricultural sectors, the first Agribusiness Insights Report was released last week which captures key agricultural indicators, emerging opportunities, and trends to inform industry development and government policy. Developed in partnership with industry, Agribusiness Insights will be an ongoing publication released annually after each peak production season. The report is an initiative under the Competitiveness of Tasmanian Agriculture white paper and aims to help industries respond to change and unlocking of opportunities.

This will further support Tasmania's strong growth in agriculture. The 2018-19 Tasmanian Agri-Food ScoreCard released in November 2020 revealed the value of Tasmania's agricultural production increased in value in 2018-19 to \$1.90 billion. The Government's position and record on agriculture is clear. Unashamedly, we are the strongest supporter of agriculture and have invested almost \$50 million to accelerate Tasmania's agricultural industry, providing thousands of Tasmanian jobs and important support for rural and regional communities in the process. This is something we should all welcome wholeheartedly. As you can see, agriculture really is my heart, so I have focussed on that. It is good to see it all going forward.

I do look forward to seeing the rest of other members' contributions tomorrow. I do note the Governor's Address and adjourn the debate, Mr President.

Debate adjourned.

MESSAGE FROM THE HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

Attendance of Ministers from the Legislative Council in the House of Assembly

[5.51 p.m.]

Mr PRESIDENT - The following message has been received from the House of Assembly:

The House of Assembly, having agreed to the following resolution, begs now to transmit the same to the Legislative Council and requests its concurrence therein.

Resolved, that pursuant to the provisions of the House of Assembly Standing Order 50, a Message be transmitted to the Legislative Council requesting that the Legislative Council give leave for any Member of the Legislative Council who is a Minister of the Crown to attend the Assembly so as to respond specifically to Questions without Notice seeking information of the kind covered by the Standing Orders of the House of Assembly.

Mark Shelton, Speaker,
House of Assembly, 22 June 2021.

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

That the message be taken into consideration forthwith.

Motion agreed.

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

That leave be granted to Members of the Legislative Council who are Ministers of the Crown to attend the House of Assembly if they think fit, so

as to response specifically to Questions without Notice seeking information of the kind covered by the Standing Orders of the House of Assembly.

Motion agreed to.

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

That a Message be transmitted to the House of Assembly acquainting that House accordingly.

Motion agreed to.

SUPPLEMENTARY ANSWER

North West Integrated Midwifery Services

[5.52 p.m.]

Mrs HISCUTT (Montgomery - Leader of the Government in the Legislative Council) - Mr President, I am glad the member for Murchison has come to the Chamber. I would just like to clarify the question during question time. Your question was, when was the review finished? The answer is, the review of the North West Integrated Midwifery Services was extended to enable greater opportunity for stakeholder participation. The Department of Health is expecting to receive the review report in coming weeks.

ADJOURNMENT

[5.53 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 Thursday, 24 June 2021.

Motion agreed to.

Mrs HISCUTT (Montgomery - Leader of the Government in the Legislative Council) - Mr President, I have a couple of messages for members while I have most of you here. As members would be aware, the Address-in-Reply takes precedence.

I would like to finish the remaining speeches tomorrow so we can move on to private members' business on Tuesday. I believe that when we have finished the Address-in-Reply, we are invited to Government House to deliver that to the Governor. We need to get that done tomorrow, members.

Also, I remind you of the 10.00 a.m. briefing tomorrow morning on the Land Use Planning and Approvals Amendment (Tasmanian Planning Scheme Modification) Bill 2021. We have not received that bill yet, but we will. It is hoped it will be completed next week, so

we will start early with that briefing. I hope all members can be there tomorrow at 10.00 a.m. I have printed out packages for you, so we should be right to go.

The Council adjourned at 5.54 p.m.