



**PARLIAMENT OF TASMANIA**

**HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY**

**REPORT OF DEBATES**

**Tuesday 23 March 2021**

**REVISED EDITION**



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

## **QUESTIONS**

### **Liberal Party - Comments made by Ms Hickey**

#### **Ms WHITE to PREMIER, Mr GUTWEIN**

[10.04 a.m.]

The former Liberal member for Clark has said, after she was sacked yesterday, that, 'she felt like a giant boil had been lanced and the poison and pus and toxicity of your government for her is over'. You know that you have utterly failed and betrayed Tasmanians in relation to health, to housing, to the delivery of important infrastructure and now with your plan to wreck TAFE. You know that for the past year since you assumed this position you have been too busy for papering over the cracks of division, disfunction and disarray that is at the core of your Government and your Cabinet to deliver for Tasmanians. You have lost control and plunged Tasmania into minority government.

The former Liberal member for Clark said at the weekend that this is a challenging time for the Liberal Party and its supporters:

It appears that the men in dark suits are firmly in control and there is no place for small 'L' Liberal women who refuse to kowtow or be subservient to the dominant males.

Is this a reflection of your party's clear attitude that women should be relegated to the background and certainly should not be permitted to take on leadership roles in our community?

#### **ANSWER**

Madam Speaker, I thank the Leader of the Opposition for that question. The first point I make is that this is not about gender, it is about teamwork. I lead a strong government. It has strong women in it. I am not going to pass any comment whatsoever on any matters the member for Clark might have raised over the weekend.

In regard to the past year, what we have been focused on on this side of the House, is keeping Tasmanians safe and ensuring in keeping Tasmanians safe, that we rebuild confidence, that we rebuild our economy and rebuild jobs and that is exactly what we have been delivering.

I said yesterday that we are in new territory; I accept that. I am certain that on that side of the House they will do their very best to damage confidence, to ensure they put people out of work. On this side of the House we are going to focus on our clear plan to secure Tasmania's future. That is what Tasmanians want us to do. That is what we were elected to do. That is exactly what we have done every single day since I became Premier with my Cabinet colleagues and this Government to ensure that Tasmanians were safe, that we could rebuild the economy, and that our clear plan delivered for Tasmania.

I am very proud that at the moment Tasmania leads the country on a number of economic indicators: one of the lowest unemployment rates, and one of the strongest-growing economies. Who would have thought that after the middle of last year, when the forecast pointed to 12.25 per cent unemployment, to an economy going backwards, that because of the steps we took to keep people safe, to rebuild confidence, that we would be in a position that is now the envy of the nation? One of the safest places in this country, one of the safest places on this planet. On this side of the House we are simply going to keep getting on with that job.

### **TasTAFE - Restructure**

**Ms WHITE to PREMIER, Mr GUTWEIN**

[10.07 a.m.]

The deep divisions in your toxic minority Government have been exposed for all to see. They are a distraction from the very real issues facing Tasmania. It is becoming increasingly clear that you are desperate to go to an election, to avoid taking responsibility for the crisis in housing and hospitals that you have created.

You need to mask your complete failure to deliver major infrastructure projects and you want to avoid scrutiny of your hidden privatisation agenda. You might be distracted by the utter chaos unfolding in the party, but we will not allow Tasmania to lose sight of the real issues.

Just a week after it was announced, your poisonous move to blow up TAFE is already deeply unpopular. For seven years your Government has undermined and under-invested in TAFE. Under your watch, enrolments at TAFE have declined by more than 30 per cent since 2014. Your plan to privatise TAFE will mean fewer courses and higher fees. Will you admit that you have got this plan terribly wrong and today abandon your plans to privatise TAFE?

### **ANSWER**

Madam Speaker, I thank the Leader of the Opposition for that question and, for the first time, some real clarity in terms of PESRAC and its recommendations. We know that they do not support turning TAFE into a more nimble organisation, one that is more able to provide skills and training for young Tasmanians and regional Tasmanians, to ensure that they can get one of the jobs that are on offer in our economy at the moment.

Talking about distractions, the circumstances that we find ourselves in now are a construct of both the Leader of the Opposition and the Leader of the Greens, regarding their focus on political matters shortly after the government was first elected. Let us not forget that point, Madam Speaker. We will not be distracted by those on the other side.

We are in new territory. I have made that perfectly clear. I am certain that on that side of the House they will make governing a day-by-day proposition. We will not be distracted. As part of our clear plan to secure Tasmania's future, we want to see TasTAFE more nimble and able to operate more like the businesses it is there to serve. At the end of the day, this side of the House wants more Tasmanians - more young Tasmanians, more regional Tasmanians - to get the skills and training they need and deserve to take on the jobs that are there in our

strong and growing economy. On that side of the House they will, on ideological grounds, oppose TAFE being more nimble.

The one point that was made very clear on this side of the House last week is that we are not privatising TasTAFE. That is a ridiculous proposition and one where those opposite again mislead the House. We want TasTAFE to be a government business that is more nimble and more able to serve the businesses it needs to serve. In securing Tasmania's future, we see this as a very important factor. One of the single largest challenges we face is ensuring that young Tasmanians and regional Tasmanians can get the skills and training they need to grasp the jobs that are available in our economy. On this side of the House we make no apologies for getting on the front foot and doing everything we possibly can to secure Tasmania's future.

### **Electoral Reform Legislation**

**Ms O'CONNOR to PREMIER, Mr GUTWEIN**

[10.12 a.m.]

We know an early election is on the cards. We also know your last election was bankrolled by the gambling industry. What we do not know is the source of 92 per cent of Liberal Party donations received in the year 2019-20. In fact, the Australian Electoral Commission figures released since the last election show your party has refused to release the source of about \$7.5 million in donations. Of course, the money will really start to pour in as we get closer to an election. Will parliament see electoral reform legislation before you call an early election so that this election is a genuine contest of values and policies uncontaminated by the influence of secret donors?

### **ANSWER**

Madam Speaker, I thank the Leader of the Tasmanian Greens for that question. Regarding an election, I have said that I have an open mind and Tasmania will have an election when it needs an election. That is what I have said.

**Ms O'Connor** - And you decide what we need.

**Mr GUTWEIN** - It sounds like the Leader of the Opposition has already made up her mind that she wants an election.

**Ms O'Connor** - Did you just call me the Leader of the Opposition?

**Mr GUTWEIN** - No - sorry.

**Ms O'Connor** - Thank you.

**Mr GUTWEIN** - Madam Speaker, that was a slip of the tongue but there is some truth to that, I think. I make the point that on that side of the House it is only the Greens that bring out a fully-costed alternative budget and have the courage of their convictions to announce their policies and explain how they will fund them, unlike Labor. Mind you, as I have said on many occasions, many of those policies are kooky.

What the Leader of the Greens wants me to do is to speculate on when there might be an election date and -

**Ms O'CONNOR** - Point of order, Madam Speaker. For the Premier's clarification, perhaps he misunderstood the question. We are not asking when the election date will be. We are asking whether electoral reform legislation will come before the House because, as we know, based on figures from the last election year, the Liberal Party is likely to receive another \$3 million in secret donations before the next campaign.

**Madam SPEAKER** - Thank you very much, Leader of the Greens. As you know, under the structure of this House, that is not a point of order but I have allowed it for *Hansard*.

**Mr GUTWEIN** - As I have said, it appears that the Leader of the Greens is wanting me to speculate on when there might be an election. I have an open mind and Tasmania will have an election when it needs one.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - Point of order, Madam Speaker. Perhaps the Premier could accept that this is a matter that is important to Tasmanians. It is in the public interest to know whether electoral reform legislation will come before the House before it rises for the next election.

**Madam SPEAKER** - Was that under standing order 45, relevance?

**Ms O'CONNOR** - Yes. It is a very important question for Tasmanians.

**Madam SPEAKER** - Premier, I think you get the gist of the conversation.

**Mr GUTWEIN** - Madam Speaker, I do, and as I said, in terms of an election, I have an open mind to it.

**Ms O'Connor** - But that's not the question.

**Mr GUTWEIN** - In terms of timing, Tasmania will have an election when it needs one.

### **Rebuilding Tasmania's Future - Employment**

**Mr TUCKER to PREMIER, Mr GUTWEIN**

[10.15 a.m.]

Can you update the House on the Government's clear plan to secure our future and how this is translating into more jobs for Tasmanians? Are you aware of any alternative approaches?

### **ANSWER**

Madam Speaker, I thank Mr Tucker for his interest in this very important matter. In terms of our clear plan to rebuild Tasmania to secure Tasmania's future, last week I outlined in my Address a very clear plan to ensure that we continue to ensure that we keep Tasmanians

safe, to ensure that we continue to roll out our vaccine program, and to ensure that WE significantly invest in the important area of mental health.

There are additional incentives and initiatives that we included last week to put down the pressure on rents and the cost of living and to boost housing supply for Tasmanians. We have plans to support our growing industries and our competitive advantages in agriculture, trade, renewable energy, tourism and our environment. Last week, I announced a \$20 million job support package which features a job-ready fund, expanding our already successful Area Connect service to 16 further local government areas to ensure that we can get people to work, training or education where there are no easy transport options.

There is an uplift in the successful matching service for jobseekers and local jobs, the new Tasmanian employer bonus to incentivise employers to take on a long-term unemployed jobseeker, support for youth navigators, and more certificate 3 and individual support training places. All of that is underpinned by our significant \$5 billion infrastructure program.

Our clear plan to grow our economy and create jobs is working. Our economy is growing the second strongest of all the states and is now 1.5 per cent larger than before the pandemic. Jobs have returned to pre-pandemic levels. A total 261 100 Tasmanians are in work, the second highest on record. In February, 3800 Tasmanians found work and employment grew by 1.5 per cent, the highest growth rate in the country. Even you, Mr O'Byrne, should be able to acknowledge that.

Since the height of the pandemic, when around 19 000 jobs were lost, very pleasingly 21 500 are now back. Our clear plan is working. Our unemployment rate is 5.7 per cent, the lowest of all the states and lower than the national average. Our youth unemployment rate is the third lowest of the states. Last month, job vacancies grew 13.3 per cent because businesses are confident and are investing and creating job opportunities.

This Liberal Government makes no apologies for being the strongest backer of Tasmanian businesses, because it is businesses, not bureaucracy, that drives our economy and creates jobs.

I was asked about alternative approaches. Before I do that, I make the point that on this side of the House we have a very clear vision to ensure that TasTAFE is nimble and more able to operate in the same way that the businesses it is there to serve operate.

**Ms White** - It is actually there to serve students.

**Mr GUTWEIN** - The problem you have, unfortunately, Leader of the Opposition, is that you do not accept that TasTAFE trains people so they can get jobs. At the moment we have jobs available in our economy.

The single largest challenge that we face on this side of the House is to ensure that young Tasmanians and regional Tasmanians can be skilled and trained to grasp those jobs. We make no apologies. There is clear policy distinction: they want to remain in the days of old. What we want to do is to secure Tasmania's future and take us forward.

## **Gaming Laws - Proposed Changes**

**Ms OGILVIE to PREMIER, Mr GUTWEIN**

[10.21 a.m.]

Transparency is vitally important in our democracy. Will you commit to bringing on for debate your proposed changes to Tasmania's gaming laws prior to the next election?

**ANSWER**

Madam Speaker, I thank the independent member for Clark for that question. There is much speculation in this place on when there might be an election -

**Members** interjecting.

**Ms OGILVIE** - Point of order, Madam Speaker. I cannot hear the answer.

**Madam SPEAKER** - I think that is a point of order. No interruptions, please.

**Mr GUTWEIN** - There seems to be an enormous amount of speculation on when the next election might be -

**Dr Woodruff** - We are just wondering if you are ever going to fulfil the broken promises that you have not made any effort to fulfil?

**Ms OGILVIE** - Point of order, Madam Speaker, I am still finding it hard to hear the answer because people are speaking.

**Madam SPEAKER** - Please, Dr Woodruff, refrain from interfering. You are annoying your neighbour. Thank you.

**Mr GUTWEIN** - We are continuing to roll out our legislative program. It is our expectation that the gaming legislation will be introduced into the parliament in the first half of this year, as we have said. As to when there may be an election, I have an open mind. Tasmania will have an election when it needs one.

## **TasTAFE - Course Availability in Regional Areas**

**Ms WHITE to PREMIER, Mr GUTWEIN**

[10.22 a.m.]

You know that TasTAFE should be accessible to people in regional areas and relevant to modern industry needs. Your plan to blow up TAFE disregards the important lessons that should have been learnt from similar moves in South Australia and Victoria. In those states numerous regional campuses closed and courses were cut. Under your toxic minority Government's plan to privatise TAFE, will courses continue to be available in Smithton, Scottsdale, Huonville and other regional locations? Can you guarantee that no regional TAFE courses will be cut?



## **ANSWER**

Madam Speaker, I thank the Leader of the Opposition for that question and her interest in this matter. We want TasTAFE to be better. We want TasTAFE to be in a stronger position than it is even today. Under this Government, TasTAFE has gone from strength to strength in recent years. However, it is clear that our job is not done. Industry and the community expect more. They expect a more agile and more flexible public provider. As the Deputy Premier said last week, we must continue our evolution of TasTAFE if it is to be the best that it can be.

It galls me to hear that side of the House talking about TasTAFE, as if it holds some special part in their hearts, when you consider what they did to TasTAFE. Labor pulled TasTAFE to pieces in its disastrous Tasmania Tomorrow experiment. They blew it up. Under Labor's disastrous reforms, there were fewer students, courses cost more, unions, teachers and staff and parents -

**Ms WHITE** - Point of order, Madam Speaker, it goes to standing order 45 on relevance. The question to the Premier was specifically about whether he can guarantee he will not cut courses for regional communities. He is going nowhere near answering the question. It is very important and I ask you to draw his attention to it, please.

**Madam SPEAKER** - Thank you, that is not a point of order but I ask the Premier to be relevant.

**Mr GUTWEIN** - Our intention is to ensure that we can provide more access to courses for regional Tasmania, that we can provide the training and the skills that are needed by young Tasmanians wherever they live right around the state to ensure that Tasmanians - young, old or regional - can get the jobs that are available in our economy.

We are hearing hypocrisy from the other side at the moment. Under Labor's disastrous reforms when they tore TAFE to pieces there were fewer students, courses cost more, unions, teachers, staff and parents did not support it, mature-age students were left out, there were job cuts, and there were course cuts. They damaged our economy because they damaged the training pathways for young Tasmanians.

We make no apologies on this side of the House that we want TasTAFE to be more nimble. We want it to be more like the businesses it is there to serve. It will not be privatised. It will become a government business and it will have flexibility. This is supported by the board, it is supported by the CEO and, importantly, it is supported by the 3500 people PESRAC engaged with. We want to get on with this because we believe that one of the biggest challenges that we face is ensuring that young Tasmanians and regional Tasmanians are able to be skilled and trained for the jobs that are available in our economy. There has never been a more important challenge and we intend to get on with it and solve it.

## **Electoral Reform Legislation**

**Ms O'CONNOR to PREMIER, Mr GUTWEIN**

[10.26 a.m.]

Will you bring electoral reform legislation to parliament before Tasmanians go to the polls, whenever that is?

## **ANSWER**

Madam Speaker, I thank the Leader of the Tasmanian Greens for that question. I am not going to speculate on the date of an election. I have made that perfectly clear -

**Ms O'Connor** - Stop gaslighting us and answer the question.

**Mr GUTWEIN** - I have made that perfectly clear. I am not going to be led into an answer of when or not there may -

**Ms O'CONNOR** - Point of order, Madam Speaker. Before the Premier tries to not answer this question again and scurry back to his chair, we asked a question which was a yes/no answer. He cannot deflect by pretending it was about when the election might be. This is about electoral reform legislation and a previous promise to bring it to the parliament.

**Madam SPEAKER** - Thank you, Leader of the Greens. Unfortunately, it is not a point of order.

**Mr GUTWEIN** - As I said in my previous answer, we have a legislative program which we intend to bring to the parliament. However, I will not be drawn, as much as the Leader of the Opposition wants me to be, on when the election may be.

## **TasTAFE - Fees for Courses**

**Ms O'BYRNE to PREMIER, Mr GUTWEIN**

[10.28 a.m.]

You spent seven years in Government undermining TAFE and now you are blowing it up. Your toxic minority Government's plan for privatisation makes it clear that the institution will run on a cost-recovery model. Right now, student fees constitute just over 10 per cent of the TAFE budget. It is inevitable that your policy will massively increase fees for students and employers. Under your model to privatise TAFE and force it to cover all costs, course costs will skyrocket by 10 times. Privatising TAFE with the inevitable rise in the cost of courses is an insurmountable barrier for Tasmanians who are hoping to have careers in aged care, in disability care, even nursing.

Can you guarantee Tasmanians today that your ideological-driven policy to privatise TAFE will not have devastating consequences for our future care and health workforce?

## **ANSWER**

Madam Speaker, I thank Ms O'Byrne for her question. Yes, I will guarantee that our evolution of TAFE will not have devastating consequences for those industry sectors that you mentioned. We want to see a more nimble TasTAFE, a TAFE that is able to operate more like the businesses that it is there to serve. We want to see more Tasmanians able to enter training. We want TasTAFE to be the best that it possibly can be.

I will pull the Deputy Leader of the Opposition up. We are not privatising TAFE. Every time that side of the House rise to say so, they are misleading Tasmanians.

TasTAFE will evolve into a government business that is more nimble and able to act like the businesses it is there to serve. Our very clear aim is that those young Tasmanians and those in regional Tasmania who want to be skilled up and trained for the jobs that are there will have that pathway.

### **Securing Tasmania's Future - Infrastructure Program**

**Mr STREET to MINISTER for INFRASTRUCTURE and TRANSPORT,  
Mr FERGUSON**

[10.31 a.m.]

Can you update the House on how the Government's infrastructure program is contributing to our clear plan to secure Tasmania's future?

### **ANSWER**

Madam Speaker, I thank the member for Franklin, Mr Street, for his question and his genuine interest in this matter.

As we emerge from the pandemic and help our state to recover, we know that the most important thing we can continue to do is to support jobs. That is already happening, because our plan is not failing. It is working for Tasmanians. We are well ahead of the national picture for unemployment. By investing in further infrastructure, we know that our dollar spreads throughout the economy and we can support even more jobs, particularly when we have a training provider to link up people looking for work with the jobs that are available right now.

By providing a strong and steady pipeline of work, we will give construction firms the confidence they need to invest in plant and equipment but also, importantly, to invest in their people and their teams, employing tradies, engineers and myriad other workers that are needed to deliver our projects.

In the supply chain, we are giving suppliers of concrete, aggregate, bitumen and other construction materials the confidence they need to grow their businesses well, because it is about helping to grow the aggregate demand right across the economy. It is working. Those businesses and staff are spending the money they have earned throughout our beautiful state and all the regions, whether it is a counter meal, for example, or a trip to the coast in the school holidays supporting our hard-hit tourism and hospitality sectors.

That is why we are investing a record \$5 billion in infrastructure right now, including \$2.4 billion through our roads and bridges program, which is going gangbusters. There is no doubt that it is an ambitious commitment. We have been very clear that our aim all along has been to saturate the construction sectors in our state with work. By every report, including the excellent women in infrastructure event last week, we are delivering exactly that. That is what industry is saying. I speak regularly with them and I encourage those opposite, who continue with their feigned mockery, to have a drive around Tasmania and look at the work that is underway and talk to our construction sector businesses, because they are doing a fantastic job for our state.

It has been a hallmark of our Government that we have been able, even through the lockdown last year, to keep our construction businesses going. It was a fantastic year of delivery for state roads. This season is shaping up to be even better. Already this season we have completed a range of projects, including the Mowbray connector; the \$92 million Perth links road finished ahead of schedule; intersection upgrades in Invermay; and the first stages of upgrades to Railton main road. We have also delivered a number of COVID-19 economic stimulus projects such as the Pub with No Beer corner in the Highland Lakes Road and upgrades to Bridport main road.

Around the state there is a huge amount of construction activity occurring. We thank the travelling public for being patient with us, as we have needed them to slow down through roadworks and they are doing that.

We are well ahead of schedule with our 10-year Midland Highway Action Plan. We are now up to around 103 kilometres that have either been completed or under construction - that is right now - and the contracts for the final stages have now been awarded. That is jobs for Tasmanians. Our \$350 million South East Traffic Solution is also well under way. Construction is happening as we speak on the Hobart Airport interchange and at Midway Point. That is jobs for Tasmanians.

I am also pleased to note that just yesterday, AWC started work on the duplication of East Derwent Highway, so Franklin and Clark members will be pleased. This is about providing a major improvement to traffic flow and safety. That is jobs for Tasmanians. Our infrastructure plan is delivering for our state and is about supporting a growing state and helping people get to where they want to go.

On Saturday I took a drive up the West Tamar Highway. It was fantastic to see the jobs that are under way there with Hazell Brothers. They are safety and congestion improvements and the public is absolutely thrilled with that. Jobs to deliver a new Apsley River bridge are occurring right now. This is a \$10 million project that was made a reality last year as a COVID-19 stimulus package. That is jobs for Tasmanians. At Sheas Creek Bridge at Orford we are seeing VEC Civil Engineering with that project and that is jobs for Tasmanians.

They are the things that are happening and have been completed and I say thank you to the civil construction sector for the incredible partnership, but we are not stopping there. There is more to come. Just this month, Tasmanian construction company, Hazell Brothers, was awarded the contract to deliver the realignment of the Bass Highway between Somerset and Wynyard. This is part of the massive \$200 million commitment to improve the Bass Highway in partnership with the Morrison government -

**Ms O'CONNOR** - Point of order, Madam Speaker, under standing order 48. The minister has had more than enough time to congratulate himself.

**Madam SPEAKER** - Yes, he is well over five minutes. Minister, I urge you to wind up, please.

**Mr FERGUSON** - Madam Speaker, I will wind up as a courtesy to the House. I am very enthusiastic about our investment. Not only is it providing the investment that allows our

bottlenecks to be dealt with and legacy infrastructure projects, it allows us to create more jobs, which is exactly what this Government has at the heart of our plan for state.

### **TasTAFE - Lack of Consultation regarding Restructure**

**Ms O'BYRNE to PREMIER, Mr GUTWEIN**

[10.36 a.m.]

You have declared war on TAFE without consideration of, or consultation with, staff or their representatives. Will you now apologise to TAFE educators like Fiona Thollar who is now 'tired and scared about what the future holds'. Ms Thollar, who for the past four years has arrived on site at 6.30 a.m. to teach at a Huon aged care facility is stressed, scared and fears that your plan to privatise TAFE could jeopardise her job. Can you provide any certainty for our hardworking TAFE workers? How many people will be sacked? Will redundancies be offered? Will there be forcible transfers? If so, which staff, courses or regions will be targeted? Premier, exactly who is in your firing line?

### **ANSWER**

Madam Speaker, I thank the Deputy Leader of the Opposition for that question but again point out that it is quite obvious that they have not read the PESRAC report. There is no recommendation to privatise TasTAFE. There is a recommendation to ensure that we can make TAFE more nimble and able to support those businesses that need skilled workers. The board and the CEO support this. We want to ensure that more young Tasmanians and more regional Tasmanians can get the skills and training they need to grasp the jobs that are available in our vast growing economy.

The Opposition is taking an ideological position, led by the unions on this particular matter. We want more trainers, not fewer. We want TasTAFE to offer courses regionally, in the cities -

**Ms O'Byrne** - She is providing a course in Huonville at 6.30 in the morning at a workplace - what else should she do?

**Madam SPEAKER** - Order, Ms O'Byrne, please.

**Mr GUTWEIN** - and we want more opportunities for young Tasmanians and regional Tasmanians to get the skills and training that they need to get one of the jobs out there in our economy right now. It beggars belief that that side of the House - I struggle to understand -

**Ms O'BYRNE** - Point of order, Madam Speaker, going to standing order 45, relevance. My question was about getting a commitment to staff about their future. Will there be sackings, will there be redundancies, will these people be forcibly transferred? Who is on the Premier's hit list?

**Madam SPEAKER** - That is not a point of order.

**Mr GUTWEIN** - Thank you, Madam Speaker, it is not a point of order.

We want to allow TAFE to evolve into a more nimble organisation that will have more trainers and will provide opportunities for young Tasmanians and regional Tasmanians to get the skills they need to get a job in our fast-growing economy. Why that side of the House wants to oppose more young Tasmanians and more regional Tasmanians - more Tasmanians generally - getting the skills and training they need to get a job is beyond me. It does not surprise me -

**Ms O'BYRNE** - Point of order, Madam Speaker. Will there be forced redundancies, will there be forced transfers, will people be sacked?

**Madam SPEAKER** - That is not a point of order.

**Mr GUTWEIN** - Madam Speaker, the point I have made is that we want to see more trainers. We want to see TasTAFE able to deal with even more young Tasmanians and regional Tasmanians. That side of the House is simply doing what the union wants it to do.

PESRAC has provided a strong recommendation based on significant feedback, which is supported by the board, supported by the CEO, and very strongly supported by this side of the House. We recognise that one of our single largest challenges is making sure young Tasmanians and regional Tasmanians who want to be skilled-up, want to be trained-up to get a job, are able to get the skills and training they need. That will help us to secure Tasmania's future and that is what this side of the House is about.

### **Irrigation Infrastructure**

**Mr TUCKER to MINISTER for PRIMARY INDUSTRIES and WATER, Mr BARNETT**

[10.41 a.m.]

Can you update the House on the Tasmanian Liberal Government's clear plan to secure Tasmania's future especially for delivering irrigation infrastructure across our state? Are you aware of any other approaches?

### **ANSWER**

Madam Speaker, I thank the member for his question. I know of his commitment to not just rural and regional Tasmania but the importance of water and irrigation. He knows how important it is. I can answer both those questions and would like the opportunity to do so because water is liquid gold. We know it. One of the real pleasures in this role is listening to the farmers and the farming communities, and hearing the feedback. That feedback is 'thank you so much for investing in water irrigation infrastructure'. They know the importance of reliable water and it is encouraging to get that feedback. It is not just for me. Everyone on this side of the House would hear it from those farmers and farming communities: the opportunities for an increased number of crops whether it is peas, beans, potatoes, poppies, cauliflower - a whole range of vegetables. There are new options for new crops. You have seen the polytunnels for strawberries, raspberries, blueberries, and blackberries. It goes on and on.

Why are we seeing double-digit growth in our vineyards, in our wine sector? It is encouraging that they have high security water. We have had record milk production in the last 12 months. This is all good news.

What does it mean? It means more jobs: more jobs for rural and regional Tasmania. This Government is delivering time and again, and the feedback is positive. We are on track to get to our \$10 billion farmgate value by 2050. Seven per cent increase in the last year; \$1.64 billion. It is going well.

Rabobank, what do they say? The December rural confidence survey said farmers' confidence in Tasmania had risen to a 15-month high, resulting from high commodity prices, good seasonal contracts and commodities. What about in the March release? Just this month, March 2021, the survey noted Tasmanian farmers' investment appetite for productivity improving projects is the highest in Australia. This is encouraging news and it is on the back of our plans for water irrigation. We are leading the nation.

Regarding irrigated production, we have doubled to almost \$1 billion in the last decade, so it is very good. Thanks to the Commonwealth Government. When I was recently in Canberra, the Deputy Prime Minister is keen and supportive; the minister for Agriculture, David Littleproud; Keith Pitt, the minister for Water; they say, 'Congratulations Tasmania, you are leading the nation', so that is great. The Commonwealth/state \$185 million has delivered record irrigation projects here in Tasmania.

The tranche 3 projects are progressing: the Don, Wesley Vale, Sassafras, Northern Midlands, Fingal, and Tamar. There is good news for the farmers in Forthside, Forth, Lillico, Don, Barrington, West Kentish and Melrose areas. The Don business case has been approved. That clears the path for construction this year. Construction on the Don - 4750 megalitres. What does it mean in terms of jobs? 135 direct jobs. This is jobs on the ground in rural and regional Tasmania, being delivered under the Gutwein Liberal Government. When we are done with tranche 3, it is expected to produce 78 000 megalitres of water, 2600 full-time jobs and it will trigger an extra \$150 million in on-farm private investment - that is the farmers investing on-farm - and \$114 million to our economy across the board. This is saying 'we are a stronger economy, confidence is growing'.

I was asked 'what about alternatives?' The answer is there is a big, dark, black hole over there. There is no policy alternative. I have said it before and I will say it again: they are all hat, no cattle. We are hearing from the other side, there is a lot of shouting, a lot of noise, but no policy. In terms of agriculture there is nothing. The only thing we have seen is their opposition to the workers having their right to work, and to business and their right to operate.

Get on board, support our workplace protection legislation, Labor Party. Reconsider your position, support the workers, support the businesses and their right to operate, and oppose the Bob Brown Foundation. Come on board, support our policies.

### **TasTAFE - Cost of Restructure**

**Mr O'BYRNE to PREMIER, Mr GUTWEIN**

[10.47 a.m.]

Last week you answered a question having a crack at TAFE workers' annual leave but in your previous answer you could not answer a question on their job security. It is interesting that you cherry-picked those answers.

Your toxic minority Government's plan to blow up TAFE is just one of the uncoded items on your shopping list from your Premier's Address last week. You have not included any additional funds or resources to progress your privatisation agenda and the impact on the budget is an unknown black hole. Can you reveal how much this experiment will cost the Tasmanian taxpayer, or is your secret plan to pass on the full cost to students and business?

## **ANSWER**

Madam Speaker, I thank the shadow treasurer for that question. I note the comment by the previous speaker about the big black hole that exists on that side of the House in terms of any policies, any financial plan at all. It could not be truer. They have squibbed year-by-year in bringing down alternative budgets, being prepared to cost their policies or explain where they would come from.

Last week in the Address I announced policies that would have a combined impact on the budget of about \$180 million across the forward Estimates. In the mid-year report the budget improved across the forward Estimates by around \$220 million. Within the envelope and delivering significant policies that will support jobs, support mental health, support housing and -

**Ms O'Byrne** - How much is privatising TAFE going to cost?

**Mr GUTWEIN** - By interjection, the member misleads the House -

**Ms O'Byrne** - How much will this cost?

**Mr GUTWEIN** - I know that you desperately want to cling to privatisation because it is something you want to oppose. This is about an evolution of TasTAFE, an evolution -

**Madam SPEAKER** - Order, Ms O'Byrne. Ms O'Byrne, I will have to give you a warning.

**Mr GUTWEIN** - of TasTAFE to a more nimble organisation, one that is better able to support the businesses it is there to serve. It beggars belief, that on that side of the House they cannot get their head around the fact that what we want to do is provide more jobs and opportunity for young Tasmanians and regional Tasmanians.

**Mr O'BYRNE** - Point of order, Madam Speaker. The question was clear: how much is this experiment going to cost? An evolution will not cut it.

**Madam SPEAKER** - As you know that is not a point of order. I can only draw the Premier to relevance.

**Mr GUTWEIN** - I have spoken about what was involved in the Premier's Address last week and the fact that the Budget can stand it.

All that side of the House can do is oppose. Whingeing is not a policy; complaining is not a platform. All they are doing today is the union's bidding. We want to ensure that we have a fit-for-purpose TasTAFE that is nimble, more like the businesses that it is there to serve,



and that can provide more opportunity for young Tasmanians to get the jobs that are available in our strong and growing economy. We will need more trainers, not fewer.

**Premier's Economic and Social Recovery Advisory Council -  
Cost of Implementation of Recommendations**

**Mr O'BYRNE to PREMIER, Mr GUTWEIN**

[10.52 a.m.]

Will you today release updated Treasury financial statements outlining the full cost of your commitment to adopt all 52 recommendations of the Premier's Economic and Social Recovery Advisory Council? Were these announcements fully costed and consulted with Treasury? If they were, will you release those costings? If they were not submitted for costings, your announcements are reckless. If you refuse to release them, you are clearly hiding something. Premier, which is it, secretive, reckless, or both?

**ANSWER**

Madam Speaker, I thank the shadow treasurer for that question. It is the height of hypocrisy. For years, when asked to deliver an alternative budget to explain what their policies were, how they would cost them, they turn up zip.

I will go back to the statements I made about PESRAC last year. I said that the final report of PESRAC would be delivered in time to be included in the coming budget. That is exactly what has occurred. The initiatives and recommendations within TasTAFE will be fully costed and fully funded as part of that budget. That is the way public finance works.

It beggar's belief that on that side of the House, the Opposition has refused to detail what its policies cost, and how it would fund them for seven years.

**Mr O'BYRNE** - Point of order, Madam Speaker, relevance. Will the Premier release updated costings on what is a significant announcement -

**Madam SPEAKER** - That is not a point of order. The Premier may return.

**Mr GUTWEIN** - The recommendations in the PESRAC report, as I said last year, will be captured in the coming budget.

That is the way public finance works. It sounds like the shadow treasure has not even read PESRAC. The recommendations run for a two- to five-year period. PESRAC was about re-building our state and securing Tasmania's future over the short- to medium-term. That is what will be presented in the August budget.

Even the Tasmanian Greens bring down a fully costed, fully funded budget every year. It is extraordinary that on that side of the House they could not even explain to Tasmanians what they stand for, what their policies are, and how they will pay for them. Year by year that is the process they go through. We will meet our commitments to Tasmanians and the PESRAC recommendations will be captured in the coming budget.

## **Mental Health - Care Options**

**Mr STREET to MINISTER for MENTAL HEALTH and WELLBEING,  
Mr ROCKLIFF**

[10.57 a.m.]

Can you provide the House with an update on the Government's plan to provide more care options for Tasmanians living with mental health challenges?

### **ANSWER**

Madam Speaker, I thank Mr Street for his question and his considerable interest in this matter. The Government is committed to building a better mental health system that is responsive to the needs of people with mental health challenges and their loved ones, providing the right care in the right place at the right time. People are increasingly seeking support and engaging with services with mental health issues. We acknowledge that this has seen an increase in mental-health-related presentations at emergency departments in recent years, particularly at the Royal Hobart Hospital. COVID-19 is creating additional challenges for many in our community.

In response to this, a number of initiatives have been implemented to improve access to support and more treatment options. A consultant psychiatrist and career medical officer have been employed to work within the Royal Hobart Hospital emergency department to provide specialist care and advice for people presenting with mental health issues.

The establishment of the Mental Health Hospital in the Home service is another initiative designed to improve the support available for Tasmanians, allowing people in an acute phase of mental illness who otherwise may have had to be admitted to hospital to now receive intensive evidence-based short-term support in the familiar environment of their own home.

I am pleased to announce the newly opened mental health short stay unit at the Royal Hobart Hospital will also go far to increase access to acute care for Tasmanians in need. The mental health short stay unit has a six-bed capacity and will provide a more appropriate therapeutic environment for people presenting to the emergency department with mental health issues who require short-term specialist care for up to 24 to 48 hours.

The short stay unit commenced last month and will be staffed by a pool of specialist level health clinicians, including nurses and allied health and medical staff. The short-stay unit will also provide an in-reach service to the emergency department 24 hours a day, seven days a week to ensure those patients requiring medical treatment continue to have access to specialist mental health support. The mental health short-stay unit is initially open five days per week until recruitment to all positions is achieved. The short-stay unit is a critical new component of our acute mental health facilities, reducing pressure and providing support to the emergency department, which will in turn improve patient care and flow at the Royal Hobart Hospital.

While there will always be a need for acute mental health facilities, we are also supporting more community-based mental health support options to reduce the reliance on hospital emergency departments, which are not the best environment for a person with a mental illness.

Many of the initiatives under the Tasmanian Mental Health Reform Program will provide more community-based support and additional options beyond presenting to hospital for the care of Tasmanians who require mental health treatment.

We have a clear \$160 million plan, including community-based solutions such as the redevelopment of the Peacock Centre, which commenced construction last week, and investment of over \$45 million to implement the Government's response to the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services review. Our Government is absolutely focused and we have a very strong continuing commitment to improving the mental health and wellbeing of all Tasmanians.

### **AFL Teams - Equal Pay for Female Players**

**Ms OGILVIE to PREMIER, Mr GUTWEIN**

[11.00 a.m.]

You have consistently said that a women's AFL team is a priority for the Tasmanian Government and we all know that women's sport is where it is at. Have you asked Mr Carter to ensure that when he reviews the business case for an AFL team for Tasmania that it includes equal pay for female players and if not, why not?

### **ANSWER**

Madam Speaker, I thank the Independent member for Clark that question and her interest in what is an important matter for Tasmanians broadly. As a state of this Federation we deserve both a men's and women's team on the national stage. I have made that point perfectly clear. I will be meeting with Mr Carter in coming weeks and he will also be engaging with the task force. Our very clear aim is to get both a men's licence and an AFLW licence, so that will be part of the conversation.

Regarding Mr Carter's role as consultant, he has been a forward thinker in his views of the AFL. I will not be able to quote him directly but I think I will get close enough. He said once, 'Why would you continue to subsidise the tenth team in Melbourne when you won't subsidise or pay or fund the first team in Tasmania?'. I could not agree more with Mr Carter on that fact.

The business case is sound; I am certain that Mr Carter will find that. What we will need is the will of the AFL in providing us with that licence. I am very confident that as we work through that process the business case will stack up and will make a compelling case for both an AFL men's team and an AFLW team. As to the matter you have raised, I will certainly raise that with Mr Carter.

**Time expired.**

### **PETITION**

#### **Marlborough and Wellington Streets, Longford - Dangerous Intersection**

**Ms Butler** presented a petition signed by approximately 552 residents praying that the Minister for Infrastructure and Transport immediately improve the dangerous intersection of

Marlborough and Wellington streets, Longford, by introducing a safer traffic control management system.

**Petition received.**

**LAND USE PLANNING AND APPROVALS AMENDMENT (TASMANIAN  
PLANNING SCHEME MODIFICATION) BILL 2021 (No. 8)**

**First Reading**

Bill presented by **Mr Jaensch** and read the first time.

**MATTER OF PUBLIC IMPORTANCE**

**TasTAFE**

[11.06 a.m.]

**Ms O'BYRNE** (Bass) - Madam Deputy Speaker, I move -

That the House take note of the following matter: TasTAFE.

I will commence by talking about the impact on the staff at TAFE from the way the Government has gone about this particular attack on them.

TasTAFE educator, Fiona Thollar, is stressed, scared and fears the state Government's plan to privatise TAFE will jeopardise her job. Fiona is part of a team of about 19 health workers and they are all tired and scared about what the future holds. Ms Thollar says that there are many unknowns such as whether redundancies will be offered and, if so, whether they will be targeted. Ms Thollar who, for the past four years has arrived on site at 6.30 a.m. to teach at a Huon aged care facility, was bemused to hear TAFE's flexible learning questioned by the Premier. Everyone in her team will work at least 10 to 15 hours overtime every week. She says:

I come in to work at 6.30 a.m. ready for students to start at 6.45. Everything being proposed is going to negate the quality of learning. We work in this area because we care about the wellbeing of the people we are looking after and about our student body.

It is very clear that this Government cares far less about those students and their ability to respond to industry's needs than Ms Thollar and her colleagues do.

This Government is about privatisation. They have been about privatisation in TAFE for some time. You only need to look at how the last seven years have played out to understand that. In fact, there was commentary by the AEU last November which said:

When you think like a private provider and act like a private provider, you become a private provider, and then the bottom line becomes reducing costs, with diminished outcomes for students.

They went on to say:

It is TasTAFE's job to raise the education capital of Tasmania and provide skilled and ready workers for hundreds of Tasmanian trades, industries and services. The current approach from management is setting many students up to fail.

Staff at TAFE said:

We need more and better resourced VET teachers to deliver a good quality, engaging learning experiences to students so they stay connected, continue learning and participate successfully in work and community life.

The Government says it is about TAFE being nimble and acting like a business. The Government needs to remember that TAFE is there to provide an educational pathway that means so much to young people, middle-aged people and older people. There are many pathways through TAFE and this Government appears to be ignoring all of them.

In a report last year produced by the AEU about how badly the transition to online learning was managed, one of the recipients said this:

Systemically and seemingly intentionally TasTAFE is being positioned, not as the Government's flagship of vocational education, as it once was, but as a 'failed government institution'. The root cause of TasTAFE's organisational dysfunction is camouflaged in corporate narrative of 'COVID-19 requirements', 'modernisation' and 'efficiency' but evidenced in poor educational leadership, the dissatisfaction of teachers and the performance of management, and in the non-completion rates of students.

Leadership is hiding behind COVID-19 and ignoring the advice of teachers, the advice of those students who weathered the storm to sustain their studies, and the advice of the industries we are training for.

It is very clear that this Government has been on this path for some time. They have actively undermined TAFE, they have actively undermined TAFE teachers and the broader staff, and they have actively undermined industry and students in an agenda to get to this point where we are now, where they can throw their hands in the air and say the only thing left is to sell it off. The reality is that there is not one of the concerns that has been raised that could not be addressed under the current model if the Government chose to do it. But this Government is not about investing in TAFE. This Government is not about providing that kind of connectivity to students. This Government is not about working in vocational education.

This Government is picking a fight for the sake of it. This Government wants to have a fight - and we have seen that in other decisions in the last couple of weeks. This Government is more interested in playing offence than defence. They would rather pick the fight and have the war to avoid the scrutiny of their own mismanagement and their deliberate disengagement in TAFE over the years. We saw that in the Premier's responses today. We saw that with the way he failed to answer it.

Let us go through some of the questions he was asked. He was asked about enrolment declines. It is important to recognise that student numbers are down more than 30 per cent since this Government came to power; even in the last couple of years there has been more than 8 per cent decline. This Government has overseen student declines because that is what this Government wanted to do. They cannot say, 'Oh well, we are just getting ready to be nimble and move on', because that is not what this is about. If you wanted to be nimble, you can be nimble under the current rules; there is nothing to stop you.

The second question talked about the South Australian example - an example that this Government would rather not talk about, where what we have seen is significant cuts to courses: cuts to courses in regional areas and cuts to courses in metropolitan areas. Courses diminish under this model. That is what this Government wants to happen. We have seen staff cuts across South Australia. We even have the TAFE boss in South Australia revealing that industry has concerns about those course cuts. Even the head of TAFE in South Australia is saying that this does not work. So if you are using - as you have - what happens in other states as a model, then you are clearly setting up TAFE for diminished courses, diminished access and diminished staffing levels.

When he was asked about regional delivery, this Premier would not commit to those regional services. In fact, he said the whole reason we need to do that is because we need to be able to provide services in regional communities despite the many examples of courses being provided in regional communities now, that the Premier chooses to ignore.

This Premier was asked about staffing cuts. He would not stand in this House and rule out that people would be sacked. He would not rule out that there would be redundancies. He would not rule out that people would be forcibly transferred, because that is all part of this. If he wants to be nimble, if he wants to achieve this model he is mythically talking about, it does not come without those cuts. It does not come without cutting staff. It does not come without making people redundant or forcibly transferring them.

This Government cannot explain how they are going to pay for this model. They have been unable to explain why they have undermined courses. They have been unable to explain why they have fewer students. They have been unable to explain why they are not committed to TAFE. It will negatively impact on students. It is a plan to cut staff. It is a privatisation agenda. It is clear that this Government could work with TAFE and has chosen not to because they would rather have a fight and sell it off.

**Time expired.**

[11.13 a.m.]

**Mr ROCKLIFF** (Braddon - Minister for Education and Training) - Madam Deputy Speaker, I thank the Deputy Leader of the Opposition for bringing forward her matter of public importance today, and the very important matter of TasTAFE, which has been our public training provider for many years, apart from, of course, the Tasmania Tomorrow reforms which decimated TAFE, cost a lot of money, courses were cut, and that was a complete and utter disaster.

The language the member has used is language that would scare staff within TasTAFE. When the member speaks of privatisation, that is simply not true. It is absolutely not true. We are the greatest supporter of TasTAFE - our public training provider - and we always will be.

TasTAFE will remain in public hands absolutely. We are 100 per cent committed to that and it is important for the very reason, as the member talks about, when it comes to regional service delivery.

We need to ensure we have a public training provider that serves the regions, supports our students and aligns with industry across the state. This is one of the key planks of why we want to invest more in TAFE. We want more choices for learners. We want our public provider to have more teachers and delivery within our regions. We want better pay for skilled teachers. I commend all our teachers within TasTAFE. It has been a challenging time over the last number of years since TAFE was abolished. We had the Polytechnic, the Academy, the Skills Institute - and it was a failed experiment. The member mentioned the word experiment today in question time. The only experiment with the public training provider, learners, teachers, trainers over the course of the last decade was the failed experiment of Tasmania Tomorrow, which cost jobs, public funds, learners, and courses were cut.

That is not what we want for our public training provider, which will always be in public hands. We want flexible hours aligned to business and industry needs: the best public service training provider to meet the needs of young Tasmanians and those looking to reskill or upskill.

TasTAFE, in the National Training Awards, delivered the Vocational Education Training Student of the Year; and delivered the Apprentice of the Year, a young farm apprentice, very proud to be in the Training Awards here in Hobart. It was a 'virtual' Training Awards and we heard from ministers around the country, and we heard from students. The last award of the evening was the Apprentice of the Year, and to see a young farm apprentice, Ms Caitlin Radford, win that was a very proud moment for me and should be for all TasTAFE.

This is why it is important that we continue to invest. Now is the time to support TasTAFE in the next step of its evolution. We have paid off the debt that TasTAFE inherited from the previous government. We have achieved seven years' accreditation: the highest possible accreditation, when many, including those opposite I hasten to add, probably did not think that could be achieved. But it was done, with all the 800 staff, the collective will of the CEO at the time, Jenny Dodd, the board, managers, teachers and trainers, the admin staff, and it was a very proud moment indeed.

The next step, as highlighted by the PESRAC report and the recommendations, is to acknowledge the good work that is done but we can continue to improve. We should be about continuous improvement, irrespective of what we are speaking about in terms of government service delivery. We have to improve our Mental Health Services, which I speak about quite often. I acknowledge the challenges there.

We are investing and the investment we made in the PESRAC, following the Premier's Address, was some \$41 million for stage 1 and 2 of the CAMHS report recommendations is also significant about a government investing in public service for that continuous improvement. TAFE is in the same position. We want to make a great TAFE even greater and I want to sit down with representatives of staff. I have written to the AEU. I have stated very clearly that we are exceptionally proud of TasTAFE's achievement in recent years, which is a positive reflection on our teaching staff. We want to build on these successes by ensuring TasTAFE has more flexibility to meet industry needs. We will be looking to develop an implementation plan in coming months, and engagement with our major stakeholders such as the Australian Education Union that represent teachers and that will be part of that process.

I genuinely want, as I expressed to the Australian Education Union, to ensure that we see TAFE go from strength to strength. That can be best achieved by collectively and constructively working together. At the end of the day it is all about the students, the learners and aligning their aspirations to industry need.

**Time expired.**

[11.20 a.m.]

**Ms O'CONNOR** (Clark - Leader of the Greens) - Madam Deputy Speaker, it was lovely to hear that students from TasTAFE took out Student of the Year and Apprentice of the Year at the national awards. It tells the House that TasTAFE as it stands is doing an excellent job in lifting the skills and training of young people and people who need reskilling to enter the workplace. We all want to see young Tasmanians have the education and the skills they need to enter the workforce and contribute to our society. The question is whether corporatising TasTAFE is the path forward.

I listened carefully to the minister's contribution. He said this is all about the students and the learners, but it is not. Even according to PESRAC it is not. What PESRAC is saying is that it needs to be all about industry's needs. This is designed to cater to industry. In fact, when you read this section of the PESRAC report there is a veiled antagonism towards what they call educationalists and a prioritising of the concerns of industry. It is very important that the public training provider provides an education in varied fields. If industry is calling the shots about what courses are provided by TasTAFE, you are going to have a depletion in courses, in diversity of courses and, I argue, in the quality of some of those courses being taught.

If the Government is serious about lifting TasTAFE to the next level, it will make TasTAFE free. If you want to reach people in rural and regional Tasmania and tell them that there are courses available to lift their skills and give them greater employment opportunities, make TasTAFE free. It is the public training provider. Instead, what we have here is a proposal for a government business that would operate on a full cost-recovery basis. We cannot say at this point what that might mean for course costs, but we know now the cost of some TasTAFE courses excludes people.

We urge the Government to be extremely cautious here. When you corporatise a public service into a government business you are putting it behind the walls of corporatism, of it being a business. We have huge transparency concerns about this approach, because every two years the Greens sit opposite, for example, Forestry Tasmania or Hydro Tasmania, and seek information from them on how they are administering their businesses. It is very difficult to get clear, factual information and straight answers out of a government business that knows it is only going to have to face the Greens, for example, every two years.

There are legitimate concerns about what this will mean to the quality of public training, what it will mean to the staff at TasTAFE, and to the diversity of courses that are available to students. It cannot all be about what industry needs. That is a blunt instrument approach. I take on board what Ms O'Byrne said earlier about how this played out in South Australia. I do not think PESRAC has made the case in its report, although there is much in the PESRAC report that is of high quality. I commend chapter 6 to members, which is the chapter on the environment and sustainability, but the lens through which this section of the report has been written is very industry focused.



Of course we need to make sure that the skills are there for industry but we need to provide a rich educational opportunity to people who go to TasTAFE, and industry is not going to necessarily say that the jobs of the future are in green skills or renewable skills. Industry is not necessarily going to say we need 10 000 new age and disability care workers over the next 10 years so we need to invest in that part of the economy.

We are strongly of the view that the Government needs to be extremely cautious here because TasTAFE has been used as a political football before and it is the students and staff of TasTAFE who suffer when that happens. We believe that if the Government is really serious about providing those opportunities, particularly to young people, they should make TasTAFE courses free. They should recognise that a huge part of the skills for the future that will be needed are in green skills, in re-wilding and the repair of nature and repairing degraded landscapes. We do not believe there are industries in Tasmania that will promote the need for those skills. We are concerned about how this might play out in making sure that TasTAFE is able to provide the diversity of skills that are required for the future.

While the minister has said he is a big supporter of TasTAFE, on his watch \$1 million went to the Tasmanian Hospitality Association and the Tourism Industry Council of Tasmania to establish a private registered training organisation. That is money that should have gone into TasTAFE to support the work undertaken at Drysdale House for the hospitality sector. It might have been part of the payback from the last state election, who can say, but a choice was made to allocate \$1 million to create a new entity, not to fill a gap, because that gap was being filled by TasTAFE itself through Drysdale House.

Imagine what they could have done at Drysdale with an extra \$1 million and extra staffing to go into skilling up people for the hospitality sector? We have never had a straight answer out of Government about that funding decision. It was a slap in the face for TasTAFE. In part, it must have been the Tourism Hospitality Association that undermined TasTAFE and that is our concern about the future when industry is calling the shots.

### **Time expired.**

[11.27 a.m.]

**Mr O'BYRNE** (Franklin) - Madam Deputy Speaker, I rise to talk on this very important matter confronting not only this parliament but the people of Tasmania. It was remarkable listening to the minister laud and praise the work of TasTAFE and talk about how proud he was to see young Tasmanians getting not only state awards but national awards. We all in this House celebrate that.

If we listen to the minister's words in his contribution today, he says we want to work, we want to sit down, we want to build something. If only his Government would work with TAFE, to invest in TAFE, to build on the strengths it already has, to deal with some of the challenges that business has raised with some of the delivery issues. If only this Government would work with TAFE.

This exposes a massive rift and the wafer-thin reform agenda of this Liberal Government. There is clearly a rift between the minister and the Premier. The minister gets up and says he wants to work with TAFE. The Premier gets up and attacks TAFE, and he attacks the workers. He got up here last week in his Address in answer to questions about the corporatisation or privatisation and criticised TAFE. He attacked them for having too much annual leave, inflated wages, inflexible delivery. Well, you cannot have it both ways. You cannot have a minister

getting up and saying they do great work and we love it and we are going to support it, and the Premier getting up saying it is broken, it does not work, and we need to fundamentally change it. It cannot be both.

Let us go back. In their answers to questions today the Premier and the minister, regarding ruling things in and out, said it is not privatisation, it is corporatisation. It is semantics regarding accountability to the Tasmanian people and the ability of the Government to ensure that delivery is consistent in the regions, that the needs of students are met, that there is a fair weighing-up of the needs of students and businesses.

In recent weeks, despite Mr Barnett claiming a jobs bonanza in renewable energy, when the corporatised and, arguably, privatised Hydro set up similar legislation to the one proposed for TAFE and then announced it was sacking 50 workers, what was the Government's response? 'It has nothing to do with us. It is a matter for the CEO. It is a matter for the board'.

When the Premier makes a commitment, we know it is hollow. We know he has a secret agenda to gut the wages and conditions of TAFE, to copy what happened in South Australia where regional courses were cut, where staff numbers were cut, courses were cut - courses in industries that are in desperate need of training and support such as aged care, disability, early education and care and nursing. They have gutted those services.

Minister, I take you at face value, but the problem is your Premier and your Government is careering down a pathway that is the antithesis of the words that you spoke in your contribution. You are not working with TAFE; you have a predetermined view.

**Mr Rockliff** - I encourage you to go to Clarence and Alanvale and see the new nursing facilities.

**Mr O'BYRNE** - I did not interrupt you. They want to set up a system where they do not have to take responsibility, where they contract out the work to a board and a CEO in a corporatised environment. There have been no costings associated with this reform. It is a black hole, it is a blank cheque. If it is not about a blank cheque, it is about transferring cost from the public purse to businesses by charging more for the courses and to students who want to access those services.

If there is no funded plan, that is exactly what will happen because it has happened in other states. Despite the assurances from the minister, this is form for this premier. In his eight years in the role as either Treasurer or Premier, not one piece of micro-economic reform or major policy that he has initiated has been successful. His last woeful attempt was TasWater which cost millions of dollars, wasted a significant amount of time, and caused an organisation that should have been focused on delivering services to the community to focus on defending an attack from the Government. He took it to the last election and then on the day of parliament resuming in 2018 did a massive backflip because it all got a bit too hard, it was all too difficult.

When the Premier says, 'We have a plan for the future', he does not. All he has is narrow stimulus, a pea and thimble trick with the Budget, careering towards - even before COVID - \$1 billion of net debt and deficit, apart from his raids on the GBEs via dividend policy. All of a sudden, he has the PESRAC report, which has given him something to talk about. Instead of reading the report, balancing that report, talking with business and TAFE, he launched a surprise attack. We know it was a surprise attack because the first TAFE people heard about it was when the Premier was on his feet.

He has confirmed it in question time today that he did not even send it to Treasury for costings. How reckless is that? It is appalling. The idea of TAFE is to build the workforce of the future and to build genuine industry and community partnerships. This approach is the antithesis of that.

**Time expired.**

[11.34 a.m.]

**Mr ELLIS** (Braddon) - Madam Deputy Speaker, Labor is failing to listen to our community. We have heard from PESRAC, industry groups, community groups, the TasTAFE chair and board and CEOs, and they all endorse the government business model for TasTAFE. Those opposite did not believe the endorsements published last week. They had to check if they were real and then if permission had been received. That is how flabbergasted they were at how positive the coverage and the endorsements were. When the third-party endorsements are so good that the Opposition cannot even believe them you know you are on the right track.

Labor reminds me on this issue of the home handyman who is trying to fix a leaking tap. They have gone in there with the \$5 Bunnings tools and have completely wrecked it. They have flooded the house, the wife is panicking because the carpets will be ruined, and they have to call the plumber to fix the mess. He has to turn off the taps, he has to soak everything up, he has to make everything better. We can say of the 1950s taps, we can put new ones in there, we can make it better than when you started and when you stuffed it up.

That is what we want to deliver. Every Tasmanian I have spoken to in the north-west has asked why Labor does not start listening to Tasmanians. As much as Labor wants to criticise the government business model as only about employment conditions, it is about much more than that. Labor refuses to hear that, refuses to hear the voices of the industry that want a training organisation that runs more like they do and less like a high school. PESRAC recommended that TAFE manages its own infrastructure. It currently cannot do that. PESRAC said an autonomous board is a better government structure; TasTAFE currently does not have that.

Labor is not talking about these important recommendations because it either does not understand PESRAC or maybe the Opposition treasury spokesperson has not bothered to do the work on this; he might not have even read it. Labor remains deathly quiet on PESRAC which speaks to a lack of work ethic, a lack of drive and commitment to the people who put us here. These are structural changes that are required to take TasTAFE to the next level. That is what we promised, that is what we are keen to deliver. An autonomous board and self-management of infrastructure are not possible in this current model.

I am happy to quote the last industry perspective on Labor's TAFE plan when they were last in power, when industry was excluded and confused and student numbers disappeared. This is from ABC Online 29 October 2009:

More flak over education changes

...

The changes to the TAFE system in particular have upset both the agriculture and industrial sectors. Mike Badcock ... said it has reached the point where the system is so disorganised and confusing it is driving students away. 'It

appears as though it's an absolute disaster for rural industry in Tasmania', he said.

**Mr O'Byrne** interjecting.

**Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER** - Order, Mr O'Byrne.

**Mr ELLIS** - I know you live in Hobart, but people up in my neck of the woods want to be able to get trained and they remember what you did.

Mr Badcock goes onto say:

'We want work-ready employees and at the moment we're just not getting people to sign up to take these, to sign up for educational purposes.'

It is a complete shemozzle and they are walking away and saying it is all too hard. That is what Labor left us, that is a blown-up training system, that is a blow-up TAFE. I wonder where you got the phrase 'Blowing up TAFE'. It is pure projection. The Prime Minister recognised last year that Tasmania is the only jurisdiction to maintain investment in skills in real terms in the last 10 years.

The hypocrisy from Labor on this is stunning. On 13 July 2019, Rebecca White said 'The TAFE system is broken and we have to fix it'. I cannot figure out whether she was lying then or David O'Byrne is lying now. It is really hard to keep track of what they even think on this issue. It is absolute chaos -

**Ms O'BYRNE** - Point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. You just heard the member accuse another member of lying. I suggest you might want to take action regarding that allegation.

**Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER** - Is there another word the member could use in place of 'lying'?

**Mr ELLIS** - I am happy to withdraw the word 'lying', Madam Deputy Speaker. Perhaps 'mislead' is the correct word.

They will not listen. Perhaps they listen to themselves depending on the time of day but even then they are contradictory.

The AEU release said that TAFE teachers bend over backwards to meet the needs of industry. We thank the teachers for their passion and the commitment they make to our students and say that we want better conditions where teachers can be more fairly remunerated for the work they do. On this side of the House we have a TAFE teacher, we have tradies, people who are passionate about people getting skills and who want to hand down the skills they have to the next generation to make this a place where you can get a job, work on the tools and raise a family. If you cannot get the training you need at the time you need it then you will not be able to achieve those things. We want to back in those students and those jobs.

This happens right across Australia. When you look at how TAFE currently has to manage training outside of business hours, you realise there are better ways of working. I went

to night school in a different place. I want my kids to be able to go to night school here, because it means you can go to work, train after work and get the job done.

I implore those opposite to listen to PESRAC. This group of prominent individuals in our community, including -

**Time expired.**

**Matter noted.**

## **MOTION**

### **Note - Premier's Address**

**Continued from 18 March 2021 (page 95).**

**Ms COURTNEY** (Bass - Minister for Health) - Madam Deputy Speaker, I am pleased to continue my response to the Premier's Address. I had started outlining some of the measures within the health system. As Minister for Health, these things are very important to me. I have a few more and then I will move to some other topics.

With regard to medicinal cannabis, we have seen the announcement of changes that will be made to the framework for access to medicinal cannabis to provide greater consistency with access models adopted in other jurisdictions. The new scheme will be established which will allow for authorised Tasmanian GPs to prescribe medicinal cannabis products and to ensure that more pharmacies across the state are able to dispense them. This will assist patients to have easier and greater access to medicinal cannabis products around the state. Like many other members, I have engaged with many Tasmanians on this issue and I know that this will help many Tasmanians at a time of very difficult need.

Subject to the necessary approval from the TGA, Tasmania will also adopt the national streamlined online application pathway and a 48-hour authorisation time frame. A review of the Controlled Access Scheme will be conducted to ensure there is continued subsidised access for Tasmanians with a serious illness which has not responded to conventional therapies when prescribed through the medical specialist pathway. The Department of Health will shortly be undertaking targeted consultation with key stakeholders regarding the changes and our expectation is that the new scheme will commence on 1 July this year.

I will touch on an issue I know will be looked at in the upper House this week. I will not reflect on their debate but I am immensely proud to have taken carriage of the End of Life Choices (Voluntary Assisted Dying) Bill through this place. Without pre-empting the other place, I am very hopeful that it will be looked upon favourably with regard to the amendments that have been made. The amendments put forward by this House together have strengthened the bill, ensuring the framework ensures access and support for those wishing to access VAD while striking an appropriate balance with the rights of those not wishing to participate or who have conscientious objections. Other improvements include requirements for a regional access standard to be established by the secretary of the Department of Health stating how people access VAD including in regional and rural communities, as well as prescribing requirements for medical practitioners, providing details of the voluntary assisted dying commission, which

has further powers to provide an appropriate level of assistance to Tasmanians. I believe we are focused on improving safeguards for patients and practitioners and I look forward to a time in this state where it is legal.

Before I conclude reflecting on Health, I would like to say how grateful I am for the participation we have seen from stakeholders in the Our Healthcare Future discussion paper and directions document. We know that for a state we need to all be working together and if we reflect on the things we have done well during COVID-19, one is the health system all working together. It is easy sometimes as a Health minister to think of your health system and your responsibility ending at the edge of our hospitals, but quite clearly for a state we all need to be working together across primary care, aged care and care in the community. I am very hopeful and optimistic that the work we do through Our Healthcare Future will provide a common goal for our healthcare system more broadly to work towards being able to solve some of the long-term challenges we have within healthcare.

Small business is one of the Government's key priorities. I am very proud to be Tasmania's Small Business minister as we are delivering on our return of confidence to the economy post-COVID-19. Our 39 000-odd small businesses employ around 100 000 people with about 60 per cent operating as sole traders. They underpin regional communities and our CBDs. They underpin families, livelihoods, training opportunities and the vibrancy we see in Tasmania.

COVID-19 hit small business extraordinarily quickly and it hit hard but, over the past 12 months, we have worked in partnership with businesses, industry bodies, and chambers of commerce to develop a nation-leading support package, including over 20 000 grants to over 14 000 businesses. The feedback has been that the support has been vital in helping businesses keep their doors open, as well as providing mechanisms for them to transition towards new operating models and respond to the challenges we saw last year. I am very proud of the way our small businesses have tackled the various hurdles and opportunities that have come their way and I am delighted that business confidence is high.

I thank the small business owners. I know how difficult the past year has been for many of them. Once again it has demonstrated the enormous tenacity, work ethic, intellect and sheer determination of our small businesses. It is something that we definitely do not take for granted as a government. The support we have provided has helped keep doors open but also provided strong advice for businesses. We have worked hard to ensure we have sufficient breadth in the offerings available, because we know that small business know what they need. They know what type of support is best for them and being able to provide the flexibility to get that support has been very important.

It is also why we have announced a new \$1 million small business financial counselling support program to help eligible small business access the financial advice they need to help them plan for the future, to ensure they are profitable, to ensure that they have long-term plans, and to ensure that they are able to be resilient to future shocks. We will be working with the Small Business Council and the Tasmanian Chamber of Commerce and we will have more to say on that.

I thank the small chambers of commerce. They have played an important role in their local communities supporting them during an extraordinarily difficult time. Many chambers of commerce in regional areas operate through volunteer structures. Very few of them have

the capacity to actually employ staff and the hundreds and hundreds of hours that have been dedicated by these people to support their businesses has been motivating. I am very grateful for the work they have done. Not only have they delivered vital support to their sector and to their businesses, they have been a source for information for me as minister and also the small business team within State Growth to ensure that the policies we are standing up and the support we have available is appropriate for them.

It has also been flagged a number of times around our mental health support. This is because it is so important. When I conducted a range of roundtables around the state on the impacts of COVID-19, one of the things that became very clear was the impact of mental health on business owners and also providing them with the skills to be able to support their staff.

The funding we have been able to roll out - and are continuing to roll out - is exciting for those participants and it is a good opportunity to remind members around the chamber that these supports are still available. We are still rolling out money through peak organisations as well. We are keen to ensure we have the support there for businesses so they can in turn support themselves and support their staff.

Hospitality is another sector that has been hard hit by COVID-19 but it is exciting that we are welcoming visitors back to the state. We also note from the PESRAC report how critical it is to rebuild these industries and the skills that are part of these industries. I was excited this morning to join the inaugural CEO of the new Tasmanian Hospitality and Tourism Training Organisation, Emilie Donovan. With 20 years' experience I have confidence that Emilie will bring the skill-set to that organisation to deliver the training pathways that we need.

We know we had - pre-pandemic - almost 50 000 Tasmanians employed across tourism and hospitality, so ensuring that we have pathways available for training to ensure these vital industries remain strong and robust in the future is important. These industries provide employment opportunities in a range of regional areas. As an employment pathway for a Tasmanian in a rural or regional area, hospitality and tourism is an exciting prospect and ensuring we have the training pathways to be able to support them to move into meaningful careers is important.

Through the Premier's Address earlier last week, we also recognised that tourism and hospitality have continued to be impacted by travel bans. We will provide the industry with \$8 million in innovation and development grants to continue to enhance our world-class experience reputation, as well as a further \$500 000 to extend the business planning support program. We have also provided \$4 million through the Premier's Address in direct financial support to tourism and hospitality businesses identified as being critical to regional visitor attraction and that remain in acute financial stress. These will be grants of up to \$100 000 per business with a go-live date expected on 4 April. This is important because we know that visitation to regional areas has been a key platform of this Government since Will Hodgman first took his seat in this Chamber as premier. Ensuring that those businesses that are critical to that regional travel remain viable is important.

We know some of Tasmania's best assets tend to be in regional areas if we look at some of our world heritage and historical and cultural aspects. Ensuring that we have the appropriate infrastructure there, supporting the people in those organisations to remain in those communities, is critical. I would also like to thank the THA which has worked closely and has

been a strong advocate for those in their sector. I am looking forward to having a productive relationship with the THA.

We know that events are big drivers of the economy in Tasmania; they drive visitation and spending. We also know that Tasmanians love to get out and about for an event as well, so from a way of life perspective, they are an important part of being Tasmanian. We have seen sporting events deliver strong returns for our economy which is why we have committed more than \$14 million in last year's budget to deliver a range of sporting events. With the Premier's Address last week, the Premier announced funding of \$1.5 million to establish a Regional Event Recovery Grant Fund which will support Tasmania's regional communities and local businesses as they move through the recovery phase.

Start-up and existing events held in regional areas in the state may be eligible to receive funding for marketing or to engage short-term personnel to provide specialist advice in areas such as business development, risk management, evaluation measures, and also other ways to be able to help drive sustainability. We know that many of our iconic events in Tasmania started as smaller grassroots regional events and so supporting those events to ensure they can be sustainable into the future, that they can have the structures in place to be able to tell what is an authentic and unique Tasmanian story is part of our appeal for tourists and indeed it is an important way for us as Tasmanians to be able to share our stories and build our community.

I also take my role as Minister for Strategic Growth very seriously. It is a portfolio that has evolved with the changing economic environment that we have seen since the portfolio was established. Under our long-term plan before even COVID-19 had hit, thousands more Tasmanians have been employed in trend terms since March 2014 and pleasingly, even with the impact of COVID-19, we have seen our employment participation return to pre-pandemic levels.

While we have seen steady growth in this state led by a stable majority Liberal Government, we also know that we have challenges in the future. We know that with regard to the recovery, while we have the lowest unemployment rate of other jurisdictions, there is still more work to do. There is still more work to get more Tasmanians in regional areas and younger Tasmanians being able to benefit from the opportunities that our strong economy provides. This is why we are working to unlock potential in our regions; partnering with organisations, with industry, with community groups, with Local Government; to enable opportunities for all Tasmanians.

Through our Jobs Hub in the south-east and in Glenorchy and our regional development projects in George Town, we are investing at the local level to support targeted regional solutions driven by those who best know what is needed - local leaders, local communities and local businesses. The South East Employment Hub has now placed more than 250 people in employment since it began operating in July 2019 with a quarter of those in full-time positions.

We are also supporting employment-focused social enterprise including Hamlet Inc and the Workskills Troublesmith program to support people facing significant and complex barriers. We know the differences that these types of initiatives make to the lives of Tasmanians, so I am really excited about the announcement of Jobs Tasmania local networks to strengthen the links to job opportunities and support more Tasmanians to live and work in the place they call home and the creation of a new Jobs and Participation Unit within Skills Tasmania.



I welcome the new \$20.5 million package to help more Tasmanian workers into jobs. These are exciting initiatives that will make a real difference to Tasmanian jobseekers. I know from speaking with those people - our young and young at heart who have had the benefit of similar-types of programs - the opportunities that these provide to support them into a role that is meaningful, that creates a future and can exist in our local community is incredibly important. It is important for our economy but it is even more important for that person and their local community.

The new JobReady Fund expanded area connection service to support people to be able to get to work, training or education; the new Workers Connect Portal to improve information flow; a regional jobs show; an events program; and a Tasmanian Employer Bonus will build on the work started through Strategic Growth and will make even more opportunities available to more Tasmanians around the state. This is vital. We want to ensure with the strong economy that we are delivering through our government, that the benefits of this are available to all Tasmanians, that they have the opportunities to be able to participate, that they have the opportunities to be able to get training, and that they are able to have access to those employment opportunities that are available in their regional areas.

I will now reflect on my role as Minister for Women. I am proud to be part of a government that has made, and continues to make, significant progress in improving opportunities for women and girls in our state. It would be remiss not to thank the former minister for women, Jacquie Petrusma. I know how the passionate Mrs Petrusma has been in this space and the drive and the determination she showed when she was minister. It is a great privilege to continue many of the initiatives she commenced.

The centrepiece of this work is the Tasmanian Women's Strategy 2018-21 which is being delivered through a series of action plans that prioritise the financial security, safety, leadership and participation, and health and wellbeing of Tasmanian women and girls. We have already exceeded our 2020 target of 40 per cent of women holding senior executive roles within the State Service and we are fast approaching a full representation.

We are making great progress on our target of 50 per cent women on boards by 2025, with women making up 46.4 per cent in June 2020. This is a great achievement and I give credit to former premier, Will Hodgman, with regard to this initiative. It is one that has been driven by him and the senior leadership within this Government and has clearly demonstrated that if we focus on action we can achieve outcomes.

We have also supported 87 women to build their executive and board-readiness skills through leadership scholarships to undertake the AICD courses. With the strategy expiring this year we are taking the opportunity to reflect on what has worked well, how participation is changing, and what steps can be taken next. I am very pleased to be able to be playing an active role also engaging with industry on this because we need to also be cognisant of the opportunities for women and girls. While some of those lie within the government sector, many also lie within private industry, and there are opportunities in regional areas in those industries that we know are going to be strong going forward. I am very excited with the initiatives we already have under way and the funding we secured through last year's state budget to get meaningful action on the ground.

The past year has proven that Tasmanians are incredibly resilient. I have been very proud to be a member of this Government and minister for all my portfolios in a year where they have

been impacted so much. It shows what we can achieve as a state and gives me enormous confidence going forward around the future potential of Tasmania and Tasmanians. It has been a year that very few of us will ever forget.

I thank all those small businesses and participants and all the healthcare workers, both employed by the state government and employed through other mechanisms. The attitude, the willingness to lend a hand to others and the capacity of our entire community to support small businesses when they needed it most has been demonstrated time and time again. The pandemic will be a formative time for Tasmania. It will demonstrate for us now but also for future generations what Tasmania is capable of when we come together. We will also, with the policies we have outlined, ensure that we have a strong future.

### **Time expired.**

[12.03 p.m.]

**Ms DOW** (Braddon) - Madam Deputy Speaker, I am pleased to present my response to the Premier's Address. It has been said that this Premier's Address felt more like a pre-election speech than a normal Address. I note the Premier's recent indications that he will not rule out going to an early election. With developments over the weekend and with the Government now in minority, an early election might be required.

I put on the record today that we are ready with a dedicated, united and committed team ready and capable of governing, a dynamic team working together to create a fairer and better Tasmania. A Labor government will be a compassionate government in both words and actions, unlike this Government. Through our policies we will make a positive difference to the lives of all Tasmanians.

As we approach the next state election, Tasmanians need to ask themselves a simple question: is life better under the Gutwein Liberal minority Government? Does this minority Government deserve another four years? Can Tasmanians endure another 12 years of this Liberal minority Government?

During my contribution today, I believe that the answer to these questions will be made abundantly clear. I plan to share some stories from Tasmanians, members of my electorate, throughout my contribution today, because this is what matters. The lived experience of Tasmanians should inform decision-making in this place and the policies of current and future governments. I am proud to be part of a team that listens to communities, consults widely and develops its policies from the interactions we have with Tasmanians and stakeholders as we endeavour to improve the lives of all Tasmanians.

The start of a new year always brings both reflection and anticipation and often hope for a better year ahead, but after the trials and pain of 2020, there is a special significance to the start of this new year and indeed our parliamentary year. I know across the world, across our state and this Chamber, there is a collective hope for better times in 2021. While the uncertainty is not over, there is cause for optimism, particularly in Tasmania where we have overcome the worst of the public health emergency by pulling together as a community. For my close-knit community in the north-west, west coast and on King Island, the outbreak, tragic loss of lives and extended lockdown period brought enormous hardship but also serves as a shining example of what can be achieved by us working together. As we embark on this new year and our

ongoing recovery, we need to keep that in our minds and incorporate what we have learnt in 2020.

One of the first lessons was the importance of a strong health system. The pressures on north-west health facilities and staff, culminating in the closure of the Mersey hospital emergency department outside business hours, highlighted wider, pre-existing issues with the system including culture, understaffing and a heavy reliance on locums. The people of the north-west deserve better. We must ensure our health system is properly funded and our healthcare workforce supported. I put on the record this morning my gratitude and thanks to all our frontline workers who assisted our state and our local communities in our response to COVID-19.

It is not just in our hospitals. More investment in vital community services including mental health across our region and the state is needed now more than ever to support our community through the hardship they have endured. We also need more action to create local jobs across our regions. Labor's priorities are jobs, housing and health. When it comes to jobs, our fully-costed plan, Working for Tasmania, includes initiatives designed to stimulate the economy, foster business growth and get Tasmanians into secure jobs.

Labor will rebuild TAFE and enhance regional delivery, as well as making TAFE free in areas of greater skills demand. Labor will also invest in supporting our small businesses, incentivise innovation to diversify our economy and invest in the Burnie and Devonport ports to stimulate industry growth and job creation. We will also ensure that money from government contracts stays in Tasmania by implementing a genuine Buy Local policy.

COVID-19 has taught us that we can get through a crisis while working together. I thank our community for working together throughout a very tough year. I also thank my colleagues in this place for working together during what was an incredibly difficult time for our state.

As Tasmanians sit in traffic, try to put a roof over their head, struggle to make ends meet each week, wait for hours for an ambulance, struggle to get an appointment with their local GP, afford a TAFE course or get a job, I wonder what they truly think about this Government and its impact on their quality of life. We think the quality of life of all Tasmanians is slowly eroding under this Government. All of those issues effecting Tasmanians, prior to COVID-19 still exists post COVID-19, with many having been amplified by COVID-19.

This Government has failed to plan for growth across Tasmania. It has no comprehensive plan for Tasmania. It has taken seven years to address the skills shortages across Tasmania, seven years to fix planning, seven years to invest in TAFE, seven years to fix Tasmania's housing crisis, seven years to fix workforce shortages, seven years to fix traffic congestion across our major centres and seven years to ensure rural and regional Tasmanians have access to the same services and are afforded the same opportunities as their city counterparts.

Right now, though, despite the tag line on our number plate, not all Tasmanians are getting the opportunity to explore the possibilities. There is a clear dichotomy in Tasmania between the haves and the have nots.

We are seeing the result of the short-term approach taken by this Government over seven years impacting on the quality of life and opportunities that we as proud Tasmanians have enjoyed for generations. Tasmania is the state of beautiful landscapes, talented people and

tremendous opportunities and possibilities. We must think big, think differently and have the courage to face up to our challenges and plan together as a community for our future. This Government has no long-term plan for Tasmania, no shared objectives or goals, or no insight into what is important to Tasmanians.

I take this opportunity to thank the members of PESRAC for their commitment to the future of Tasmania and the preparation of their report and Tasmania's future direction and their work on our social and economic recovery. It is only now when PESRAC has handed down its final report that we see the Government promoting TAFE being made available in the regions. The Treasurer and minister have had seven years to address this, to invest in TAFE and improve regional delivery - seven years of inaction. This is but one example of this Government's neglect.

The Labor Party is the party for the workers and all Tasmanians. We will not be drawn into wedge politics. We will not be doing any deals with the Greens. We are clear on our priorities. We want to help Tasmanians, young and old, to get a job, have access to quality skills and training and make sure they can get into see their GP, get an ambulance when they need to, and have a roof over their head for themselves and their families. We recognise that one in four Tasmanians lives in poverty. This is simply unacceptable and addressing this must be a clear priority for government. We have questions about how the Government will fund the initiatives set out in the Premier's Address and the recommendations set out in PESRAC. Are they fully costed and budgeted for? If they are not why not?

Our fully costed jobs plan, our budget reply, is a document that I am proud of and that has been developed through consultation with communities and industries. It enables the creation of 35 000 jobs across Tasmania, from the regions to the cities. It is about investing in Tasmanians. The Government says it does not rate our jobs plan. The Premier's Address confirmed the Government has included a number of initiatives from our jobs plan as outlined last week. We are pleased the Government sees merit in these initiatives including rolling out our regional jobs hubs.

I will now take some time to examine yearly progress made across each of my shadow portfolios.

Labor is a strong supporter of small business. We want to do more to support small business, particularly across regional Tasmania. I thank our small business owners and operators across the state. It has been a heartbreaking year for them and they have sacrificed a great deal for the greater health and wellbeing of our communities. There have been numerous support packages and grants made available by the Government to support small business across the state, some less controversial than others. While I acknowledge there needed to be haste to provide this financial support, the administration of some of these small business grants programs has been questioned. We have received feedback from many businesses who felt this process was not equitable and could have been administered better. We will need to continue to support our small businesses as JobKeeper ends. I call on the Government to do this.

The Government is still failing to strategically invest in regional Tasmania. It talks about it, but it does not do it. Here is poor access to skills and training, poor community transport services and poor access to general practice. It is only since PESRAC's report that community transport services and access to regional skills and training have become a priority for this

Government. The Government has had seven years to make this a priority. We believe that local government is an important strategic partner in regional development and we will work in partnership to address barriers to growth across regional Tasmania.

Regarding transport, we have been accused by those on other side of creating nothing but glossy brochures. I bring to the attention of the House this glossy brochure, which is all about Hobart's transport vision from two ministers ago when Rene Hidding was responsible for the document. In here you will see lots of glossy pictures of Derwent ferries, underground bus malls, and rail services from the northern suburbs. It is all there. Not much of it has been achieved. We still have issues with congestion. There has been no progress made on the Derwent ferries. We do not have an underground bus mall. There has been no progress made on the northern suburbs rail yet there is going to be another consultant's report on this project.

We have very poor public transport amenities around the state, very poor bus shelter infrastructure, bus stops on the sides of hills with no shelter. I recently wrote to the Minister for Infrastructure and Transport about putting a bus stop at Waratah on Tasmania's west coast because the weather is dreadful. There is no school in the town and the kids need to stand out in the rain to catch the bus to school. I was told that would be a council responsibility. Why is the Government not working in partnership with local government to provide these facilities?

The Ride and Go infrastructure has been slow to mobilise. There have been ludicrous changes to bus services across the north-west coast, which I will talk more about further on in my contribution.

The review of the local government act seems to have stalled. It should have examined more strategically the roles and responsibilities of local government and the state Government and set a vision for local government in partnership with the sector for the future.

The Code of Conduct needs to be reviewed. I acknowledge and thank the women from the local government sector who have stood up for better support for women in the sector. I ask the Government what it is going to do to support women in elected member positions across the local government sector?

I thank the local government sector during the pandemic for taking on a number of initiatives to provide rate relief and other forms of support to their local communities. They did a tremendous job.

Planning is not just about a regulatory focus; it is also about planning for growth across the state, something in which this Government has failed miserably. We still do not have planning policies. We have out-of-date regional land use strategies that are holding back urban growth and development. We are still awaiting the further progress of the LPSs. We are awaiting the findings of the review of the Tasmanian Planning Commission.

Planning has been underfunded by this Government. It is constantly raised with us through our industry advisory councils that there are difficulties with the current planning process and there is the need for better strategic planning across the state. Local government has raised on many occasions the need for investment in training and more planners across the state. We have a significant shortage of planners in Tasmania. It feels like we are getting piecemeal, bandaid approaches to fixing messy bits as we transition to the new planning scheme - whenever that might be.

The last shadow portfolio area I want to speak about is advanced manufacturing. I have a special affinity for advanced manufacturing having worked closely with advanced manufacturers across my electorate in previous roles. We have seen change over the past few years which have brought opportunities to the sector and individual businesses. I visited a couple of businesses in my electorate recently which have benefited from Defence bids. This highlights the opportunities that are ahead for our advanced manufacturers.

I commend Jayben on its memorandum of agreement with Insitu Pacific, a subsidiary of Boeing, and congratulate it on its bid for drone Defence work. Penguin Composites is also actively involved in Defence work. I encourage the Government to provide advocacy to its federal counterparts to ensure Tasmanian firms continue to get their fair share of Defence work.

We all love living in Tasmania. I am proud to call the north-west coast of Tasmania my home. It is a place I have grown up in, a place that has provided me with many opportunities and a unique quality of life. It has been a funny year and events were only beginning to be held across the electorate in the latter part of the year. Despite there not being as many events or face-to-face meetings to attend, this time was still incredibly busy as we assisted people and organisations as public health directives and restrictions changed rapidly in response to COVID-19.

I thank the people of Braddon for the incredible privilege to be your local member. I am looking forward to the year ahead. I thank Kay and Jess for their work in my electorate office and Teresa, Dawn, Peter and Joan for their stellar job in volunteering over the past 12 months.

I want to reflect on the Government's election commitments in my electorate. Some key projects that come to mind are palliative care beds at the Mersey Community Hospital which still have not been delivered and are a very important investment for our region.

Regarding the Cradle Mountain project gateway precinct and expressions of interest process, there has been no update on this for a significant period of time. We know this private investment is critical to the success of this project and the Cradle Mountain Master Plan and the economic benefit that will be brought to Tasmania through this investment.

The Burnie youth foyer, the north-west men's homeless accommodation, the next iconic walk on the west coast - what has the progress been to date? As to the Burnie ambulance station, we have gone from a greenfield site to trying to fit the new station on the already heavily compromised North West Regional Hospital site and we still do not have a time frame for the completion.

I want to again mention Lois again, who shared her story with me recently and whose story I shared on her behalf with the parliament who she waited three and a half hours with a fractured pelvis 100 metres from the Wynyard ambulance station in pain waiting for an ambulance to arrive to take her to hospital. That is simply not good enough. Each and every day I am hearing stories from people within my electorate with similar experiences.

We have had the delay of the *Spirits*. This will cost jobs and investment across the state. There has been a feasibility study done of the Western Explorer and the sealing of that piece of road infrastructure and an analysis of the economic benefit that might bring to the west coast and Circular Head communities. We are still waiting for that study to be released. I know that

the Circular Head Council and West Coast Council are keen to understand what that feasibility study shows and to work constructively with the Government around that project.

The Cooee 'Crawl' and the highway to Marrawah - little progress to date has been seen on these important infrastructure projects. As to the Burnie court redevelopment, there is still no master plan and no information for the community about what this project will look like.

Then there are changes to the north-west bus services network. Each and every day I am hearing from people across the community about their concerns with the changes and what it has meant to their life and their livelihoods in many instances. I will read a letter from a constituent which I received recently. I know that many of my colleagues in Braddon have received this letter as well, and the minister for Infrastructure. It says:

Hello everyone. I am sending this email to State Growth and cc'ing everyone to the same email to alert you all to my concerns regarding the new Metro timetable during the school holidays. Since these changes were implemented in January 2021 it has had a huge impact on my son, Leon, not having a morning connecting bus to his work at Vincent Industries Wynyard.

Leon lives in Wivenhoe, has a disability and has been travelling to work in Wynyard for 3.5 years without missing a day. He loves his work and as we are getting older we are encouraging Leon to be more independent. Every couple of months, however, Leon's routine will be turned upside-down because the Metro bus timetable changed during school holidays, which has no regard for people who require this service to get to work.

During the school holidays I am required to find Leon alternative transport arrangements. Not only does Leon find these changes stressful but the cost of the alternative transport, for example, community transport, is significantly more than Leon earns.

I would appreciate your consideration of these issues raised and look forward to hearing from you soon.

I recently met with Leon's mum and representatives from Speak Out advocacy group and representatives from Vincent Industries. They are quite concerned about the changes and the impact this will have on their employees. I will be writing to the minister about this issue, calling on him to review it because it does not make sense. Why would you provide a service and then not provide it during the school holidays when it is used by people to get to employment as well? It would appear that the consultation has been poor. I know that Vincent Industries reports there have been a number of changes which have impacted on their workforce and their ability to catch the bus to work.

I would like to see the Government and the Department of State Growth work constructively with this family but also the team at Vincent Industries to work out some solutions to enable these north-west Tasmanians to be able to get to work and not be obstructed by nonsense changes to the bus scheduling on the north-west coast.

That brings me to the transit centre and Redline bus services and the fact that we do not have a transit centre in Devonport anymore. People have been waiting on the street for an hour

for connecting buses with little to no shelter. It does not make sense that you would close the transit centre but through the changes you have implemented in the scheduling of the bus service make people have to wait for an hour longer for a connecting service. We have asked for this to be reviewed. I hope the Government takes it on board and reviews it because it is unacceptable and has caused enormous stress, disruption to bus services, and left members of the north-west community literally standing out in the cold. It is not good enough and I want to see this reviewed.

I will also talk about school buses. I have had many parents contact me about changes to school bus services where it means that their children are now walking 1.6 kilometres to their home from where the bus drops them off when previously year-upon-year it has dropped them off outside their house. These are primary school kids. These young children are also being dropped off in the morning on a very busy arterial road with no-one accompanying them to walk up to the school, and they are concerned about that as well. There are also very short time frames for the children to make it to the bus stop to get the connecting service to home. When they are on the connecting service, at times it is overcrowded and these parents are also very concerned about that. I have written to the minister about this and I am asking for this to be reviewed by the Department of State Growth and Metro.

I will now reflect on a public meeting I attended at Leith on Sunday. This meeting was attended by distressed locals concerned about the secrecy of this Government and its disregard for these residents and their opposition to the proposed overpass which, incidentally, has never been presented or explained to the community as the final solution, or explanation provided by this Government as to why their much-loved family homes will be bulldozed and why this is the only option to improve safety on this segment of road. There has been no further consultation or discussion on the Government's consultation session at the Forth Hall in 2018 where several options for improved road safety were presented and where the residents' preferred solution overwhelmingly was to reduce speed limits and create a roundabout. Why has the Government ignored this consultation and these residents?

Today, I am calling on the Premier, Peter Gutwein, and the minister, Michael Ferguson, to hit pause on this project and sit down with these residents, be upfront with them and listen to their concerns, provide further information to them, release the final report on all options for residents to see, listen to their pleas to save their loved homes and the character of their village and find an alternative. To receive a phone call advising you your home will be compulsorily required for a project you have no knowledge of and the experience of Tanya Wallace, who was notified by her neighbour that her home was going to be compulsorily acquired, to be frank - a term used a lot by the Premier - is completely unacceptable. In fact I find it disgraceful.

They have a number of issues they have also raised with me and asked me to raise on their behalf in this place. They feel they have been treated at times rudely and unprofessionally by the consultants who have been conducting this work on behalf of the Government. They feel that the process is very rushed and flawed, and the consultation has been very poor with those residents without any regard for what it means to their lives going forward. This is just another example of this Government running roughshod over communities. Example after example I have illustrated today and communities are fed up with it.

We are often asked in this place about alternatives. I am proud to say Labor has a suite of positive, fully-costed policies in our jobs plan that will make a difference to the lives of Tasmanians. We have recently held jobs and skills forums around the state, inviting the



community to come along and learn about our free TAFE policy and plans for job growth across Tasmania. Our jobs plan is extensive and today, in my contribution, I want to focus on Labor's Second Chance program.

Last week I had the great pleasure of meeting Emma. Emma has wanted to be a mechanic all her life but life has not always meant she has been able to fulfil that dream. She really wants to get a mechanical apprenticeship and has applied for many. She has undergone further training but to date has been unsuccessful. She wrote to us about this and it was really Emma's experience which influenced the development of our Second Chance Career program where Labor will provide a \$30 000 apprenticeship guarantee for older workers seeking a fresh career start as an apprentice, removing the financial disincentive for employers to take on a mature-aged apprentice. The \$15 million program will provide 500 apprenticeship guarantees for workers aged over 35. Emma is 36 and lives in Devonport. It was my great pleasure to meet her and hear of her experience. I wish her every success as she looks for an adult apprenticeship to be a mechanic because it is only fair and reasonable that she gets to achieve her dream.

The second aspect of our jobs plan that I want to mention is our Tasmanian Jobs and Innovation Fund. This is about partnering with business to stimulate private investment. There are many Tasmanian businesses that have in the past benefited from this type of policy that has been initiated by Labor, both at federal and state level.

We would like to see funding that will be allocated through competitive grant rounds and priority will be given to investments that will result in business growth and job creation. This policy is expected to stimulate at least \$220 million of business investment and create 1600 jobs. I believe that provides tremendous opportunity for business and industry, particularly across regional Tasmania.

The last part of our jobs plan that I want to make reference to is Labor's sea highway plan. As an island state, Tasmania's sea highway is the most important highway that we have. A Labor government will invest \$80 million to upgrade the Burnie port to accommodate larger vessels, improve bulk storage capacity and further improve ship-loading efficiency. This investment will also reduce conflict between users of the port and the increased capacity will also trigger growth and jobs in the forestry, mining and agriculture sectors.

Labor will invest \$60 million to enhance the Port of Devonport. This will include enhanced facilities to accommodate the new *Spirit of Tasmania* vessels and the 160 000 additional passengers they will bring to the state each year, whenever they arrive. As well, berthing facilities for transport and logistics providers will be expanded. The port's commercial fishing facilities will be enhanced and the opportunity will be created for development of marina and facilities for public events.

Labor has a plan with ambition for Tasmania's economic growth and local job creation. We have compassion for all Tasmanians, no matter where they live or their disadvantage. Communities are tired of this government ignoring their concerns and forging on with their own agenda with little regard to the impact this will have on Tasmanians' lives.

Our commitment to Tasmanians is genuine and we think that Tasmanians deserve better than the mediocracy of this government. We have a plan to create a better and fairer Tasmania. We believe Tasmanians deserve better and we believe Tasmanians will do better under a Labor government.

[12.32 p.m.]

**Mr SHELTON** (Lyons - Minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Management) - Madam Deputy Speaker, I rise to respond to the Premier's Address. In 2021, the threat of COVID-19 remains. It will continue to affect the lives of Tasmanians for the foreseeable future. As a community we must continue to be vigilant to keep on top of this terrible disease that has caused so much suffering and economic devastation throughout the world.

At this time last year, the Premier had declared the first state of emergency in living memory. Under our emergency management arrangements, Mr Darren Hine, the State Controller, had the responsibility for coordinating the whole-of-government response to the pandemic. I have expressed these sentiments in this place before and I will do it again - I offer my deepest appreciation for the strong leadership of Darren Hine and also Scott Tilyard, the Deputy State Controller.

Police officers and State Service employees from across the government took up positions to work in the State Control Centre working in many critical areas such as policy, legal, planning, public information and recovery. I thank those who have worked over the past year to support the response and those who continue in those roles for their hard work to keep Tasmanians safe.

As the minister, I also particularly thank the Tasmanian Fire Service and the State Emergency Service volunteers for the assistance they gave and have provided. Thank you to all Tasmanians who have followed the advice of Public Health, which has allowed us to keep on top of COVID-19. Following Public Health advice may not always have been easy or popular, but there is no doubt that Tasmania is in a better place than it could have been because the Premier has faithfully adhered to that principle.

As a state, we suffered fatalities due to the disease - and I offer my condolences to the families, friends and communities that have lost loved ones during the pandemic. Despite what has been a difficult year, there is no doubt that there is improved economic confidence, indeed confidence in the Government's response, and a plan for recovery.

Vaccine development, distribution and administration is a huge logistical and social undertaking. It gives us optimism and the roll-out in Tasmania will be very important to keeping Tasmanians safe. I encourage all people who can get the vaccine to get it when available to your cohort. It might not just save your life, it could also save your friends and your family's lives. Even your friends' families.

Mr Deputy Speaker, the Premier's Address was a testament to his vision and deep care for the people of this state. It sets out our plan and the task ahead for continuing to keep Tasmania safe. I will talk about it from my portfolio point of view of Police, Fire and Emergency Management.

Thankfully, the impact of bushfires in Tasmania has not been as significant this season, but Tasmanians have experienced three major fire seasons in the last eight years and that pattern is expected to continue. Just because we did not have a large season does not mean the work was not done to prepare for it. I recognise the leadership of the chief officer, Chris Arnol, and the preparedness of the Tasmania Fire Service for the 2020-21 bushfire season.

The Tasmanian community holds the TFS in high regard and that is built on community confidence that, year-on-year, the TFS is ready for the bushfire season. The Tasmania Fire Service has not been called-up this year to provide assistance to interstate jurisdictions; however, if the call had come we were ready and able to assist. The vital preparation and planning undertaken by both the Tasmania Fire Service and the State Emergency Service is never wasted.

Part of that work is recruitment and training. On 1 March this year, 30 new trainee firefighters commenced a 15-week firefighting development program with the Tasmania Fire Service. In 2021-22 financial year, the Tasmania Fire Service will also run another recruitment of 15 trainees. This demonstrates the government's commitment to our firefighting capability in Tasmania.

Together with investing in people, we are also investing in the appliances that they need to use. In December last year the Tasmania Fire Service welcomed three brand new state-of-the-art aerial appliances to add to their fleet. The Tasmanian Government provided \$3.75 million for these appliances, ensuring that our firefighters have the equipment they need to keep our community safe.

We also must do everything we can to protect life, property, infrastructure and our natural assets. We risk putting people's lives and property at greater risk if we do not act now. To keep Tasmanians safe, the government is working on legislation to make it easier to reduce the fuel load and mechanically-clear vegetation for a fuel-break once a bushfire hazard production plan has been issued. The legislation will introduce a new streamlined process to enable fuel loads to be reduced while balancing environmental and community concerns. We have also made ready more resources this year to reduce the fuel load. Our two new fuel reduction teams will soon have 12 extra staff helping to reduce fuel loads across the state this year.

The Government has provided more resources to the Parks and Wildlife Service to ensure we have winch-insertion capability for remote area fire teams within Tasmania so we can insert specialist firefighters and respond quickly when needed.

These commitments demonstrate that the Government acts on the recommendations from reports such as the AFAC review into the 2018-19 bushfire season. It is no surprise that we are also acting on the PESRAC recommendations despite the predictable opposition from those who want to stay stuck in the past.

I am proud that we achieved a first this year for our volunteer remote area firefighters. On 10 March the newest members of Tasmania Fire Service's remote area team were deployed to respond to a fire at Molesworth. After a relatively quiet fire season, this was one of the first opportunities the new remote area fire fighters had to be deployed since they completed their training last year. For this deployment, volunteer members joined their career counterparts to operate as one remote area team. The Government provided an additional \$1.27 million in this financial year to support Tasmania Fire Service with management training and equipment to develop its volunteer remote firefighting capability. A total of 30 volunteers completed their remote area training at the end of last year, enhancing the existing capability of over 100 remote area firefighters from the career brigades.

Reducing the risk of bushfire is essential to protecting Tasmania's life, property, infrastructure and our unique and beautiful assets, especially as we meet the challenges of

climate change. The Government's fuel reduction program is nation leading in its tenure-blind strategic risk-based approach. Last year we completed 188 fuel reduction burns across nearly 35 000 hectares in strategic locations to protect Tasmania's communities.

Looking ahead to the 2020-21 autumn burn season, it is pleasing to see that burn planning is finalised for 130 burns when the conditions are right. There is a continuous process for planning and adding burns to the list which includes community consultation. While fuel reduction is not a silver bullet, it is an extremely important element of fire management. As a government we are also strongly committed to fuel reduction and will continue to improve and innovate our nation-leading fuel reduction program in order to mitigate the effects of bushfire and make them easier to fight. We are working hard to protect all Tasmanians and to ensure that our local communities in towns, cities and regions across the state are well prepared.

Our police service continues to deliver nation-leading policing and community safety and I want to congratulate the commissioner, his leadership team and all police officers for the fantastic work they do on a daily business to keep Tasmania safe. We continue to build our police service and are on track to have recruited 258 police officers since we came to government in 2014. This commitment will increase Tasmania Police to an authorised strength of 1358 full-time positions. Our main focus will always be to have police on the beat and the majority have been allocated to frontline duties at first responder stations and in regional and rural stations around the state. 2020 saw the graduation of 44 recruits and this year we have two further graduations scheduled for June and September which will add over 50 additional frontline police officers.

Police officers have helped with compliance measures during COVID-19. When we saw unprecedented restrictions on movement I have to say that Tasmania Police went about their business professionally and with good judgment. As a result, Tasmania Police maintained a high level of public confidence and trust during this challenging period and I congratulate our police officers on the enormous contribution they have made to assisting Tasmania to continue to be a safe place to live and work.

During the pandemic there has been a reduction in crime and public order offences resulting in a 2 per cent reduction in recorded crime including assaults, burglaries, stolen motor vehicles and arson-related offences. Now more than ever we need to continue to invest in our emergency service to keep Tasmanians safe. Whether it is in the battle against crime, bushfire, flood or pandemic, our emergency services are there for us. We know we need to keep acting decisively to meet the challenges before us. We know that policing is becoming increasingly complex and our community more diverse. These factors and developments in technology will continue to transform the future criminal law enforcement and emergency management operational environment.

The good news is that we are investing in equipment and assets that our police need. Ms Butler, I note your comments from last week in this place and I am not sure whether you have been to New Norfolk recently, but I attended the site of the New Norfolk police station last Friday and saw the magnificent progress that is being made to the building. The old building has been demolished and the foundations are going in for the new \$5 million station for our police officers. Construction commenced in January this year, with the station due to be completed in November this year. This was a promise we made to the community and we are delivering those results.

The Bridgewater division will also be the direct beneficiary of increased police numbers with an allocation of an extra 10 officers to Bridgewater police station and four to the New Norfolk police station. Sorell emergency hub plans are well underway, with the department working with the Sorell Council, and I thank them for their support. The build of the new Longford police station commenced in February and work is well underway to progress this building over the coming year.

The Government invested a total of \$8.7 million as part of the COVID-19 economic stimulus packages for 29 police house upgrades. In 2019-20 houses at Bushy Park, Flinders Island, Scottsdale, Bicheno and Bridport were upgraded and a new property was purchased and upgraded in Swansea. This year we will have housing upgrades completed for Oatlands, Kempton, Geeveston, Dover, Nubeena and Richmond. Properties will also be purchased in Scottsdale, Smithton and on Bruny Island. Construction of new houses will commence in Fingal and Campbell Town. The Government has also invested \$7 million for the upgrade of the Launceston police headquarters. Planning work is currently underway for these upgrades.

After successfully delivering phase 1 in 2019, the next stage of Project Unify will deliver an integrated and sophisticated operational information system. This will ensure Tasmania Police have the best possible ICT system to better respond to and solve crime. There is no doubt that moving to this technology will improve how we respond to and solve crime, ultimately resulting in a safer working environment for the police and better outcomes for the community. This additional funding will also deliver an online crime reporting function, where members of the public can use an online portal to report certain categories of crime.

The TasGRN project has reached a major milestone, with contracts being signed with Telstra and supported by Motorola for the delivery of interoperable sustainable and contemporary radio-based communication capability. The total value of the project is \$567 million, with construction to begin in 2021. User organisations are expected to commence migrating over to the new network in the 2022-23 financial year. The project is expected to create around 50 jobs during its three years of construction, with more than 30 additional positions created to help run, maintain and oversee the network once it is up and running.

Supporting the health and wellbeing of police officers has always been a priority of the Tasmanian Liberal Government. We have already committed \$6 million funding to a groundbreaking health and wellbeing program that provides a mix of proactive, preventative and intervention measures. In February this year the government announced a further \$1.5 million per year to support the mental health and wellbeing of our police officers.

I will now speak in relation to my portfolio as Minister for Local Government. The Tasmanian councils have done a fantastic job in assisting to get accurate and straightforward messaging out into the community during the pandemic with council websites displaying appropriate information about the COVID-19 virus and, importantly, directing their community back to the Department of Health for further information and updates.

As a former local government elected representative and a mayor of Meander Valley Council for a number of years I can say it is a great privilege to serve and represent one's community. I applaud those elected members in the local government sector who do so.

As the Minister for Local Government, I acknowledge the additional privilege and responsibility of working with the local government sector to deliver good outcomes for all Tasmania's communities across our rural and regional areas and across our towns and cities. I acknowledge the continuing efforts and contributions of the Local Government Association of Tasmania and the councils that make up the local government sector as the state recovers from the impacts of COVID-19.

Local Government remains critical in supporting the recovery of our communities at a local and regional level. The sector has responded admirably to the challenges faced over the past 12 months with many councils bringing forward capital works projects, pausing general rate increases for the 2020-21 financial year and introducing hardship policies aimed at providing much-needed assistance to our communities.

Despite the setbacks and disruptions caused by COVID-19, our Government continues to move forward with the critical legislative projects that will support the local government sector into the future and we remain committed to open, regular and constructive engagement with the sector. COVID-19 has created significant uncertainty for many parts of the sector.

I, like many others, have welcomed the release of the Premier's Economic and Social Recovery Advisory Council Report and I acknowledge the breadth of analysis that was conducted on the current state and the future of the local government sector. As has been highlighted publicly, the Government supports all 52 recommendations of the report. This is because, despite the tremendous progress made in Tasmania to respond to COVID-19, there is much more to be done.

The Premier and I are looking forward to working with the parliament, the sector and the wider community on the prospect of reform. There is no doubt that the community expects much of their councils. This is why it is important that we assist the sector in adapting to the challenges they face. It is in the interests of all Tasmanians that the local government sector not only survives the pandemic, but thrives.

The make-up of the sector has been widely discussed and analysed by both government and the community for many years. I note that the last major reforms to the Tasmanian local government sector occurred when Allan Border was still captain of the Australian Cricket Team.

I accept the advice of the report that in order to best future-proof the sector we need to examine possible reforms. I also welcome the supportive comments of the Local Government Association of Tasmania president, mayor, Christina Holmdahl, who said on Tuesday, that LGAT welcomes genuine discussion and collaboration around the changed approach to local government reform. I am sure it will come as no surprise to many that the four dominant themes noted in the report are: the role of local government generally; local government in approvals processes; local government capacity and capability; and service and resource-sharing for better outcomes.

We need to plan for the future. The world has changed and we need to be ready to adapt to the new and emerging challenges to ensure councils can provide service delivery to their communities and be financially efficient and sustainable.

The report highlights by way of example that councils could investigate and move towards the centralisation of such things as administration, planning and asset management. The state government already has tools in place to support this. However, we need to look at how this can be accelerated for the greater benefit. The report also highlights that councils can identify community priorities to the state and national governments. They can act as a conduit between the community, not-for-profit organisations and the other tiers of government. This includes highlighting and addressing issues of opportunity that might affect their community. I support the position that we need agile government approval processes and transparency. This applies to all levels of government. It is the expectation of the community that we serve.

As the Premier has highlighted in the Address, the Government's position on the PESRAC recommendations for local government reform is to establish a cross-party working group comprised of members of the Government, Labor and the Greens, and the independent member for Clark, Ms Ogilvie, to discuss whether we will move forward collectively on this issue. I support the Premier's comments that unless we have united support, both in this House and from our colleagues in the other place, there is no point in proceeding along this path. I note the Premier is writing to the leaders of the parties and Ms Ogilvie. I look forward to hearing the response of those members to the suggestion.

I look forward to working with the Premier, LGAT and my fellow parliamentarians to progress these important reforms. It is accepted that some councils are struggling to invest in infrastructure and services that will serve their community into the future. As the report highlights, if this challenge is not addressed it will get worse. The risk of high council debt may lead to higher rates for the community. Such debts put the viability of the council and the services they provide to their community at risk. It is the responsibility of each council to ensure their financial situation is stable, viable and does not adversely affect the community. The report highlights the necessity that councils share services and resources to ensure the best outcomes for their community.

This can include common infrastructure platforms, systems integration, resource sharing and overall a greater cooperation and coordination between councils. I acknowledge that a number of councils have already investigated and embarked on shared resources and greater cooperation in many parts of the state. More needs to be done.

I note that the report finds, of the 20 councils of Tasmania, eight are on the cusp of decline and nine are currently declining. It shows that we need to change so that the local government sector can best serve Tasmanians. The central issue for the local government sector is its capacity to meet the contemporary needs of the community. As we know, these needs are changing and it is our responsibility and the responsibility of our elected local government members to ensure that the sector is best placed to serve those needs.

In addition to the PESRAC recommendations, councils themselves need to look for innovative responses to challenges and in certain cases they will need to make tough decisions on how to best service the needs and expectations of their community.

A key part of the Government's response to these issues has been the review of the local government legislative framework, which has led to the drafting of a new bill. Given the sheer size of the bill and recognising its importance to the local government sector, an extended period will be provided for consultation at the exposure draft stage.

The separate local government (elections) bill is intended to give effect to some of the approved reforms. It is anticipated that this will be progressed following the introduction of the primary local government bill to the parliament. It is essential that the legal framework governing the Tasmanian local government sector reflects and supports the important role of councils and aligns with the expectations of the community and other levels of government.

I thank all members of the sector and the community who have taken the time to engage with the reforms, provide their input and made submissions. This Government is committed to -

**The sitting suspended from 1.00 p.m. to 2.30 p.m.**

## **MOTION**

### **Note - Premier's Address**

**Resumed from above.**

**Mr SHELTON** (Lyons - Minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Management) - Madam Speaker, the Government is committed to ensuring that local councils are well placed to address their long-term sustainability challenges and to continue to meet modern service delivery expectations. We are providing real support and strategic opportunities for councils to respond to the challenges they face in the 21st century.

I acknowledge and applaud the Premier for his Address and for outlining the successes achieved under our Government. It has been a privilege to work with the dedicated group on this side of the House over what has been an unprecedented last 12 months and to witness the capacity and unwavering commitment and dedication that the Premier has demonstrated for and towards the Tasmanian community. I thank the Premier very much for that. That sentiment is expressed to me every time I talk to people in the community.

[2.32 p.m.]

**Mrs PETRUSMA** (Franklin) - Madam Speaker, it is with great pleasure that I rise to speak on the Premier's Address. As a very proud member of the Tasmanian Liberal Government, it is an honour and privilege to be back for this, the fourth year of the 49th Parliament of Tasmania.

I congratulate and thank Peter Gutwein on his outstanding leadership. Mr Gutwein and his Cabinet, together with our public service, have been tireless in overseeing the delivery of our plan to secure Tasmania's future by keeping Tasmania one of the safest places in the world as we rebuild and grow Tasmania's economy after COVID-19, while creating more jobs and more opportunities for Tasmanians.

A parliamentary career is a demanding one and no one knows this more than the family and friends that surround you. I am very grateful to my number one supporter, my husband Tim, and my four children. I would not be here without their loving encouragement. I am always conscious of the many sacrifices they make on a daily basis to allow me to have a career in public life, albeit a career working for the constituents in the best electorate in Australia, the great electorate of Franklin.



I also gratefully thank the world's best and most amazing and fantastic electorate office staff, Rochelle and Clare, without whom I definitely could not do this role. The wonderful Franklin members of the Liberal Party who support me and the entire Liberal team are invaluable.

In regards to my role as Deputy Speaker and Chair of Committees, I would like to say how much I enjoy the committees I am a member of. Committee work is a very important role and function for members of parliament. I commend the professionalism, positive attitude and commitment that members in both this House and the upper House of the various committees show.

I have deeply appreciated working with the respective committee secretaries. I thank them, our Clerks, and all our wonderful parliamentary staff in the House of Assembly for their professionalism and tireless support for what they do each and every day for all of us in this House.

I congratulate Mr Gutwein on his second Premier's Address. As the Premier outlined, COVID-19 has been the biggest single health, economic, and societal shock to hit Tasmania in our lifetime. The efforts of Tasmanians have been extraordinary in what has been the most dreadful of circumstances. Many of our businesses were closed, thousands of Tasmanians lost their jobs and Tasmanians lost people they loved.

As the Premier stated, we will not forget the sacrifice that Tasmanians made, the cost borne by individuals, families and communities. Nor will we ever forget that tragically there were 13 lives lost. This is why the Premier established PESRAC last year, to provide advice to the Government on strategies and initiatives to support both the short- to medium- as well as the longer-term recovery from COVID-19.

The final PESRAC Report has now been released and the Government will accept all 52 of the recommendations so that we can grasp new future-focused opportunities across five key priority areas, including jobs and income, health and housing, community, connectivity and engagement, environmental sustainability and public sector capability. The Government is very committed to delivering all 52 recommendations as we want to ensure that all Tasmanians, regardless of their background or where they live or their circumstances, are able to grasp the opportunities that our new growing economy offers, including making our great state an even better place in which to live, work and raise a family.

Regarding Tasmania's economy, there is no doubt that this Government's Social and Economic Support Package of \$1 billion is working. Employment is back to pre-pandemic levels, we have the second-lowest unemployment rate of all the states and our economy is ranked the number one performing economy in Australia for the fourth quarter in a row, according to CommSec.

We know that there is still much more to be done. For example, Tasmania has a world-class tourism industry, which is essential in supporting and securing local jobs. While we have had an incredibly tough year, the future is bright, which is why the Premier has announced \$17.5 million of initiatives to ensure that we have the right attractions and opportunities for visitors and which also enhance our world-class reputation. This includes the launch of our most aggressive winter season campaign ever. Along with the Australian Government's discounted flights initiative this will set us up for a bumper season.

A strong and resilient tourism industry plays a key role in our plan to secure Tasmania's future which is why my family and I over summer delighted in supporting our local industries through thoroughly enjoying the pleasure of holidaying at home and supporting the Huon Valley in its recovery.

When you drive south from Hobart you pass through Huonville, Franklin and Geeveston with the opportunity to stop to fill your car with petrol, buy the groceries you need at Woollies and shout the kids an ice-cream or grab a coffee at one of the many fabulous restaurants or take-away outlets on the way. Among all the many activities and attractions we visited, the Tahune Airwalk was especially inspiring, to see firsthand the resilience and community spirit shown by Ken Stronach and his fabulous staff at Tahune Adventures. My family and I were amazed and inspired by all that the team has achieved in restoring Tahune since the horrendous 2019 bushfires ravaged the site, including the magnificent rebuilt walks and views and the great vignettes scattered throughout the walk on forest regeneration and resilience. I particularly congratulate Mr Barnett, Sustainable Timber Tasmania, Tahune Adventures Tasmania and all the contractors for their investment, hard work and efforts in getting this very popular and very important tourism site for the Huon Valley back up and running to full operation.

The Tahune Airwalk is now employing both former and new employees and providing job opportunities to locals in the area with immense flow-on economic effects to the Geeveston community and the wider Huon Valley.

A little further past Dover and Southport lies the wondrous Hastings Caves. If you have not been there I encourage you to do so. The Hastings Caves is a magical underground world. My family and I love the dolomite cave system, an incredible labyrinth of chambers cleverly lit to highlight the ancient subterranean formations, including cathedrals and columns. We also enjoyed the warm and newly resurfaced thermal pool at Hastings. It is 28 degrees and mineral-rich. It is surrounded by gorgeous walking trails. It was wonderful to see so many tourists there on the day. Because the Government has now sealed the road they can now take their hire cars on the road and enjoy a picnic and barbecue with their families in the forest surrounds.

If you really want to support your fellow Tasmanians, do not just go for the day, stay for a night or two in the far south. My family and I enjoyed superb accommodation in Southport and undertook many beautiful walks, including the short and easy walk to Duck Hole Lake in the South West National Park. This walk is mostly boardwalk and it follows the stream through to regrowth forest along a 19th century sawmill tramway. It is the most delightful tranquil location in which to just sit and listen to the birds and frogs, while enjoying a picnic.

We also visited Cockle Creek, a much-loved destination in Tasmania's far south and saw firsthand the \$800 000 worth of upgrades being undertaken to the Southwest National Park including a new interpretation shelter as well as new and refurbished amenities. It was fantastic to see that the works are being undertaken by a local company which is providing ongoing work for Tasmanians as well as value-adding to our local economy.

Closer to Hobart is the Channel Museum at Margate, a fantastic place for visitors to check out the many, varied and quirky stories of the D'Entrecasteaux Channel region. This award-winning museum is packed with rare and fascinating insights into the cultural, social, artistic and industrial life of the original Aboriginal inhabitants, the early explorers and the various

channel industries. It has been wonderful to visit the museum a few times lately because on every visit you learn so much more.

This Government is also continuing to invest in the infrastructure our growing state needs with a record \$5 billion infrastructure program to turbocharge our economy, supporting about 25 000 jobs and building the intergenerational infrastructure our state needs to thrive, attract investment and to rebuild a stronger Tasmania.

As a member for Franklin I am particularly excited to see the raft of infrastructure measures to deal with traffic congestion in Hobart, as people from both sides of the river in my electorate need to get into and quite often to travel right through the city to get to work, to drop off kids at school, or to participate in daily activities. I note that construction of the \$46 million Tasman Highway Hobart Airport interchange upgrade is now well and truly under way, making this intersection safer, reducing traffic congestion, while also allowing for future increases in traffic. It is scheduled to be completed before the end of 2022.

There is \$23.2 million for the duplication of the East Derwent Highway at Geilston Bay which has started this week; \$65 million towards the Tasman Bridge upgrades as part of this \$130 million federal/state government project; \$23 million for intelligent traffic solutions around the greater Hobart area, therefore enabling the road network to be more resilient as well as to accommodate traffic changes arising from unplanned events; \$7.5 million for the Channel Highway diversion at Huonville; \$500 000 for bus services as part of the Hobart City Deal; and \$7 million for the Sandfly intersection upgrade on the Huon Highway.

This Government has also released the Channel Highway Corridor Study between the Algona Road roundabout and Margate, which has considered how the highway will best meet the community's needs including future housing growth. This is a plan for not just the short term but for the next 20 years. It identifies challenges as well as a shortlist of prioritised opportunities for future improvement projects to address congestion, safety and public transport concerns. I congratulate the minister for Infrastructure, Michael Ferguson, and his department, as the report was developed with extensive consultation including residents, road users, businesses, community groups and the Kingborough Council, and is taking into account future development proposals as well as projected traffic volumes.

I note that potential projects to be put forward in future budgets as high priorities include significant upgrades at the 'Fork in the Road', the Algona Road intersection with the Channel Highway in order to deal with congestion, together with improvements to site-distance at the Howden Road intersection, improvements to pedestrian cycling and public transport facilities as well as a future grade-separated interchange at the existing Algona Road roundabout and a new roundabout to align with the future Huntingfield Stage 2 development.

The Southern Access Project, as a key initiative of the Hobart City Deal, is also on track with a contract awarded to develop a detailed design for a fifth Southern Outlet transit lane to link with bus priority measures in Hobart with concept designs also developed. Preliminary works at the park-and-ride facility at Firthside have commenced and the tender for stage 2 of the park-and-ride facilities at Huntingfield and Firthside are now open. Additional express bus services to support the park and ride facilities will commence mid 2020-21.

Bruny Island residents and visitors are also set to benefit through the \$7.5 million being spent on Bruny Island landside infrastructure, providing an improved traffic management and

far greater amenity for local residents and other road users. Work is also continuing to progress on the Bruny Island ferry terminals at Kettering and Roberts Point so as to improve travel times to and from Bruny Island; to reduce ferry queues and congestion on Ferry Road and the Channel Highway; and to improve more orderly and safer boarding.

Another exciting project is the new \$22.5 million TasTAFE Energy Trades and Water Centre of Excellence in Warrane. This will deliver an innovative teaching and learning facility that meets the current and future needs of the plumbing, mechanical services, water, hydrogen electro-technology and polymer processing industries. The latest technologies will be showcased and will also enable TasTAFE to adapt its training offerings to respond to the changing needs of traditional industries and emerging industries. This is another important step in TasTAFE's evolution.

As the Premier and minister Rockcliff have outlined, one of the strongest themes in the PESRAC report is the critical role of skills in building Tasmania's recovery, and TasTAFE's central role in this. We know that our construction sector has a pipeline of work, which is why we are training more Tasmanians as tradies, apprentices and trainees. We have emerging industries with new jobs on the horizon, which is why we must act now to make sure Tasmanians have the best access to industry-endorsed training that is fit-for-purpose. This is why this Government supports PESRAC's recommendation, as we believe it is time to take action and build a bolder TasTAFE with a smart approach to delivering hands-on training to courses that best equip Tasmanians to gain a job.

Under the Fair Work Act 2009, no teacher or staff member will be disadvantaged by this move. Instead this action will deliver more teachers and more delivery in our regions, contemporary fit-for-purpose facilities, more training options, better pay for skilled teachers and flexible hours.

Another key recommendation of PESRAC is the creation of Jobs Tasmania Local Networks to strengthen the links to job opportunities and ensure more Tasmanians have the opportunity to live and work in the place they call home. We will work to establish these local networks to link to our existing hubs; however, we know Tasmanian businesses need workers now.

This is why we have announced a two-year \$20.5 million package to help Tasmanian workers into jobs which includes: \$6.5 million over two years for the Tasmanian Employer Bonus to help employers take on long-term jobseekers who need a fair go, with a \$6500 bonus for those employers; \$3 million to fund an additional 600 training places in certificate 3 in individual support, which is the crucial qualification staff need to work in the Aged Care and Disability Support sectors; \$2.2 million for low-cost or free buses by expanding our Area Connect service. This will provide transport to get people to work, training or education where no easier alternative exists and will be expanded to serve 16 local government areas.

There will be \$2 million for our Job Ready Fund to help jobseekers with the costs of licensing, Working with Vulnerable People checks, or a toolbox with equipment necessary for a new job. There is also \$2.4 million to expand our successful job matching service to place more jobseekers with local employer vacancies, and \$1 million to extend TasTAFE's successful Skill-Up initiative, which provides fee-free training for those hardest hit by COVID-19 in key areas such as Health, ICT, Business, Tourism and Hospitality.

I note that there is \$850 000 towards the Youth Navigators Project, which will assist disengaged youth to get extra triage services they need over the next 12 months to navigate further education, training or employment opportunities through one-on-one guided support; \$400 000 to establish a workers connect portal, providing Tasmanian businesses and jobseekers with authoritative information about local jobs, programs and the support services that are available; and \$200 000 to deliver regional job shows and events to showcase local employment and industry opportunities in partnership with regional job hubs and community groups. These projects will be managed by a new jobs and participation unit, to align with adult learning and vocational training strategies in Skills Tasmania.

This Government believes that every Tasmanian needs a roof over their head, which is why we are committed to helping more Tasmanians into a home by boosting the supply of new homes, supporting home ownership and putting downward pressure on rents. Our home builder program is already a great success with more than 2600 grants received and 1763 applications conditionally approved for new home builds and substantial renovations.

This Government under minister Jaensch is also rolling out the most comprehensive affordable housing strategy attempted in this state. Alongside this we will develop a broader housing policy framework that looks at the full array of housing market issues across the public and private sector to drive solutions in line with PESRACs recommendations. This includes \$10 million to support a further 100 low income households into home ownership, through the Home Share program.

To address land supply, we will incentivise landowners to activate land with a \$10 million headworks holiday for new residential subdivisions, including up to \$5000 per residential lot for power and up to \$5000 per residential lot for water and sewerage infrastructure. I note there are around 5000 hectares of privately owned, vacant, residential-zoned land across Tasmania which, if activated, could deliver around 60 000 lots for residential development across the state.

We will also provide further support to Tasmanians to buy their first home and incentivise empty-nesters to downsize with a stamp duty concession threshold to increase from \$400 000 to \$500 000 to reflect current market conditions. This will mean a saving of up to \$9100 for homebuyers. To make it faster and simpler to build in-filled medium-density housing, we will also finalise an apartment code this year to make it easier, faster and simpler for developers and landowners to meet the growing demand for inner-urban apartment living. We are also providing a streamlined no-permit-required approvals pathway for landowners to construct ancillary dwellings such as granny flats or self-contained studios on their existing properties. To help meet demand for rental properties, the first 250 new ancillary dwellings that are made available for long-term rental for more than two years will also receive \$10 000.

As well, to ease cost-of-living pressures and put downward pressure on rents, we have also released a suite of measures to modernise land tax arrangements. While land tax in Tasmania is the lowest, together with Western Australia, of all the states as a share of total state revenue, land tax thresholds will be increased to reflect today's strong property market, with the land value at which land tax becomes payable to double from \$25 000 to \$50 000. The top threshold will also increase by \$50 000 from \$350 000 to \$400 000, which means that around 70 000 landowners will benefit by up to \$613 a year and 4100 additional landowners will pay no land tax at all in the year ahead. The premium penalty rate of interest will also be halved

from 8 per cent to 4 per cent and land tax bills over \$500 will be able to be paid in three instalments over the year.

On top of our \$10 million building project support program announced in the 2020-21 state budget, to further support stalled shovel-ready projects we will also establish a \$30 million building construction support loan scheme to bring forward commercial construction projects that have been paused due to the economic and financing uncertainties created by COVID-19. This will further support jobs and create new or improved buildings or infrastructure. Projects of \$3 million or more will be able to apply for low-interest commercial loans through the Office of the Coordinator-General under this job-creating scheme.

In regard to our health system, since coming to government we have grown our Health budget to \$9.8 billion, a 70 per cent increase since the last Labor-Greens budget, with 1500 additional FTE staff. While Tasmania now has the second-highest rate of public hospital staff in Australia, we know there is still more to be done. Therefore, as minister Courtney has announced, to help make it even easier for Tasmanians to access medical care closer to home, we will work with the primary health sector with \$3 million in additional support and incentives for primary care services, including GPs, to provide after-hours services for their local communities which will complement other state government initiatives including community rapid response and secondary triage.

The aim of this incentive program is to take pressure off Tasmania's emergency departments and to maximise opportunities for lower-level care to be provided outside of hospitals, providing a better patient experience and freeing up hospital resources for more urgent patients. To ensure greater access to high-quality palliative care services, in the lead-up to the August budget we will also work with peak palliative care and health bodies and the community sector on the best approach for additional and expanded hospice-at-home services and expansion of statewide after-hours palliative care support. This will result in substantial investment to ensure that Tasmanians continue to have improved levels of care.

The Government will also be investing \$5 million to provide around 20 000 appointments for public patients across emergency, general care and denture clinics so that more Tasmanians can get the dental care they need.

Tragically, there still continues to be far too many distressing and shocking incidents of family and sexual violence, both interstate and here in Tasmania. It is horrific incidents like these that remind us all that we still have such a long way to go to change the attitudes that lead to such terrible, senseless and unforgiveable acts of violence.

Eliminating family and sexual violence remains a top priority for our Government and we are strongly committed to preventing and responding to family and sexual violence in Tasmania. Together with many in this parliament, I attended the March 4 Justice rally last Monday and I welcome the Premier's comments in his Address where he said:

... in terms of the rallies held yesterday around the country, and the hundreds of women who marched and rallied for a more inclusive, safe and fair society here in Tasmania - I see you, I hear you. This Government, this parliament sees you and it hears you, and while action has been taken already, we know there is more to be done, and we will not shirk our responsibilities to ensure that everyone is safe, everyone is respected and everyone is supported.

Madam Speaker, this is also why this Government supports PESRAC's recommendation to proactively seek out and fund additional initiatives that increase community connection, primary prevention and early intervention in areas such as family and community violence. To ensure our supports are ongoing the Premier has already assured our specialist family and sexual violence service providers that their funding will be extended at the increased level of COVID funding until 30 June 2022 so they can maintain their operational capacity to meet demand and continue to support our communities.

The Tasmanian Government is also continuing to support women and children affected by family violence through funding the upgrade and expansion of our women's shelters, including Jireh House in my electorate of Franklin which, through this increased funding, have expanded their services through the purchase of a new three-bedroom home and the construction of another three-bedroom home, therefore helping more women to access safe and secure accommodation, support services and assistance to help them in their time of most vulnerability.

Young Tasmanians are our next generation and the future of our state, which is why a very important part of our plan is to invest in the education, learning and wellbeing of our young people. Since coming to government, across Tasmania we have extended 56 high schools to years 11 and 12, there are currently 35 new education infrastructure projects in planning, design or construction. We have prioritised boosting staff, with 269 more FTE teachers and 250 FTE teacher assistants. I congratulate minister Rockliff on these outstanding achievements and the fact that from term 3 this year pads and tampons will be freely available in all our government schools to ensure that no female student will miss school because they do not have access to basic requirements such as sanitary products at home.

We also acknowledge that mental health issues in our schools require a holistic multifaceted approach. This is why we have committed \$81 million to deliver an extra 80 FTE professional support staff, including school psychologists, social workers, ministers and speech and language pathologists. We have also empowered senior people in our schools to adapt and tailor classroom teaching accordingly to better support students with mental health challenges or who are impacted by trauma. We are also further strengthening supports already in place by upskilling all of our school health nurses, with the latest mental health first aid training commencing later this year.

Additionally, this Government is taking a best-practice approach to building a contemporary integrated model of mental health care so our children and young people can get more holistic support at the right time. That is why, in line with PESRAC's recommendations, we will also invest an additional \$41.2 million over four years to fully fund phases 1 and 2 of the Government's response to the CAMHS review.

This Government passionately believe that sporting clubs and organisations play an enormously positive role in our communities. The single largest investment in the 2020-21 state budget to boost community sport was our \$10 million Improving the Playing Fields grants program that provides support for a range of capital investments by sporting clubs and associations. I have been delighted to visit some of the successful recipients to hear all about how this program will benefit their communities. For example, the Middleton Tennis Club will have a new and upgraded tennis court; the Huon Valley Golf Club will benefit from improved subsoil drainage for their fairways; Geilston Bay Tennis Club will have new lighting for their courts; and Sunshine Tennis Club will benefit with much-needed court and fencing

upgrades as well as installation of the Book a Court online reservation system. The Kettering Cricket Club will be able to install a new centre pitch and training nets and the Kingborough District Cricket Club will benefit by installing a new complex scoreboard at the twin ovals.

In regard to climate change, Tasmania has a very proud history as a quiet leader on climate action, with a strong track record of renewable energy and innovation which has not only helped to reduce our emissions but also those of our nation. As the Premier and Minister for Climate Change has stated, the transition to net zero emissions represents an economic, environmental and social opportunity for this state which we are very well placed to grasp. We have already achieved our net zero target by 2050 four years in a row, and our target and Climate Change Act are currently under independent review. We are also developing our next climate action plan to guide our actions over the next five years. It will be informed by the modelling we are already undertaking to understand both the economic and the environmental implications of more ambitious goals.

We also have a target to have the lowest rate of litter in the country by 2023. We will support up to \$30 million of investment into waste management and recycling facilities state-wide. We will also introduce legislation for our container refund scheme this year.

PESRAC has also recommended that we develop a sustainability strategy for Tasmania with ambitious goals and actions. The Department of Premier and Cabinet will lead this work in concert with other agencies and will consult widely on the strategy this year.

I congratulate Mr Barnett for taking the lead on the Tasmanian Government's Renewable Energy Action Plan which has been rated by the World Wildlife Fund as nation-leading. It is blueprint to leverage our renewable energy resources and to transform Tasmania into a renewable energy powerhouse. It will build on Tasmania's natural competitive advantages, attract large-scale investment and ensure that new, large-scale renewable energy development and investment happens in the right place at the right time and for the benefit of all Tasmanians.

As the World Wildlife Fund stated yesterday, Tasmania has been named the overall leader on the scorecard largely due to our 100 per cent self-sufficient renewable status, our legislated renewable target and our efforts to punch above our weight to build a renewable hydrogen industry with our \$50 million funding program. As Mr Barnett stated yesterday, we know we have more to do. We have our eyes on achieving an even higher level on the World Wildlife Fund scorecard as we continue to further our Tasmanian Renewable Energy Action Plan over the coming years. It is great that Tasmania has been acknowledged as the leader across all state, territory and federal governments when it comes to the actions essential to position Australia as a renewable export superpower.

Finally, I acknowledge and thank the Premier, the Cabinet, the public service, in fact all Tasmanians who worked together to ensure that we kept our state safe over the last 12 months. As a result of all of these efforts, and I acknowledge the efforts of everyone in this Chamber as well, Tasmania has not only managed to conquer a health crisis but it has also turned around its economy, which is again growing strongly and supporting Tasmanian jobs.

[3.02 p.m.]

**Ms O'BYRNE** (Bass) - Madam Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to respond to the Premier's Address, particularly given that we discovered in question time today that none of the initiatives seem to have been costed by this Government. The PESRAC initiatives appear



not to have gone to Treasury so we do not know how the Government is going to pay for them. The Government says they will fit in the budget but as we heard today there is no guarantee that we are going to see a budget before this Premier takes us to the polls. I do not have the confidence that members on the other side have about the ability of the Government to deliver on anything that they have been announcing, let alone when you look at their past form. I will get to that again in a moment.

I will start my contribution, as have many others, by commending Tasmanians on how strong everyone was during the COVID-19 emergency. When asked to stay at home, they did. When asked to change their behaviours, they did. When faced with families being torn apart, they coped. When asked to put off funeral services and memorials, they did. The demands were huge and they stepped up every time. We thank everyone for that.

I particularly thank the amazing staff in supermarkets and shops and the supply chains that kept working to make sure we all had what we needed. Thank you for putting up with clearly distressed customers, thank you for turning up every day and thank you for taking that risk. It is a reminder that as the industrial organisation's representative workers in the retail space call on them to be treated better, how much we owe them. They certainly do not deserve the serves they often receive.

Thank you to our emergency and our frontline services, from health to quarantine, for keeping us safe.

Thank you to our educators for getting so many kids and families through last year. You are amazing. Seeing some of the outcomes for our year 12 students as they were transitioning, in a very difficult year, I cannot speak highly enough of our colleges for the work they did in engaging students and families and getting people through.

It is one of the great things about small communities that we pull together when it is needed. I am pleased to be part of this community.

As someone who lost an extended family member to COVID-19, as I know other members of this House also did, I thank people for keeping us safe. When you witnessed the result of not being safe then you understand very much what a great sacrifice was made to keep so many people alive.

As a member of a FIFO family, it is so good that people can come home again. Thank you to all of those who coped with being away and for making home work while they were.

I will start my formal contribution to the Premier's Address by talking about women; women and the way in which government policy in action impacts. What was clear from the pandemic and the way in which government policy in action impacts was that we do not have an economy that knows how to ensure women are economically safe.

Every single lever that we used was predominately a lever that would impact on a man's working environment and the way a male-dominated part of our economy works. We do not understand what will fundamentally shift the way we need to change our economy so that women are no longer exposed to that kind of risk. Women overwhelmingly lost their jobs first, women bore the brunt of home education, women were most likely to work in retail and care giving, and women were most likely to get ill. The simple line that women drive on roads

therefore investing in roads is a good policy for women does not fundamentally understand the structural challenges.

Family violence has another impact that I will go to in a moment but women are more likely to be impacted by the nature of their employment and not just the industries that have high levels of casual and insecure work. Thank you so much federal government for your work in that space with Fair Work Australia. We need to not only address the appallingly high levels of insecure work but we need to investigate and understand those structural imbalances that impact on women in the way that they are continually disadvantaged and to anticipate what we might do should we be faced with a pandemic again. It is not enough to say we should encourage them to trades or that they drive on roads so are we not great for investing in roads. We need to understand their place in the economy so that we can leverage mechanisms to reduce inequity and inequality, so if we have to re-engage a mechanism to support our economy in future pandemics or crisis we know how to support women and they are economically secure.

There were some interesting models done in Victoria which are worthy of us looking at. In one model, Dress for Success and Fitted For Work, they partnered with a bank. The bank identified women who had historically been very good customers of the bank who had not been able to make their loan payments, had not been able to meet their business loan payments, were suddenly finding themselves unemployed. They did an incredible job in terms of financial support but also mentoring to get those women back into work.

They are really great responses and we should look at those but we also need to look at why it is that women are most impacted in that way.

The previous speaker talked about the decision to put sanitary products in schools. That is a great idea. Most teachers keep a drawer full of products in their classroom; the first aid room has a little stash that people can use. I hope the minister for Education can explain the level of funding for it as the minister's media release says they will fund it at \$10 per child per annum calculated on the number of girls on receipt of STAS. That is not what most people thought we were getting when they said 'free' sanitary items in schools. That indicates a smaller resource being provided to schools. I am interested in how that will work, whether we will have vending machines as in Victoria and not just a request issue, that they are accessible but they are also not limited to \$10 per child per annum calculated on receipt of STAS.

I am not sure if that is because somebody needs a biology lesson about how often we might need these products. I hope that we are not going to see schools running out within the early part of the year and then there not being an entitlement because the spend was done, particularly given the Premier's very strong words about providing that service.

We spoke about family violence in question time last week. We have talked about it a lot in this House. We welcomed the additional funding provided through COVID-19 for family violence support services. I genuinely appreciate the fact that he called me to discuss it. However, that additional funding was sucked up pretty quickly by the number of people who were already waiting to access those services. The waiting list for counselling is not hours or days; for some people it is months. We are not responding to the need. There are a number of reasons for that. Partly we had an existing unmet demand but also there is a complexity of demand.

They talk about people they have not seen for a very long time suddenly coming back but, concerning, they talk about people who have endured more before they seek help. The tolerance level has risen before people then go to seek help, so when they do seek help they need a far more complex response and that fundamentally changes the way we need to be engaging in the sector.

I do not think anyone in this Chamber thinks family violence is not something that we should be committed to, and I appreciate all the efforts across the rooms, and rooms before us here that people have done, but it is very clear that we are not meeting the need. The additional brokerage funding was great but it is already having significantly less effect because the rack rates have increased post the border changes. When you are subsidising payment into a hotel, you are now subsidising a much larger amount. I spoke to a woman in the last couple of weeks who was paying \$800 a week to stay in one of the local motels with her children because there was nowhere to go. That is really hard. That does not mean she can do all the other things that she needed to do as a parent and her stress level was incredible. She is not the only one. There are many women trying to find homes.

I have been doing this job for a long time, and I know I always wax on about how I have been here 100 years, but I have never struggled to find houses for people in the way I do now. It used to be that you could sit down with a person and you could normally work out what had not worked in the process, where something had fallen over. Perhaps they had not given the right form or the right information, or they had a debt or were not asking the right questions, or were limiting their options. It does not seem to matter anymore. You go through some of the most genuine and heartbreaking cases that are just awful and you write to the minister and there is no home because the market is already tight. The market is not keen on people who are getting support in terms of rental properties. People often tell me that the moment they say they are on JobSeeker or are being supported by an agency, their rental application is immediately discarded.

The market is absorbing women who are being evicted from shelters, from transitional care, and from Rapid Rehousing. That is a massive demand. It is a crisis. The waiting list for Rapid Rehousing is a crisis and well-meaning commitments to more plans is not going to house women tonight or tomorrow. There are too many who are sleeping in unsafe circumstances. Most frighteningly, there are too many who are contemplating returning to violent relationships because they have nowhere else to go. We cannot be proud of our investment.

Successive governments will talk about the increase in funding. Every government has put money into this space, but we cannot be proud of our investment or prevention if we succeed in raising awareness and acting to empower women and encourage women to leave and promise them support, and then we fail to deliver that support because we abuse them twice. I am sure there are other members of this House who have dealt with women who have returned to violent relationships because that is the only place they can go.

It is all well and good to have words, it is all well and good to be able to say we have funded this brand-new program, we have given the most money. All of those things are laudable and, in many cases, true. The reality is there are women and children who are not safe tonight and who will not be safe tomorrow because we do not house them and that is unforgivable. I know we say that winter is coming and it is going to get worse, but winter is a really bad time if it is cold and miserable and you do not have somewhere to live. Summer is also bad because the days are really long and that means that your safe sleeping time, the

time that it is dark enough for you to find somewhere safe to sleep, is reduced. We need to be much more cognisant of the work that we have not done.

I want to talk about TAFE. Before I do that, the last speaker in her discussion of TAFE said it is okay because everyone is going to be fine because of Fair Work Australia and the no-disadvantage clauses. I would really like it if members opposite would spend some time getting their heads across Fair Work Australia and how these provisions work, how transition arrangements work, and what happens beyond transition arrangements. Quite often the first agreement is fine but it is the agreements after that that are not fine.

They should also spend a bit of time looking at the attacks and the way the Australian Government has just been trying to undermine provisions and protections within the Fair Work Australia Act, because that will not stop because that is an ideologically driven thing. I must confess I am in no way comforted about the ability of Fair Work Australia to protect vulnerable workers or transitional workers when you look at the 'mates for jobs' that has just been happening.

Sophie Mirabella has now been made a Fair Work commissioner. Sophie Mirabella made many very passionate speeches about the need for WorkChoices and the need for there to be employer flexibility and not work protection. I do not have the confidence of members opposite about Fair Work and not just because of my previous university background but because I have seen some of the agreements and what happens beyond transition, and I have seen the things the Australian Government has said.

I am stunned at the judgment of this Premier in blowing up the trust of a public institution. I believe it is a base political move intended to pick a fight. This Premier has always liked a fight. In one way it was probably a strength during COVID-19; he likes to be battling an enemy. I do not mind when that enemy is COVID-19 but I do mind when that enemy is public education and public institutions. That is really very dangerous for us.

There is nothing identified in the PESRAC report that cannot be resolved within its current management structure. If the minister who spoke so glowingly about TAFE in his matter of public importance today genuinely had those views and genuinely thought this was a natural progression from their policy initiatives and was a positive thing for TAFE, TAFE staff would not have found out about it via the media after the Premier's Address. There would have been discussions. The minister would have gone to the AEU, the CPSU and the board and said, 'Hey, I think I've got a really good pathway for us. Let's talk about what would happen if we became a GBE, let's talk about what that means', and really sell it to them.

The fact that they all found out through a speech is indicative of a political response because if it was a genuine developed policy plan, anyone here who has ever been involved in that kind of process knows there are weeks and sometimes months of discussions looking at different options to make sure you get the right balance. None of that happened.

There is nothing that could not be dealt with as part of a statutory authority. There is also nothing that raised a concern in PESRAC that you cannot actually really lay at the feet of the minister over the last seven years. You can be as well-meaning a minister as you want, you can be a genuinely good minister at getting in here and saying you want to talk about how passionate you are about this, but if you act all the time to undermine the education system and

there are consequences and you blame people for those consequences, you are not doing a good job. That is actually not the job. Words are fine, but actions matter much more.

If you look at the sort of things that PESRAC talked about, they talked about the fact that school leavers do not know about TAFE. Maybe that is because you cut pathway planners. They talk about the fact that they cannot always get the kind of staff and the courses they want at the right time. Maybe that is because you cannot fill the staff positions or you do not actively fill staff positions.

Plumbing courses have not been run, electrotech courses have not been run, fashion industry courses have been cancelled, the IT students came along to class one day to discover that the course they signed up to would not be finished although they were halfway through and they could maybe hope it would come back next year. Certificate 4 in disability is something the industry really needs and TAFE backed the industry in getting approval for the courses, but then they ran away and said it was not in their interest to deliver.

Those things have not happened because the teachers are bad. Those things have not happened because the students are not 'good' students - quoting from PESRAC there. I believe there has been a systemic undervaluing of TAFE. There has been a systemic pattern of behaviour whereby TAFE has been treated badly by this Government. There are some concerns that need to be resolved. We have been talking about those as well. We have been talking about wanting to rebuild TAFE, but you can rebuild it without blowing it up. I guess that comes to whether the Premier had a rush of blood and wanted the fight and it was opportunistic that the Education minister had been failing for seven years, or whether those two things are linked in a different way.

You cannot ignore concerns when staff raise them. When we have raised them in this House we have been accused of being negative. You have then used those concerns to blow up TAFE. You cannot ignore union requests for more flexible provision and recommendations on how to be nimble and then punish them because you chose not to do it. You cannot blame them for industry concerns when you presided over poor management. You cannot set it up to fail and think we do not know who is behind it or exactly what is going on. You cannot claim to be a friend of public education when your actions prove you are not. There have been cancelled courses, understaffing, under-resourcing and denial every time these issues were raised, all on watch of this minister.

The Government claims some great investment and says, 'Look at this wonderful job we have done in investing in nursing', but the only reason the Government invested in nursing is that they were moments away from losing accreditation entirely. That would have been an absolute disaster for Tasmania. New areas are upgraded not necessarily because they want to upgrade the areas but because they are either so bad or the Government is prepping to sell off the asset. You cannot trust the Liberals with public education. Everyone knows that. They did not consult before blowing it up. Key stakeholders found out, as I said, via media releases and media calls.

This Premier, true to form, is bullying his way to make changes but we know that does not work and the Premier still has a chance to walk away from this. Please, do not do to TAFE what you did to TasWater. Do not cause all that pain, do not cause all that distress, do not cost all that money and then realise that you have to give up because you simply have not done the work and you do not know why you want to do that.

Unfortunately, this is how this Premier works. He likes to, as I said, have an enemy. He does not know how to work with a sector on reform. He only knows how to get in the trenches, because if you are not on offence you are on defence. That is not how good public policy works.

This Premier would rather go to war with TAFE than work with them to fix the problems, and there are consequences to his approach. This attack undermines the ability of TAFE to train Tasmanians to get a foot in the door for jobs at a critical time. We should not be making it harder for people to get access to their training courses now when we need them to be skilled more than ever.

Question time was an interesting experience today. We asked a number of questions about TAFE, related entirely to the announcement in the Premier's Address and at no stage was the Premier able to give any assurances and answer any of those questions. He did not answer questions that were related to the ability of TAFE to maintain enrolments and we know that over the time of this Government, enrolments at TAFE have fallen by more than 30 per cent since 2014. That is not TAFE's fault, that is not the Opposition's fault, as the Government would have you believe. That is actually the fault of this Government. The Premier went nowhere in answering that, in fact - I have not yet seen the *Hansard* - but I believe his first response was to blame Labor for getting Madam Speaker elected. I thought that was hilarious. Then he said he would not be distracted. Well, clearly, he is quite happy to be distracted by some things. He wants the state to be nimbler, more like a business. He said that Labor was ideologically-motivated. He said that it was not privatising, it was a GBE and that he would make no apology. Well, perhaps he should, because if he treated that workforce with an iota of respect he may have a more workable plan in front of him now.

He failed to commit to the protection of regional courses when we specifically asked and used the example of what happened in other communities that have followed this pathway: regional courses were cut. He could not answer that. We asked about the impact on fees for students, and whether that was going to have an impact on the ability to train. Once again, he did not answer that question. We asked about the impact on staff, in particular wanting to get some clarity about the future of staff because it is nice to get a video message from the CEO of TAFE saying 'we have things to work through and we value you', but right now that is not very clear because the only way people found about this was, as I said, through media releases. He could not give commitments for our TAFE workers about who might lose their job, whether redundancies would be offered, what type of redundancy that might be, whether there would be forced transfers, and if so, if there is a course or a region that was going to be targeted.

Frighteningly, he could not explain if he had any costings for this. You cannot blow something out without there being a cost. There is going to be a cost to the budget for any kind of remodelling of TAFE and unless the Premier is assuming that will be absorbed by TAFE, that can only happen with the diminution of courses and opportunities for students. Once again, he is walking away from TAFE and TAFE students.

Alternatively, we have been focused on rebuilding TAFE. We are committed to rebuilding TAFE from the ground up, to investing in more teachers, and to investing in regional delivery. We want a more efficient training sector and we want to make sure that the many passionate and dedicated teachers in TAFE are supported. Our plan promotes the value of vocational education and reinvesting in career education - the sort of things this Government has cut - and we will provide free TAFE in the areas of workforce shortage, not what we know

to be the case when you work on this kind of commercial model where those course fees will go up. We know that one of the reasons that Victoria moved to free TAFE, which has been an incredible success, was because cost was a barrier to participation.

There is nothing in the Premier's Address about education training that does not make me believe that cost will become more of a barrier to participation. We want to invest in rebuilding this public institution. This Government wants to spend untold sums tearing it down. This Government is very big on high-vis and media releases, but it fails on delivery every time. Whilst I hope that they walk away from this decision, I hope they do not do it so far down the pathway that people have gone through unimaginable distress and that the entity is even further damaged by this organisation. So, why do we not trust this Government? You know, the big on high-vis and media releases but failing on delivery? Because that is what we have seen all the time with this Government.

In Infrastructure: the new Tamar Bridge stage 1 construction in this term? *New Spirits of Tasmania* by 2021? Let us not even talk about how appallingly that was handled. The Southern Outlet fifth lane, Hobart Airport roundabout, Hobart Airport roundabout, Hobart Airport roundabout - can I mention it as many times as they have announced a Hobart Airport roundabout? The underground Hobart bus mall. We are still looking for that.

If you look in health: our ambulance response times are the worst in the country. This Government talks a lot about the previous government's investment in health but our ambulance response times were nowhere near what this Government has done to them. There is a target for 90 per cent of elective surgery to be performed on time. The latest dashboard says 50 per cent. There is a target for 90 per cent of patients to be seen within four hours; the latest dashboard says 58 per cent. I do not think we have seen the Burnie and Glenorchy ambulance super-stations, and I believe we are still going to make Tasmania the healthiest state in the country for some time, but we have abandoned that because of this Government's failure to invest.

In Education: by 2020 we were going to be at or above the national standard in every single NAPLAN measurement in reading, writing, maths and science. Now we are the worst of all states. I do not believe NAPLAN is the best way to assess, but this Government stapled itself to NAPLAN as a way of demonstrating its capacity and investment, and it is important to know that it is not the case. They said 75 per cent of all students will attain a TCE by 2022, but attainment rates have been declining, the third year in a row, and they are at the same level as 2008. They promised to invest in Tas TAFE but they have broken it and now they going to war with it.

They promised 3400 new social houses by 2023 - they have delivered a third. The housing debt waiver was supposed to build 80 homes per year, but they built next to none; and they promised to reduce the waitlist, but it is up 65 per cent since 2014. It is not going well and, as I said, I have never been so distressed or found it so hard to find homes for people. The number of people who are sleeping rough, who are sleeping unsafe, is just not on.

The Premier stands up and says, 'Make sure you let us know, tell us about those things'. We do. We write all the time. We are always writing letters because there is no other way to go and they always come back with things like, 'we encourage the person to stay in touch, we encourage them to continue to connect, we encourage, we encourage, we encourage.' We are

not writing to you because the person needs encouragement. We are writing to you because every single measure of trying to find someone a home has failed.

I do not want letters telling me that 'we encourage them to keep in touch'. Of course they are keeping touch, they are desperate. I know one woman who rang a shelter 73 times since November and has only just been able to get somewhere to live; 73 times since November, just one shelter. I wonder how many more she rang. I wonder how hard that was for her.

The reality is that this Premier talks about this great world that we are in, this great economic position, but it must just be one that he allows those close to him to enjoy, because for the constituents that I am working with, life in Tasmania is hardly the bed of roses that he would have you believe.

I have spoken to people trying hard to find work, finally being able to get off to interviews and afford the hair cut and the clothes so that they can present well at an interview, who are going to suffer under those cuts to JobSeeker. I have spoken to people who are very fearful that they are going to lose their jobs or hours when JobKeeper runs out at the end of this month. The Premier is not just silent on this - he is uncaring. I have spoken to employers who are still heavily reliant on JobKeeper. One business told me he employs 25 people, and 19 of them are on JobKeeper. That is going to have an impact come 1 April.

In Employment: the wages in Tasmania are \$12 000 below the national average, which is a gap which has grown by thousands since the Liberals came to office. Regional unemployment is among the highest in the country.

I want to spend a bit of time talking about some of the challenges. I read a story into *Hansard* in an adjournment last week from someone called Justin who talked about his waiting-time case. His is not the sort of case that gets read out because he is languishing way down on category 3. We tend to focus a lot on those people who are already over boundary on category 1 and category 2. But those category 3 people are everywhere, and when their own doctors say that government cuts have had the consequence of waiting times of 500 to 600 days for joint replacements, that does not, as Justin says, square with minister Courtney's written assurance that the LGH continues to review its waitlist. This goes on and on and on.

Do not forget that the Premier's first act as Treasurer was to cut \$210 million from health and hospitals. He then underfunded the health system by over \$100 million every year. It is not fair to blame anyone but this Premier and Treasurer because he caused that crisis. He described his horror 2019 budget as 'the one that I am most proud of'. He described \$450 million of cuts to health and education as 'sensible'. He told overworked doctors, nurses and paramedics that there is room for cuts in health. I touched on a number of the other issues that have been really hard but right now this Government would have us believe that they care about Tasmanians.

Before the 2014 election, Peter Gutwein promised Tasmanians a number of things. He told workers that there would be no forced redundancies in the public sector. In fact, he even sent an email to every single public sector worker to make that commitment to them personally, then just weeks after the election he cut 1500 jobs, including 256 school teachers. I well remember the story told by the PNF at one of the Premier's local schools who said that the Premier seemed genuinely shocked that staff were leaving and not coming back. He said,



'That's terrible, where are they all going?', and he was told, 'They are the cuts that you have made, Premier. These are the consequences of that'.

He bullied nurses, teachers and firefighters into taking industrial action. Schools were shut down because this Premier and Treasurer refused to negotiate in good faith. The Government, as we know, is now sacking Hydro workers, going to war with our TAFE teachers, and taking paramedics and firefighters to court over small amounts of allowances, although because he got caught out over it in here he had to fix some of those things. I want him to fix everything. He is the Premier. He cannot just say, 'I don't know about it so it's okay'.

This Premier's Address is a shopping list that the Government has no idea how to pay for. It is based on a web of commitments that the Government has been failing to deliver on for its entire time. It is, in fact, a complete ruse.

Labor has a plan that will create 35 000 jobs across the economy. We will work with business, we will make government spending work for Tasmania, and we will train the workforce of the future and build infrastructure. We are focused on getting the basics right not so that we can have a one-liner in parliament but because we genuinely believe in a better, fairer and more prosperous state. Only Labor can be trusted to put people first and that has been very clear by the actions of this Government.

I am getting over the number of times members opposite stand up and talk about how much they care. I believe words are important. I have said many times that language is important but so are actions. If you keep saying that you care, if you keep saying Tasmanians will be better off, if you keep saying you are building things, if you keep saying you are investing in things, then perhaps you ought to do just some of those things.

[3.32 p.m.]

**Mr STREET** (Franklin) - Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to respond to, and support, the Premier's Address. It spoke about where we have been in the last 12 months but also laid out a plan for the future. It was an Address with a vision for Tasmania's future and it is a future that I believe is bright, despite what we have been through over the last 12 months.

The past 12 months have been a difficult time for many Tasmanians. We have had the deaths of 13 Tasmanians. I have said in the past in this place, and I will say it again today, that my heartfelt condolences go to the family, friends and communities of those we have lost. It is almost an inverse reaction that the fewer people we have lost, the more we seem to feel it. Numbers from across the world of infections and deaths are now so large that it takes some thoughtful contemplation and time to actually appreciate the full extent of the pandemic, but 13 immediately strikes me because I cannot help but think those 13 people should still be with us.

We have been dealing with this pandemic for a year. We are in a better position now than any of us envisaged nine months ago but I also recognise that we are going to be dealing with the recovery from this pandemic for far longer than it has been with us. Tasmanians have lost their businesses and their jobs through no fault of their own. Having personally helped to operate a business, I can only imagine how devastated I would be if all my family and my hard work had disappeared overnight through no fault of my own.

For every business that has closed, for every job lost, there is a significant human element that goes beyond the business or the individual. The ripple effects are enormous.

I do not think anyone in this place doubts the sincerity of the devastation the Premier felt 12 months ago when he had to make decisions to keep us safe that precipitated the hurt that so many have felt. I do not wish to minimise what so many Tasmanians have been through and, in many cases, continue to deal with, but it is fair to say that the recovery is under way.

Unemployment in Tasmania is currently the lowest in the nation. The economy is growing strongly and job numbers are at pre-pandemic levels. As the Premier pointed out in his Address, job vacancies in Tasmania in February led the nation, more than 50 per cent higher than the previous year.

I want to go through a few of the initiatives the Premier touched on in his Address. The first is the building and construction support loan scheme, providing \$30 million in loan finance to support paused commercial building and construction projects. This builds on the \$10 million already provided in last year's budget for shovel-ready projects. You only have to drive around the state to see the residential housing market is booming in terms of dwelling approvals and construction. We also know that the first thing that went by the wayside when the pandemic hit was commercial construction, so it is a really positive thing that we are going to be offering this program to try to bring those projects forward.

The local jobs network the Premier spoke about in his Address follows on from the establishment of the jobs hubs in Sorell and Glenorchy. I know there are more communities looking to follow their lead and connect local businesses and industries to training and skills providers. The Premier also talked about the certificate 3 in individual support. This is particularly important in Tasmania because we have an ageing population. We are providing \$3 million to fund an additional 600 training places in this crucial qualification needed to work in the aged care sector.

Speaking of certificates of qualification brings me to TasTAFE and the recommendation from PESRAC. The Premier has announced we will move TasTAFE forward as a government business. Labor's opposition to this move is predictable but disappointing. As I said in an MPI in this place last week, we have seen this before from Labor in the education space with their loud and continual calls that we were going to destroy the college education system in Tasmania with our extension of high schools to years 11 and 12.

That move has not destroyed the college system. It has led to enhanced outcomes for students and more flexible delivery for all our schools, both colleges and what were previously only high schools. Labor knows this, which is why they have committed to not roll back our policy and in time I believe that will accept that what we are doing with TasTAFE is the sensible move forward and will quietly drop their opposition to it as well, although you can bet they will not drop it as loudly as they are opposing it right now.

Do not just take my or the Government's word for it. The Master Plumbers Association of Tasmania has said:

We welcome the move to make TasTAFE a government business and allow TasTAFE to work more in alignment to how industry works. TasTAFE has been doing a good job of servicing our industry but there is room for greater

outcomes to be delivered by moving away from a school-based model of service delivery to one that actually reflects the operational needs of business.

The Tasmanian building and construction industry is buoyant and growing. We need our training provider to be as agile, responsive and flexible as possible to ensure we seize all possible outcomes to keep Tasmanians skilled and qualified and participating in our workforce and economy. The state Government has now given TasTAFE the wings to be just that.

Michael Bailey from the TCCI said:

We expect the Government to follow through now and make the changes needed to ensure that TAFE will train the workforce of the future and will be flexible, efficient, effective and responsive to the **needs** of industry. Industry has been crying out for flexible training options, delivered in ways that suit them and their employees. That flexibility is critical if we want to get more Tasmanians into work and see our economy grow.

National Disability Services said:

... if TasTAFE being re-established as a government business means it will be more agile in responding to the needs of industry it is certainly welcome.

Finally, on this issue, I point out to the Labor Opposition that the chair of the board, the board members and the CEO are all firmly behind this move. They are the ones managing this business day to day and taking feedback from stakeholders. They believe this move will improve the TAFE system and so does the Government, from the Premier to the minister and Cabinet all the way through. I look forward to supporting whatever actions are necessary to take TAFE through his important evolution.

The issue of housing in Tasmania has become a topic of constant discussion, and rightly so, because we have a situation where affordability is becoming more and more difficult in Tasmania. What I do not hear enough of is the point that the only long-term solution to this problem is increasing supply of not just social and affordable housing but supply across every segment of the market. The Premier's announcement that we are going to remove the barriers and costs associated with activating unused land is welcome and timely.

There are about 5000 hectares of privately-owned land zoned residential that is currently empty. We need it converted into the potential 60 000 lots it can be as quickly as possible. Landowners who wish to activate their land will have access to \$10 million in a headworks holiday program with up to \$5000 per residential lot for power and a further \$5000 per lot for water and sewerage infrastructure.

The urban sprawl in the south of Tasmania is an issue. It is one I have spoken about in this place before. Around 90 per cent of all residential development in the south has occurred outside of the Hobart and Glenorchy municipalities in the last 50 years. This has led to residential developments occurring at a considerable distance from the Hobart CBD but the majority of employment still occurs within the Hobart CBD.

We now have legacy traffic issues that have been dealt with but it has also meant that a segment of the property market has been poorly supplied for a sustained period of time. To counter this, the Premier has announced that we plan to finalise an apartment code to facilitate permitted and discretionary assessment pathways for medium-density residential development. We are also going to complement this with a no-permit-required pathway for landowners to construct ancillary dwellings on their properties that are self-contained but less than 60 square metres.

We have a growing population because people want to work and live in Tasmania, but we need to facilitate at least some of this growth near existing transport routes and services, particularly in the Hobart CBD. Both initiatives I have just outlined will allow this to occur, then the ball will be in the court of developers and local government to make these projects a reality.

Many others have already spoken about the extensive work of PESRAC so I do not want to dwell on it for too long today except to thank the members of that committee for their tireless work over the last months, to meet with so many Tasmanians and to put together the report and recommendations that they have. It has been critical work, work that others in government simply have not had the time to undertake as we have dealt with the COVID-19 pandemic. It provides another important roadmap for Tasmanians as we work our way through the recovery phase.

I acknowledge the changes that have been announced to Tasmania's land tax regime and thank the many people who have contacted me to provide their feedback on this issue. No-one likes taxes but somebody much smarter than me once stated that they are the cost of a civilised society. The people I have spoken to about this issue have been passionate but, for the most part, they have also been understanding and respectful in their approaches to me. Hopefully, the changes that the Premier announced in his Address goes some way to indicating to these people that we have heard their concerns and we are working towards a better system that is more reflective of the current property market.

I thank the public servants of Tasmania for their tireless work over the past 12 months. I am not going to name specific professions or areas; everyone in the public service has faced some form of adversity in performing their normal day-to-day work tasks in the past year. I acknowledge that. It was pleasing to note from the Premier's Address that the review of the Tasmanian State Service will be completed by the end of May. Dr Ian Watt's final report is a critical piece of work in ensuring that our public service continues to provide the most efficient services possible, backed by the best systems to help us continue to rebuild from the past year but also to drive Tasmania into the post-pandemic environment.

I was a member of Kingborough Council from 2011 until I came here in 2016. My time in local government was rewarding and informative, but it was also incredibly frustrating and often seemed to be a waste of time and resources. I welcome the PESRAC recommendations in relation to local government. It is both a challenge and an opportunity that Tasmania needs to embrace to have the most effective governance structures in place for the future. The Local Government minister gave his response to the Premier's Address earlier today. I thought he spoke excellently on local government reform, the reasons for it and why it can be of benefit to Tasmania. I do not want to pre-empt where this conversation will go except to say it is a conversation that is worth having.

I finish by touching on the Leader of the Opposition's response to the Premier's Address. I want to do that because as much as it reflected on that last 12 months in the Premier's Address, he was also talking about the future. The issues I am about to speak about have been bubbling away for me since the last sitting days of 2020 when we started the second reading stage of the VAD debate. With the passage of that bill through this place, I was going to bite my tongue, be satisfied with the outcome and let it go. But as this is so often the case with Labor and the Leader of the Opposition, they could not help themselves and they went back there again.

During the response of the Leader of the Opposition, she made the claim that every member of her team is standing at the next election. What we now know is that the only reason that she can make that claim is that she subverted the preselection rules of her own party to guarantee each had a place on the ballot at the next election. It is why the whole sham of a process is now being internally investigated. The interjections start when you hit a little bit too close to the bone. I bet the report goes in the same bin as their 2018 election review.

If her entire team is such an extraordinary bunch of performers, as Leader of the Opposition claims, then why does she have to make the captain's call? I think I know why. I will get to that in a minute.

I want to concentrate on the most hypocritical aspect of Ms White's contribution, her politicisation of the VAD debate and the fact that there were differences of opinion on our side in relation to this bill. According to Ms White it was a demonstration of the deep ideological divisions within the Government. I sat with gritted teeth for three days while we were in the Committee stage of the VAD bill as Labor members who bothered to be here took pot shots across the Chamber.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** - Order, Mr Street, I have to warn you to be careful to not cross an area we have already debated with your speech.

**Mr STREET** - That is fine, but what I am dealing with is the hypocrisy of the Leader of the Opposition and the comments she made in her response to the Premier's Address.

I kept my mouth shut, because for me the passage of the bill was more important than the political point scoring that was going on. I will explain how a conscience vote works, as it seems to have evaded the Labor Party. You examine an issue, or in this case the bill, then you get up in this place, an absolute privilege, and you say what you think as an individual.

The reason I have explained it to the Labor Party is that they have tried to perpetuate the hoax that all Labor members acted individually on conscience in regard to this issue. The Leader of the Opposition did it again in her response. They gave the game away in the first clause in Committee when the Leader of the Opposition said, 'We will be opposing the amendment'. I thought all members were speaking for themselves, but apparently the Leader of the Opposition was able to speak for all Labor members.

If Labor members were all acting on their individual consciences, is it not remarkable that in the Legislative Council one of their members introduced an amendment to allow for organisational conscientious objection, and they all voted for it upstairs? But, when it failed and Ms Ogilvie moved a motion in this place for the same thing, every Labor member voted against it. What a coincidence.

Is it not remarkable that in 2017 Ms White and Ms O'Byrne were both comfortable voting for a VAD bill that had no prognostic time frames in it? This time, after it was amended upstairs to include said time frames, they voted against Ms O'Connor's amendment to remove them.

Ms O'Byrne tried to use the excuse that we all have to be pragmatic about these things, but I do not think it had anything to do with pragmatism. I think that Labor decided to put superficially appearing unified above letting their members genuinely vote with their conscience. They also put it above supporting a couple of different amendments that some of them believe could have improved the bill but would not have unanimous support of their Caucus, like the prognostic time frames I just mentioned.

They think that we are stupid. What is worse is they have treated Tasmanians like they are stupid. Do they honestly think we do not know what happened in their party room? Do they honestly think that we believe that all their members supported the VAD bill? Not for one second. We know there are Labor members who do not support VAD, but they were bullied into supporting it.

**Ms Standen** - We all supported the VAD. We are unified unlike you lot over there.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** - Order, Ms Standen.

**Mr STREET** - There is the interjection, when you start to hit a bit too close to the bone. I believe they were bullied into supporting the VAD.

**Ms Standen** - You are wrong.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** - Ms Standen, first warning.

**Mr STREET** - They were given a couple of concessions like the prognostic time frames that at least some of you do not believe should be in there. I also suspect they had their political futures hung over them and, to keep them in the tent, they were told if they all voted for the VAD bill they would be guaranteed a spot on the ballot. That is how they have ended up with an internal party investigation.

Mr Deputy Speaker, in light of everything I have just said, you can imagine my disappointment that Ms White came in here preaching unity at this Government like they have some sort of moral superiority. Let me be very clear: there was a divide on this side of the Chamber. That is what happens when you let adults voice their opinions in a conscience vote. Then, after you have voiced them, you vote and then you go back to working for the people who elected you. It is what the grown-ups do. There are Liberal members who will not ever agree with my position on VAD. That is okay because what we all agree on, on this side, is that Tasmania will always be better off under a Liberal government than the weak members we see opposite who put superficial unity in front of political integrity.

Ms White finished her response by stating that she has never wanted anything more than to win the next election. The problem Ms White has is that you have to do more than want it. You have to believe in something and have the courage to stand by it. My suspicion is that Ms White only wants to become premier because she is sick of being in opposition and wants a nicer office.

The Premier put forward a plan for Tasmania's future as opposed to the policy vacuum that sits opposite us day after day criticising our plan for the future without having one of their own. I commend the Premier's Address to the House.

[3.51 p.m.]

**Mr ELLIS** (Braddon) - Mr Deputy Speaker, I wish to associate myself with the comments of all my colleagues on this side and, most recently, Mr Street - a very fine contribution and a note on the importance of conscience in this place.

A little over a year ago, an outbreak of a previously unknown virus occurred in the city of Wuhan in the province of Hubei, an industrial and logistical hub in the eastern provinces of China. It appeared in a wet market, as many respiratory illnesses have before. Li Wenliang, a 34-year-old doctor, was one of the first to blow the whistle but was silenced by police and tragically died on 7 February 2020. He was one of the world's first COVID-19 healthcare heroes. Sadly, there were many more to come. The virus spread. A lockdown was first initiated in the city that spread across the province. People were welded into their homes by authorities. Field hospitals were established, bodies piled up in freezer trucks, and thousands of people died.

As the virus spread throughout the world, the World Health Organisation dithered, as did the leaders of many other countries. Strong actions were taken first by our federal government to close our international borders to China, then Iran, Italy, and, eventually all the other borders, effectively self-isolating Australia. 'Beggar thy neighbour' restrictions were imposed by China and Australians discovered that if we cannot manufacture face masks and if we cannot manufacture ventilators in the middle of a pandemic, then we, as a country and as a world, are in trouble.

Then what happened? Well, nightmare scenarios have since played out. So much has been said over this last year but let us hear it again. Across Europe, cases of coronavirus spiked. Supply shortages as well as bureaucratic and logistical obstacles faced people of every walk of life. Governments put exhausted communities into lockdown, and back into lockdown again. Street protests turned violent, neighbours were pitted against neighbours, friend against friend, brother against brother.

Around the world, empty streets closed schools, shuttered restaurants, cancelled Easter holidays and Christmas vacations. In many ways, those cancelled events, those time-honoured traditions - the cancellation of them, came as some form of bitter relief to the residents of a world with climbing infections, choked hospitals and rampant deaths.

It has been reported that half of Italy's 20 regions - which includes the cities of Rome, Milan and Venice - will now be entering new coronavirus restrictions from 15 March and the measures will be effective through 6 April according to a decree passed by the Italian prime minister, Mario Draghi's, cabinet on Friday. In regions demarcated as red zones, people will be unable to leave their houses except for work or health reasons, with all non-essential shops closed. In orange zones, people will also be banned from leaving their towns or their regions except for work or health reasons. Bars and restaurants will only be able have a delivery and take-away service. Affected regions will be labelled red and orange depending on the level of contagion. Regions that report weekly COVID-19 cases of more than 250 people per 1000 residents will also automatically go into lockdown, meaning that other regions could also be

affected during that period. Additionally, over the Easter weekend the entire country will be considered a red zone and will be subject to a national lockdown from 3 to 5 April.

The story of Germany reads something similar and it is worth recapping. German authorities were expected to extend lockdown measures on Monday and possibly tighten some restrictions as they face a steady rise in new coronavirus infections but leave schools open for now. Several states have tried to avoid going back into tougher lockdowns when weekly numbers of new infections exceed 100 per 100 000 residents on three consecutive days. Angela Merkel made clear that she would not accept that: 'Unfortunately, we will have to make use of this emergency break', she said. The weekly infection rate per 100 000 people stood at 107 nationwide on Monday - up from the mid-60s three weeks ago. Officials agreed to largely shut down public life from 1 to 3 April, adding a public holiday and shutting down most stores for the period. Public gatherings will be banned from 1 to 5 April to encourage people to stay at home.

In Britain the story looked very similar. Britain's packed hospitals are three weeks away from being overwhelmed as coronavirus fuels a record-breaking surge in cases and triggers a national lockdown. On Monday night, the Prime Minister, Boris Johnson, said the United Kingdom faced a pivotal moment and the coming weeks would be the hardest yet. In England alone, the number of COVID-19 patients in hospitals increased by nearly one third in the past week to almost 27 000. That number is 40 per cent higher than the first peak in April. People will only be legally allowed to leave their homes to shop for essentials, get medical treatment, escape domestic abuse, or go to work when absolutely necessary.

However, to be clear these are not stories of 2020. These are stories of 2021. The moments are not articles from last year, they are literally the news of the day as we speak. This is the state of our world. Yet we look at the state of our state in 2021 in comparison - the world is in lockdown with hundreds of thousands of deaths, many more currently in ICUs or dying in their homes, with a global recession of staggering scale and ferocity that will set back a generation: a world that is adding nearly 500 000 new cases a day to a total that has now reached more than 120 million cases with sadly nearly 2.7 million deaths.

Here we are in Tasmania - safe, secure, our way of life returning. The state of our state is summed up in a simple refrain heard on farms and factory floors, building sites and aged care homes, in our villages, cities and towns. 'There is nowhere in the world I would rather be than here right now'. That quiet, assured, cautiously optimistic phrase heard again and again from the mouths of everyday Tasmanian heroes. The little people, the quiet people, the all too often forgotten people. Those people can see jobs returning, their small business on its feet once again, and a future for our children on this our island home. In Tasmania people tend to vote first with their feet. In the dark times when governments fail or the global economy lurches they are forced to pack up and leave to find new hope far from home. In the better times our people come back and the state grows again.

This is our time and our problems in 2021, remarkably, are those of growth, in sharp contrast to the all too familiar problems of decline. We are stronger, we are prouder, we are more confident, and we are brought together under one banner. JK Rowling wrote, I believe, in the first Harry Potter book, *The Philosopher's Stone*, that there are some things that you cannot share without ending up liking each other and knocking out a 12-foot mountain troll is one of them. I believe this is very great wisdom and surely COVID-19 has been our 12-foot



mountain troll. I am very proud to stand with the people who we appear to have knocked it out with.

Regarding our plan for the future, Premier Peter Gutwein in his Address said there are now over 22 000 more Tasmanians employed since coming to government in 2014. Our economy is one of the strongest in the country. We have the lowest unemployment rate of any state in the nation. The number one issue I hear in the towns and the farms across the north-west coast, the west coast and King Island is jobs for now, jobs for the future, jobs we can rely on.

This Government is putting in place plans for a job-ready generation. We will establish a job-ready fund with \$2 million to help jobseekers to gain essential tools that they need for a job. I have been in that place where I was making less than \$40 dollars a day as an apprentice working full time in my first year, and that was after tax, and having to pay for the tools of the trade to get the qualifications that I needed, the white cards, the boots, all the sundry items that you need to rely on to be able to do your job. To have a government that supports not just those people who go to university or those who choose to drop out from work but those who choose to use their hand to put themselves in our building sites or on our farms, in our mines and in our forests to earn a living for this generation and those to come, those people need to be supported.

While in many ways it is the little things that really count, in that moment as an 18-year-old beginning your first job it truly is the little investment that means that you can be that much further ahead at the end of the week when you would have been just that little bit further behind. We want to encourage every young Tasmanian, regardless of their background or their circumstance to pick up the tools, to work hard, to provide for their family and to provide for our future, because and despite the fact that it is a cliché, it is eminently true that young people are our future.

We want to expand our Area Connect service to get more people into work, training and education where no easy transport exists. When you live in a vast remote rural area such as the people in my electorate - and yours as well, Mr Deputy Speaker - the people of the west coast, Circular Head, King Island and many places in the hinterlands behind our towns where people want to be able to work and find a future and an income, we want to make sure those people are connected with those who provide the jobs.

We want to fund a \$400 000 worker connect pool, providing Tasmanian businesses and jobseekers with information about local jobs as well as the programs and support services available. When you are a young person you do not speak the same language, you do not understand things in quite the same way as the middle-aged bureaucrats who write the policy in the first place. We want to be able to line up those jobseekers with the services they need to be able to do the job. We want to put them in a place where they can get exactly the right support needed. Sometimes generations cannot speak the same language. We want to put those people together and make sure that they have the skills to get the job done. We want to expand our successful job-matching service with an additional \$2.4 million to place jobseekers with local employment vacancies. This again is about putting a jobseeker who does not have the experience or the qualifications or the life experience that would have been putting them in that place in the first place. It is about getting them to have a go and making sure that they get a go.

We want a guarantee that all young people in Tasmania have a job and the first way we do that is by making sure they are linked with the people in our community who want to give them their start. To that end, we are introducing the Tasmanian employer bonus which is about incentivising employers to take on long-term jobseekers. We know in the north-west coast there are pockets of long-term disadvantage where for three generations people have not worked or earned and contributed to our society in a way that would guarantee that they live up to their potential and can support others. We do not want to see those people being left behind.

In this moment, when we have a global pandemic, when the world is in recession and when Tasmania is leading the way, we want to make sure that every person who wants to work is put in that position and they can succeed. We have \$6.5 million over two years to help employers take on jobseekers who have experience and skills but need a fair go with a \$6500 incentive to those employers. That is going to make a massive difference. We believe in these people and we want to ensure that the incentives are there for others to believe in them as well.

I want to speak briefly about the construction industry, an industry I know very well. There is \$5000 per lot for a headworks holiday. That means more jobs. It means more tradies getting out on site. It means more utes in the vacant blocks around our towns and in our cities. It means more family homes. It means more people can finally get the three-bedroom, two-bathroom place that they want to settle down in and start a family.

Those are the simple things that can be unlocked when you provide the clever incentives that are brought to us by the business community across Tasmania, by the tradies and the people who know how to get things done. We want to incentivise them to build for the future, to secure the homes and lives of Tasmanians who want to set themselves up and who want to start a family. There is \$5000 per lot for a Headworks Holiday. I could not imagine anything that sounds more unsexy but it is about dreams, about livelihoods, about securing our future.

HomeBuilder has delivered with 2600 applications received and 1763 applications already conditionally approved by the State Revenue Office and in total, in the 12 months to January there were 3538 new dwellings approved. That is the most approved in a quarter of a century. It is a very strange downturn around the world where in Tasmania we are building more than we have ever done before. It is truly staggering what we have been able to achieve in this place.

We are talking as well about land tax relief. Around 70 000 people will have land tax relief through this package announced in the Premier's Address and 4100 people will no longer need to pay land tax at all. That is about freeing people from the shackles that is taxation. It is about putting more money back in their pockets and making sure they can spend it in a way they see fit. The Leader of the Opposition spoke once about tired old formulas of tax cuts. As someone who worked for a living, I can tell you that you earn every dollar of that and it deserves to be back in your pocket whenever we can afford it.

We are also providing stamp duty relief to benefit young families but also seniors and people who want to downsize their home because they are the ones who have borne the heaviest burden during this pandemic - the young families who cancelled weddings, who put their lives on hold, whose businesses were under threat, and the seniors who could not leave home, who relied on family and charity just to pick up the shopping, who have not seen visitors in their aged care home, in many cases, for many months.

I am very passionate about TAFE and making sure that every person who wants to train for a role that is hands-on can find that training here. I know from my own personal experience what a difference it can make to the lives of young people. It is about training for the future. It is about experience for our young people. It is about making sure that night schools, weekends, holidays - times where busy families and people can squeeze in the training to get ahead - that is when we want to be able to provide the training for our young people - to make sure that TAFE is flexible enough to respond, not just to the teacher's needs, but to the learner's needs. It is about putting the learners of Tasmania at the centre of our education system.

I spoke before about when I was an 18-year-old apprentice making less than \$40 a day after tax. The difference that being able to skill up made in my life was enormous. I went through the long, hard process: the certificate 2 in construction, the trade certificate, all the gas fitting tickets, the certificate 4 contractor's licence that enabled you to climb the ladder of prosperity in this country. Those are the things that are delivered by TAFE. Those are the things that take you from earning less than \$40 a day to earning an income that can support a family. Where that training is provided is where lives are changed. It is about passing on the skills of generations.

I am a plumber, the son of a plumber. The proudest moment of my professional life was not in this place. It was when my old man signed off on my apprenticeship. That is what TAFE does. That is what training does.

We want to encourage younger guys and girls with relevant experience to get after it, to go get it, to earn an income to support their family, to get the training that they need. As the Master Plumbers said:

Master Plumbers of Tasmania welcome the move to make TasTAFE a government business and allow TasTAFE to work more in alignment to how industry works. TasTAFE has been doing a good job in servicing our industry but there is always room for greater outcomes to be delivered by moving away from a school-based business model of service delivery to one that actually reflects the operational needs of our business.

As Keystone said:

Keystone Tasmania welcomes any initiative to increase capacity and responsiveness of the State's largest training provider. There are certainly opportunities for TAFE to engage more deeply with industry. We look forward to strengthening our relationship with TasTAFE under this new business model.

I know the chambers of commerce in my region, including the Burnie Chamber of Commerce, North West Business and the Devonport Chamber of Commerce strongly back TAFE because ours is a region where the jobs are hands-on, where the people get down and dirty and they make sure that they can earn a living. They are vocational, they are practical and those are the jobs that people need and that is the training that businesses require.

TasCOSS said:

... we strongly welcome investment into TasTAFE and look forward to working with them to address the demand for an expanded community services workforce.

Delivering the skills to meet the needs of business, a training system that looks more like the businesses it serves and the aspirations of those who it trains. It reminds me of the extended high schools to years 11 and 12. A government that governs for all rather than special interests, that puts learners at the centre of education.

Winston Churchill, who saw many dark hours, said:

All the greatest things are simple and many can be expressed in a single word: freedom; justice; honour; duty; mercy; hope.

It is that final word - hope - which we have needed most in these dark times.

That hope is embodied in the north-west nurses coming back to shift after recovering from COVID-19. The hope of a young couple finally putting out a shingle in the building industry after all those years of talking about it. The hope of a school leaver who has discovered in this moment of hardship the burning desire to serve and who pursues agriculture to feed a world wracked with disease in an industry which is the ultimate essential.

I want to turn to health, because health is another thing for which my community relies on government and wants to see the guarantee of services that cares for our people. In dental there are 20 000 additional appointments for public patients across emergency, general care and dental clinics. That is about making sure that people from all walks of life can receive the care that they need whether it is in their toes, whether it is in their organs, in their arms, in their head, wherever it is, wherever they are sick, wherever they need care. It is about making sure that those people have the care that they need.

Since coming into government we have grown our Health budget to \$9.8 billion - a 70 per cent increase since the failed Labor-Greens budget. There are 15 000 additional full-time-equivalent jobs, 800 new nurses, 230 more doctors, 170 more allied health professionals and over 170 more ambos.

After hours care: we are making it easier for Tasmanians to access medical care, both closer to home and at the times that they need it through the primary health care sector with \$3 million in additional support to make sure that our primary health carers are providing the care when people need it. If you have a sick child and it is not within business hours you deserve the level of care that you would receive at another time. We want to make sure that happens. It is about complementing other existing initiatives, including Community Rapid Response, who are truly wonderful people, and secondary triage. It is about more ambulances and building on our 50 per cent increase in Ambulance Tasmania staff recruited since 2014. It is about recruiting new paramedic crews - an additional 12 full-time-equivalent jobs, new vehicles, new support. We want to make sure that if people are sick that ambulances can get to them and take them to hospital in a timely manner.

Most saliently, with the discussion that we have had in our community over the previous months, palliative care. I am enormously proud that in the August budget we will be working with peak palliative care and health bodies and the community sector to find solutions for

palliative care that will look after our people, even at the last moment. Those people deserve it. If our community has made the choice that it has, we want to make sure that, as you have said, we have the gold standard and people at the end of their life can get the care that they need.

I want to speak about safer communities. An additional \$2.4 million over two years will be provided to allow for 100 new tracking devices to be fitted to offenders. It is also providing police supervision and monitoring. People in my community do not want to see those who have committed crimes against their neighbours, against their friends, against their children let out in a way in which we do not know what they are doing or where they are. Our people expect more. They demand that when those who have committed heinous crimes against our community are out of prison that we are protected. Protecting the vulnerable is one of the most important things we can do. Whether it is COVID-19, whether it is crime, we need to keep our people safe to secure their future.

We are on track to deliver 258 more police officers since we came to Government and recruited 200 more correctional officers since 2016. We want to make sure there are cops on the beat, that people are safe. We do not want a government that sacks them. Tasmanians remember that well. We want to guarantee that if you walk down the street in one of our major towns you will be protected and that if you need help then those who can do something about it will come.

The upper House is debating additional community safety laws whereby people who are going to work and earning a living in legitimate businesses and important industries in our state are being blocked by radical activists who do not care about the lives and jobs of people in the north-west or west coast or King Island. They simply care about fundraising in the cities of Melbourne and Sydney. We want to make sure that every Tasmanian has the right to go to work and that they cannot be stopped by radical protesters invading their worksite. I am very proud to support this legislation and I expect that it will be passed in the upper House. Heaven help those who do not because our community expects it, our community respects the right to work.

In closing, President Theodore Roosevelt was heard to say -

It is not the critic who counts; not the man who points out how the strong man stumbles, or where the doer of deeds could have done them better. The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena, whose face is marred in dust and sweat and blood; who strives valiantly; who errs, who comes short again and again because there is no effort without error and shortcoming; but who does actually strive to do the deeds; who knows great enthusiasms, the great devotions; who spends himself in a worthy cause; who at best knows in the end the triumph of high achievement, and who at the worst fails, if he fails, at least fails while daring greatly, so that his place shall never be with those cold and timid souls who knew neither victory nor defeat.

The world in this moment, in this year, is a world that has been to hell and back and very few of the 7 billion people have come back. They are still in purgatory, but quietly, humbly, is the stirring of pride of the people who have long been counted out, the little people of Tasmania. With the world on its knees, a year on from when it first faulted, we stand proudly on our own two feet and with the strength to lift others up. In the hard times now, we the

people of Tasmania hold our heads high. We have met the hard times that others have been found wanting.

It is under this man, our Premier, Peter Carl Gutwein, that we have been weighed and measured and our moment has come. This is the state of our state.

[4.21 a.m.]

**Mr GUTWEIN** (Bass - Premier) - Mr Deputy Speaker, it is my pleasure to take a few moments to wrap on my Address. I begin by thanking all members of the Government for their contributions and all members for their contributions, some I would support more than others in terms of their efforts in this place.

Following on from the member who just finished, Mr Ellis - and again, that was a very good contribution - the point he made is very valid. Around the world at the moment we have seen 123 million cases, more than 2.7 million deaths, and at the moment, unfortunately right now, case counts are over 450 000 a day and appear to be climbing.

When you look back to where we have come from to where we are today, Tasmania, as I have said on many occasions, stands alone as one of the safest places in this country, if not one of the safest places in the world. We should all be proud of that. Tasmanians should be proud of that. Regardless of race, religion, circumstances, background or politics, Tasmanians held out their hands to each other last year in the most extraordinary example of a common and shared humanity that I have ever witnessed.

I want to touch on again some of the efforts of the people that have supported us across the public sector. I will not name them because there are far too many but they will know who they are. When we were in the depth of the challenges that we faced back in March, April and May last year, they worked around the clock to ensure that we could keep people safe. They supported the Government making some very difficult decisions at that time but decisions that have stood this state in good stead. Whilst those decisions, as difficult as they were, impacted on the lives and livelihoods of many Tasmanians, together we have got through this. Together Tasmania is in a great place.

The very clear plan that we laid out last year in being able to not only keep Tasmanians safe but to rebuild confidence, invest in our construction sector and ensure that we provide an opportunity and importantly hope, is working. Today we have one of the fastest growing economies in the country. Our jobs have returned to pre-pandemic levels. Around 19 000 jobs were lost at the peak and we have now recovered 21 500 jobs, more than were lost at the peak of the pandemic.

We are seeing a construction sector that has a wall of work in front of it, underpinned by a \$5 billion infrastructure program that will ensure we have a long and strong pipeline for that sector.

As we have rolled out this very clear plan, Tasmanians have been prepared to work with us across both the public and private sector, and a nod to our public sector again regarding the health sector. We have witnessed some of the most fantastic efforts in the way our hospitals, our nurses, our doctors and GPs have worked with the Government over time to ensure we keep people safe and now we step into the next phase of this which is the vaccination phase.

The Health minister and I yesterday spoke at Kingston at the vaccination centre that has been established there. We met the staff and got the sense that they are embedded in the program, they were passionate about ensuring they could assist Tasmanians to get their vaccinations, and to ensure that people were safe so we could ensure that this state continues on the trajectory it is on currently which is fantastic.

We lead the country on so many economic indicators and the currency of this Government has been jobs. In terms of jobs we are back to pre-pandemic levels. That means opportunity for Tasmanians. Importantly, my Address last week lays out the next part of our plan.

Regarding PESRAC and the work undertaken by that group of very fine individuals, they are some of the most dedicated, clever, engaged individuals I have met over my time in public life, bringing together backgrounds from different sectors and different skills, but together they have worked to provide a roadmap for the next two to five years in their final report and this Government very proudly has accepted all of their 52 recommendations.

**Ms O'Connor** - What are you going to do differently?

**Mr GUTWEIN** - The Leader of the Greens has chimed in. I would be very interested to understand at some stage which of those recommendations she is backing and supporting.

**Ms O'Connor** - In chapter 6?

**Mr GUTWEIN** - No, in terms of the 52 recommendations.

**Ms O'Connor** - I will come back to you with a list.

**Mr GUTWEIN** - I shall wait with interest.

**Ms O'Connor** - If you are interested.

**Mr GUTWEIN** - I shall wait with interest to see what recommendations from PESRAC the Leader of the Greens supports. I do not want to reflect too long on other members' contributions in this place but PESRAC provides a roadmap and all that we have heard is opposition from the other side in terms of what I think are very sensible reforms that have been informed by a significant number of Tasmanians in ensuring that young Tasmanians and regional Tasmanians have better access to training to get the skills they need to access the jobs we are currently seeing in our growing economy.

Some of the politics that have been played have been very disappointing. As I have said on many occasions, this is not about privatisation. This is about an evolution to ensure that we can get the best results out of a fit-for-purpose TAFE to ensure that young people and people in regional Tasmania can get access to the skills and training they need to grasp those jobs and take on those jobs in our growing economy.

There was a range of different initiatives that I announced last week and I want to run through a couple of them. There is the \$20.5 million package to help more Tasmanian workers into jobs; the job-ready fund of \$2 million to help jobseekers gain the essential tools they need to get a job; and the Area Connect service investing \$3.2 million to expand transport services.

We have heard on so many occasions that for many people, especially young people, it can be difficult to get to work so there is \$3.2 million to expand transport services to 16 local government areas up from six. There is a new Worker Connect portal; a job-matching service with an additional \$2.4 million to place more jobseekers with local employer vacancies; a Tasmanian employer bonus - and Mr Ellis and a number of my members have spoken about this - incentivising employers to take on a long-term unemployed jobseeker by investing \$6.5 million over two years to help employers take on job seekers with a \$6500 incentive to those employers. We want to help people get back into the workforce and I have said, it is a workforce that is crying out for jobs.

In February, job vacancies are up more than 52 per cent and late last year we saw more than a 90 per cent increase or thereabouts in terms of jobs in the civil and construction sector. Employers are hiring and what we want to do is to ensure that more Tasmanians have the opportunity to grasp those jobs.

We provided additional funding into the Aged Care and Disability Support Package by investing \$3 million to fund an additional 600 training places in Certificate III in Individual Support. We have extended the Skill Up initiative for a further 12 months with a \$1 million investment to continue to provide fee-free training for those hardest hit by COVID-19, and \$850 000 into a Youth Navigators Project for the Youth Employment Alliance between community organisations to deliver triage services specifically tailored to young people.

I am very pleased and proud, with the Deputy Premier, that we will be putting \$41.2 million over four years to fully fund phases 1 and 2 of the Government's response to the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) Review. That review recommended large-scale changes in the way that it operates, including in its infrastructure, practice and culture to better support our children and our adolescents. It is a very important investment.

We will upskill all school health nurses with the latest youth mental health first aid training and we will fund the wellbeing lead teacher and principal to undertake online professional learning focused on student mental health and trauma-informed approaches.

Our oral health initiative providing \$5 million will deliver 20 000 additional dental appointments for public patients across emergency, general care and denture clinics. During the pandemic, dental services closed. When state borders closed, we could not have clinicians come in either, and it is important that we step up and that we do more, so a \$5 million investment to deliver 20 000 additional dental appointments for public patients, across emergency, general care and denture clinics.

We will be recruiting two new paramedic crews with an additional 12 FTEs each for the greater Hobart and greater Launceston areas. In the area of housing, landowners who wish to activate residential-zoned land that is not currently being developed will benefit from a \$10 million headworks holiday for new residential subdivisions - \$5000 per residential lot for power and up to \$5000 per residential lot delivered for water and sewerage infrastructure. This will unlock more land that is already zoned and enable more houses to be built. As we have said in this place on many occasions, the only way to deal with a housing challenge where there are not enough houses is to increase supply and to build more houses.

We will be establishing an apartment code and appropriate permitted and discretionary assessment pathways for medium density residential development that is already linked to



services. That will provide an opportunity for further infill developments in areas that have services available to them. The granny flat policy is brilliant. Ancillary dwellings are extra living quarters with a floor area of less than 60 metres which are self-contained but additional to the primary home on a block, such as a granny flat. The first 250 of these new ancillary dwellings that are made available for long-term rental for more than two years will receive a \$10 000 payment. I expect there will be significant interest in that particular program.

We also offer HomeShare - a scheme that enables the Government to co-invest with purchasers by taking an equity stake in the home of up to \$100 000 or 30 per cent of the home's value, whichever is the lesser. I know that many people have felt over time that this has not been advertised well enough and so we will do that. We will ensure that people understand this program is available and we will be investing a further \$10 million into that program, meaning that at least another 100 households can realise home ownership through the program.

Furthermore, for Tasmanians who want to buy their first home, or pensioners who want to downsize, we will increase the conveyance duty concession threshold from \$400 000 to \$500 000 in terms of the reduction that we provide to reflect current market conditions providing relief of 50 per cent effective immediately.

As has been mentioned by members on this side and I made comment on it in terms of my speech last week, it was important that we contemporised the thresholds for land tax and so we are doubling the land value which land tax becomes payable from \$25 000 to \$50 000 and increasing the maximum land value threshold by \$50 000 from \$350 000 to \$400 000. This will save 70 000 Tasmanians up to \$613 on their land tax bill, and 4100 landowners will now pay no land tax at all, putting downward pressure on the need for rental increases to be passed on. There are some other matters that we will be contemporising. Unpaid tax interests will be reduced from 8 per cent to 4 per cent to better reflect current market conditions and land tax bills over \$500 will be able to be paid by three instalments.

With regard to our community and ensuring that regional events can take place, \$1.5 million is being made available in a regional events recovery fund; \$1.5 million to aid the ongoing recovery efforts of the creative and cultural sector as well; as well as \$3 million to attract and support production and filming in Tasmania. Not only do these productions create jobs here in Tasmania but they take Tasmanian product to the world and it is a very worthwhile investment.

Without wanting to digress, I want to come back to TasTAFE. One of the single largest challenges we face right now in the state, is ensuring that we provide a pathway for those people who want a job, who want to be trained, who want to be skilled-up to find the jobs.

What we heard from PESRAC as a result of their extensive consultation is that TasTAFE is not nimble enough. TasTAFE does not act like the businesses it is there to serve. We will not be privatising TasTAFE. What we will be doing is evolving TasTAFE, ensuring that TasTAFE can operate in a similar fashion to the businesses it needs to serve, and in serving those businesses it will provide more opportunity for Tasmanians, young, old or regional, to gain the skills and the training that they need to be able to take on those jobs that we are seeing right across our broader economy.

I know there is an ideological opposition to this in this place and it saddens me because this should not be about ideology. We should all be able to agree on the fact that what we want

for young Tasmanians, older Tasmanians, and those in regional Tasmania is for them to have the opportunity to gain the skills and the training they need to take on the jobs that are available. That is what this policy is about.

It is one of our single largest challenges. We know that we have work. Ask anyone that has tried to get a plumber or an electrician or a builder or a roof fixed in recent times. In some cases builders are now booked out to the middle of 2022 or beyond. We have opportunity here in this state and it is important that we provide the pathways that are going to enable young Tasmanians, Tasmanians who are older, or regional Tasmanians, with that opportunity to get that skills and training.

We are determined that we will bring TasTAFE through this evolution to become a nimbler business, to become a more flexible business, to become a business that is going to provide more opportunity for more Tasmanians.

In terms of where we stand today and where I started in this closing address was to point out the challenges that we face around the world at the moment.

When you look at Europe at the moment and the rising number of cases and the lockdowns that are occurring, and the restrictions that are being placed on people, it almost takes you back to where we were 12 months ago. In fact, some of the lockdowns are harsher than what was being implemented 12 months ago.

As a country we are in a fantastic place. We stand out as a beacon in the world in our response to COVID-19. As a state we are one of the safest places in this country and one of the safest places in this world.

To finish the Premier's Address, I make the point that through this Tasmanians have worked together, they have held out their hand to each other, they have helped where necessary, they have done the right thing. I am forever thankful. I know that across this parliament we are forever thankful for their efforts.

I am pleased they have worked with us in our clear plan, a plan that we laid out last year when unfortunately we had to make the hard decisions, when we had to close down businesses, when we had to close our borders, when we had to stop people travelling and doing some of the small things they enjoy like travelling out of their municipality to fish or go into a national park or exercise in a gym. They worked with us and we provided a \$1 billion social and economic support package. We understood that we needed to do more and that \$1 billion package was the largest out of all of the states and territories as a percentage of our economy. I am very proud that we did that.

We reached out to visa holders and provided support when the Commonwealth Government would not. We invested and provided support for our community sector NGOs, ensuring that they could provide food and shelter and other supports to people who needed it. We worked together as a team through that, and we got through it.

As part of our very clear plan, we rolled out a construction package in the middle of the year. That package has ensured that we now have a construction sector that has a full book in front of it. We have had some extraordinary outcomes from HomeBuilder. Last year we had

more than 3500 home dwellings approved. That is a record. There is a wall of work in front of Tasmania at the moment.

We need to find the pathway with a fit-for-purpose TAFE to ensure that we can provide opportunities for those Tasmanians who are looking for them, because the jobs are there. In Tasmania at the moment we are safe, we have a growing economy and the jobs are there.

On this side of the House we will continue to roll out our clear plan. We will continue to invest where needed. We will continue to provide support where needed. We will continue to ensure that we secure Tasmania's future.

**Address noted.**

## **DANGEROUS CRIMINALS AND HIGH RISK OFFENDERS BILL 2020 (No. 28)**

### **In Committee**

#### **Council amendments to clause 5, 24, 40, 42 and new clause A**

[4.45 p.m.]

**Ms ARCHER** - Mr Deputy Chair, I move -

That the Council amendments to clauses 5, 24, 40, 42 and new clause A be agreed to.

These small number of amendments were made to the bill when it was considered by the Legislative Council late last year. Following the bill's passage through this House on 15 September last year the Chief Justice wrote to me in relation to some matters that had not previously been raised during consultation. In response to the request of the Chief Justice the Government agreed to progress several amendments to the bill in the other place. They are all very sensible amendments and I was only too happy to oblige when they were raised by the Chief Justice and we considered them as being needed.

First, a new clause 4A was inserted in the bill to provide for the Supreme Court to obtain reports of its own motion. For example, from the Chief Forensic Psychiatrist and to order an offender to submit to examination by a person who is preparing such a report as part of an application for a dangerous criminal declaration. This mirrors the powers provided to the court under clause 10 when a declaration is being reviewed but will allow the court to exercise those powers when a dangerous criminal application is being made in the first instance. This may be necessary in cases where a recent report relating to the offender is unavailable and the offender may be uncooperative in facilitating a new report being prepared.

Second, clause 40 was amended to provide for offences for a breach of a higher risk offender order or interim high-risk offender order to be dealt with in the Magistrates Court rather than the Supreme Court. Dealing with the breach in the Supreme Court would require a jury trial. The Chief Justice suggested that it would be preferable for such matters to be heard in the Magistrates Court criminal division, which is a sensible move. This approach is also consistent with the policy intent of the Justice Miscellaneous (Court Backlog and Related

Matters) Bill 2020, which provides for offences attracting a term of imprisonment of up to three years to be dealt with in the Magistrates Court.

Clause 40 was also amended to delete the former subclause (3) recognising that it would not be appropriate for the Magistrates Court to vary high-risk offender orders and that such orders would be made by the Supreme Court. The power to vary a high-risk offenders order or interim high-risk offenders order remains available to the Supreme Court pursuant to subclause (5) of clause 39 of the bill.

Third, subclause (2) of clause 42 was deleted in order to provide greater consistency between appeals relating to the high-risk offender order provisions of the bill and those relating to the dangerous criminal provisions. This amendment ensures that the Court of Criminal Appeal may conduct an appeal relating to a high-risk offenders order as a rehearing of the material before the original judge without the grounds of appeal unnecessarily narrowed to a question of law, a question of fact, or a question of mixed fact and law.

Further, at the request of the Chief Parliamentary Counsel, the Government also progressed minor technical amendments to clauses 5 and 6 of the bill to clarify that the application referred to in each of those clauses is the application made by the Director of Public Prosecutions under clause 4(1) of the bill for an offender to be declared a dangerous criminal.

Finally, the Legislative Council passed an amendment to clause 24 of the bill to include within the meaning of relevant agency the department primarily responsible in relation to the administration of the Mental Health Act 2013. I note, however, that this amendment did not fill and identify a gap in the departments covered by clause 24 as the Mental Health Act is administered by the department of Health except for Parts 2 and 3 of chapter 3 and Schedules 3, 4 and 5 which are administered by the Department of Justice.

The departments of Health and Justice were already covered by subparagraphs (a) and (b) of clause 24 so this amendment will have absolutely no practical effect on the implementation of the bill. However, for the sake of this bill passing, I will not oppose that amendment but I will send a very strong message to the other place: I am getting a little frustrated by unhelpful or unnecessary amendments in the other place. I believe that when they receive very good advice they should take it. It is not being provided as political advice. It is what is necessary to make sure the bill is interpreted correctly. I am getting a little tired of unnecessary amendments to bills for goodness knows what reason. However, I will not oppose it to enable the bill to pass today.

**Ms HADDAD** - I do not have a great deal more to contribute to this debate. It was a very worthwhile debate we had on the original legislation. I start my contribution by acknowledging that it was a very important law reform that happened and will insert a great deal more rigour and fairness around the way dangerous criminal declarations are made in Tasmania.

I want to touch quickly on the amendment to clause 24. In defence of our colleagues in the upper House, I believe they make amendments to legislation, as is their entitlement as a House of this parliament, and they do so in good faith. In reading through the debate that happened on that clause, which Labor supported in the upper House, the amendment was moved by the member for Nelson and inserts into a list of acts to be considered as part of the high-risk offender part of the bill: the Mental Health Act to sit alongside other acts that are to

be considered such as the Tasmanian Health Service Act, the Disability Services Act and the Police Service Act.

I acknowledge that it was the view of the Leader for Government Business in the upper House that it was an unnecessary amendment that did not add anything to the substance or the operation of the scheme. However, I believe a pretty salient point was made by the member for Hobart, Mr Valentine, when he noted that responsibilities can change under the administrative arrangements within government so it is not impossible that responsibility for a piece of legislation can move between departments. He cited an example when he was working in the public service that the Mental Health Act sat under the responsibility of the Community Services department.

I acknowledge that the section was not naming up departments, it was naming up pieces of legislation, therefore whichever department is responsible for that legislation would be included. I want to make note of the fact that I believe it was moved in the acknowledgment that mental ill health is of serious concern in Tasmania and particularly in the corrections system where instances of mental ill health are experienced in higher proportions than in the general population.

**Ms Archer** - By way of interjection, I have no doubt it was moved in good faith. I just send a strong message that if advice is given I would like them to actually take that good advice rather than think that they know better sometimes.

**Ms HADDAD** - I am sure that the esteemed members of the Legislative Council will hear that advice from the minister. I respect the role that those members play in our bicameral parliamentary system and believe they should have the right to amend legislation as they see fit. I might live to regret those words one day, who knows, but in this instance I can understand the good faith in which that amendment was moved.

The other amendments the minister has gone through were all supported by Labor colleagues in the upper House. As the minister has explained, many of them have been requested either by the Office of Parliamentary Counsel or by the Chief Justice.

My only closing question to the minister would be about time frames and when implementation might be expected to be done, and what that might mean for people who are currently under a dangerous criminal declaration order. Perhaps it was dealt with in the original debate, but for people who have in the past been subject to a dangerous criminal declaration order, will this new scheme of reviews and so on come into play for those offenders?

**Ms ARCHER** - The answer to that question is that the DPP needs to do a review within three years and that will apply to people who are already on dangerous criminal declaration orders and they will come under the new provisions. Section 9 deals with it in the original bill.

**Dr WOODRUFF** - In relation to the amendments we have before us, I have had a read of the proposed changes and we do not have any problems with them. I want to make an important point about the minister's comments in relation to the last one being an unnecessary amendment that she said does not add anything to the bill and is not required. That is pretty poor form because by the minister's own record, if it was up to her we would not have a voluntary assisted dying bill. An enormous number of amendments were produced here in relation to that debate that made changes to a bill which has come from the other place, so

when the shoe is on the other foot it seems the minister is more than happy to make changes that she thinks are required.

Members in the other place have made changes to this bill and we do not have any problems with what is being proposed. We respect their role and their right to be able to make changes and they were agreed to by the other place.

In relation to whether it is necessary for new clause A to follow clause 4 to be in the bill, it does not seem to be a disadvantage that the Supreme Court has the extra powers that this clause will enable to require that the DPP provide a copy of a report to the court and to make other requests as the Supreme Court sees fit in relation to better understanding for example, the examination of a person and the information about what is obviously a very unusual and particular circumstance. It seems entirely appropriate to have an abundance of caution in material being made available so that the parties that need to be informed understand all the facts pertinent to making a decision such as whether a person is a high-risk offender or a dangerous criminal. These things need to be provided and considered. We do not see any problem with that addition to the bill and we support the other changes.

**Ms ARCHER** - In closing, Mr Deputy Chair, it seems my comment urging the members in the other place to take on board that expert advice that is provided to this is just that. The point Dr Woodruff made was a total misinterpretation and reflection on a previous debate but I will not go there, other than to say I am not suggesting in any way shape or form that the other place should not make amendments.

I am simply observing that it would be good if they were necessary amendments based on advice they receive. The feedback I constantly get is that they do not always take the advice they receive at briefings. I would dearly love them to take that expert advice on board and respect the advice that is provided to them. Much time and effort is put into the advice and briefings that are given to them. If that advice is that an amendment is unnecessary and does not add anything to a bill, I would have thought it was pointless making such an amendment. That is simply my observation. It is not that they should not make amendments because clearly they are a House of review and that is what they are there for.

**Council amendments agreed to.**

**Reported the Committee had resolved to agree to the Council amendments.**

**Resolution agreed to.**

## **LAND (MISCELLANEOUS AMENDMENTS) BILL 2020 (No. 42)**

### **Second Reading**

[5.03 p.m.]

**Mr BARNETT** (Lyons - Minister for Primary Industries and Water) - Madam Speaker, I move -

That the bill now be read a second time.

The purpose of this bill is to improve and amend land-related legislation. This is creating clarity and consistency within legislation whilst improving, modernising and streamlining processes in preparation of the introduction of national electronic conveyancing in Tasmania.

Key legislation administered by the Recorder of Titles amended by this bill includes the Land Titles Act 1980 and Land Titles Regulations 2012. There are also minor consequential amendments to other land-related legislation where powers and functions of the Recorder of Titles apply. The Land Acquisition Act 1993, administered by the Valuer-General, is also amended by this bill.

The Land Titles Act 1980 has been in force for around 40 years. I am pleased to announce on behalf of the Government that the 60-day period for the duration of a priority notice under section 52 of the Land Titles Act will now be extended to 90 days. A priority notice provides crucial protection on a property title for the period between signing a contract to buy a new home, settlement day and until lodgement of documents with the Land Titles Office to give effect to the transfer of the title to the property.

The increased period of 90 days provides adequate time for all necessary steps to be perfected. It aligns with real-time requirements in a conveyancing transaction. The prescribed period will be removed from the Land Titles Act and included in the Land Titles Regulations and the commencement and expiration of a priority notice will be clearly defined.

This move has had support from the legal fraternity and I am pleased to announce that it will now be implemented by this bill.

The bill will also clarify the operation of section 63 of the Land Titles Act which deals with the process and effect of severing joint tenancies between landowners. If a joint tenant dies, the surviving joint tenant inherits the whole of the property, despite the contents of that person's will. A tenancy in common has the opposite effect to a joint tenancy and allows a tenant in common to deal with their share under their will.

Section 63 provides a way for a joint tenancy to be ended by the decision of one owner, which is an important right. The intended changes clarify the operation of section 63 where there are more than two joint tenants and reflects the common law position.

The bill will clarify that if an owner in a joint tenancy relationship of more than two owners severs their interest to become a tenant in common, their actions will now leave untouched the joint tenancy relationship between the remaining owners. Therefore the bill will address any unintended consequences by not ending the whole joint tenancy between the remaining owners. This upholds the rights of the remaining joint tenants to decide what they wish to do between themselves. This is a sensible protective measure so that their joint tenancy and estate planning decisions are not automatically changed by default by the actions of one owner.

Another major accomplishment of this bill will be refinement of the language throughout land-related legislation regarding the use and issue of paper certificates of title which introduces consistency. This will allow for future change and is another step towards continuous improvement in the digital transformation of a heavily paper-based process.

The bill will also modify terminology and remove confusion around the need to lodge dealings in duplicate with the Recorder of Titles. For a number of years the Recorder of Titles has not required documents to be lodged in duplicate. Despite this, the Land Titles Act and numerous other pieces of land-related legislation continue to refer to 'duplicate registered dealings' on the assumption that duplicates are either required or have been lodged.

The bill will generally improve the Land Titles Act and regulations and achieve greater clarity and consistency. The amendments also continue to uphold the integrity of documents lodged with the Recorder of Titles such as by requiring appropriate amendment and initialling of alterations and appropriate certification and translation of documents that are not in the English language.

The bill will improve the Land Acquisition Act 1993 which is administered by the Valuer-General. This act has been in force for over 27 years and sets out the process for acquisition of land in Tasmania by both Crown and non-Crown acquiring authorities.

Consistent time frames within that act will also be clarified, including allowing a mortgagee a longer period of six months to lodge a claim for compensation or notice of election instead of the currently prescribed 60-day period. This will ensure consistency with time frames that apply for other interested parties such as the property owner.

The Office of the Valuer-General is building an electronic process for land acquisition aligning with practices in other jurisdictions. I am pleased to announce that this bill will now allow electronic signatures on notices on behalf of the minister and allow electronic service of notices between the landowner and the acquiring authority. This will streamline the acquisition process significantly and achieve greater administrative efficiency.

I commend the bill to the House.

[5.11 p.m.]

**Dr BROAD** (Braddon) - Mr Deputy Speaker, Labor has a position of supporting this bill that is before us. However, it would be nice to get more than 10 minutes notice that a bill such as this is coming on for debate. That allows us time to prepare our arguments. I have looked through the bill in the past, but this was brought on - I think the first reading was November last year - so there has been some time in between.

**Mr Jaensch** - You have had plenty of time.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** - Order, Mr Jaensch.

**Dr BROAD** - With 15 minutes notice.

**Ms O'Connor** - Fifteen minutes maximum. I had to run around to find out what bill was being brought on.

**Dr BROAD** - That actually includes the time that the minister was speaking, I would add, so this is far from ideal. We have a Blue, we have a process so that we can scrutinise bills and we can prepare, so I am more than willing to talk on the bill. It is also difficult for staff -



the public servants who are in the room here. I hope that they had more than 15 minutes notice that this bill would be debated today.

We support the Land (Miscellaneous Amendments) Bill 2020. It does some sensible things. It brings the legislation into the modern world. As we speak I am using electronic means to go through the bill and I know that I use electronic signatures myself and people are becoming more used to electronic means of communication. Obviously things like the Land Titles Act need to be updated and it makes sense. Also the streamlining processes - getting rid of some things that were very sensible in the past, such as producing duplicates and so on. In modern times they are not as relevant as with electronic means you can duplicate things very quickly. No doubt back in the day we had to get certified photocopies and things like that but we are living in a much different world now.

I want to talk about some specific issues, or maybe I will come back to land acquisition because I have a bit to say about land acquisition. The changes in joint tenancy and tenancy in common are very sensible. The last thing that people want is for the unintended consequences of a joint tenancy breaking down, and breaking other joint tenancies. This whole area of joint tenancy and tenants in common is something that many people do not understand. In fact, when I bought property with my wife, we were asked to tick a box - do you want to be a joint tenant or tenant in common. That was the first time I had been asked that question and I had no idea what it meant. The understanding of joint tenancy and tenants in common is not that common, and that is something we need to work on. We know that ownership of properties can be quite complex, especially when you have families or inheritances that mean there are multiple owners of properties and multiple configurations of the way that they structure their business. This is quite sensible that if somebody breaks a joint tenancy, it does not break all the remaining joint tenancies. This is a very sensible amendment.

Changes in prescriptive language on the paper certificate of title, those sorts of things, for clarity and consistency, changing time periods provided throughout the Land Titles Act so that they are all expressed in days, again sensible. Broadening gender references to the statutory position of a recorder of titles - I am not sure if the minister talked about broadening gender references. I wonder why?

**Mr Jaensch** - I mentioned it in the second reading speech.

**Dr BROAD** - You did not go into much detail. Also getting rid of the duplicates for registered dealings, I have talked about, and removing the requirement to update the practice manual. These are all sensible changes and no doubt the department has gone through these acts with a fine-tooth comb.

The main outcome of this is modernising and improving of practices for lodgement of documents for administrative efficiency, consistency and integrity of the documents. That is very important and it flows through all these amendments. This is an administrative bill. It fixes a number of problems, it modernises a number of acts bringing them into the modern world. Therefore, we should support it.

I want to comment on this statement about streamlining the compulsory acquisition process through the issuing of electronic signatures and electronic service, both to the landowner and acquiring authority, including notices to treat and notices of acquisition. I have a very contemporary reference to this part of the bill, talking with a number of constituents who

are going to be impacted should the proposed design of Leith overpass go ahead. In this bill it talks about streamlining the compulsory acquisition process, but what we have playing out right now in Leith is a compulsory acquisition process which is anything but streamlined. It is anything but a proper process, to be honest.

There are some people who have found out that their property is going to be acquired for the Leith overpass. The way they found out was when half way through a conversation with the consultant who is dealing with the engineering of this design for the overpass, they were informed that their property was going to be acquired to build this overpass and that the consultant would hang up at any stage if things deteriorated in the conversation. That is the way they found out that the Government is proposing to acquire their land and their house of 35 years.

This Leith overpass has been coming for a number of years. There was a community consultation held at the Forth Town Hall. There were three designs. The design that I have seen, the latest design, is nothing like those designs. It puts up a great big loop that would take out at least two houses and acquire other vacant property. The people I have been dealing with found out via this phone call.

With the other property that is going to be acquired if this design goes ahead, it is pretty obvious that the road is right on top of where their house is going to go, but the Government still has not contacted them to let them know that their property could be acquired.

What is actually going on here? How is the process supposed to work? For somebody's property of 35 years, is this the way that they find out? Other people's property is going to be acquired if this design goes ahead and they still have not had any contact from the Government. Now we have comments that maybe this design is not the final design. So what is going on? This is no way to communicate with people whose land is about to be acquired.

I am positive that there has to be a design of the overpass that is based on public land, or if indeed it does need to acquire land it does not need to acquire houses; it might just need to acquire a tiny little corner of a property or a property that is vacant. There is a vacant property there that may need to be acquired, but to simply find out that your property is going to be acquired in the manner that these people have found out is very ordinary. That does not seem like much of a process at all. Maybe that is because the process needs to be streamlined, as this bill provides, but the Government needs to work on how people are communicated with.

Somebody has had a home of 35 years. They have put a lot of love and attention into it, and to find out in such a way is very ordinary. I urge the Government to rethink what they are doing there and come up with a design that does not involve acquiring two properties when there must be other options available. This is completely different from what was proposed. There were three designs and this current design looks nothing like it. The previous designs did not involve acquiring people's property.

Leith overpass is required because there are two very dangerous intersections. You have school buses crossing four lanes of traffic doing 110 kilometres an hour. There have been deaths there so there is no doubt that an overpass is required, in my mind. Other options such as slowing down traffic or putting in roundabouts are not a good option. I have also had to deal with communities in places like Heybridge where they are constantly stressed because of the

number of crashes there. They are constantly hearing crashes and having to deal with the consequences. Roundabouts on major highways are not a good idea.

I know there are times when governments need to acquire land but they have to have a better process than the one being rolled out in Leith. If this bill goes some way to making that a bit better then good, because it definitely needs to be better. These people are being treated with disrespect and others are just not being communicated with at all. That needs to change.

With those general comments, I believe the intent of this bill is administrative and it would be good for the department's operations and the Tasmanian public, and it brings a series of amended bills into the modern world. That is good but the Government needs to work on that process of acquisition so that people are communicated with. At least have face-to-face meetings and make sure people are properly informed. At least do that property community consultation so people have an idea of what is going on instead of getting halfway through a phone call and being told that their house of 35 years is about to be acquired.

[5.23 p.m.]

**Ms O'CONNOR** (Clark - Leader of the Greens) - Mr Deputy Speaker, in response to Dr Broad's parting comments, one of the problems with this Government is that they make no apologies. No matter how much at fault they are, no matter how much they ride roughshod over communities, they never make any apologies.

I believe that the House today is owed an apology by the Government and the Leader of Government Business because I had to run around to find out what was happening after the last amended bill came through and that is a sign, regrettably, of a government that is in disarray. If you cannot run this House in a manner that is respectful of the processes of this House as well as members who have to speak to bills, there is something wrong with the way you are running the House. It is disrespectful. I only hope more respect was shown for the advisers who were here supporting the minister than was shown to members.

It was literally five minutes before Mr Barnett got to his feet that I got a copy of the legislation. I had to run around to the government offices to find out what was going on. It is just contemptuous of this place to have members running around like headless chooks just to find out what the next order of business is because the Leader of Government Business - and I understand it is his birthday today so he might be a bit distracted - is not paying attention to what is happening in this House. If he is, he is not respectful to other members in this place.

Obviously I have not had a look at this bill for some time but we cannot identify any issues with this legislation. We recognise it is modernising provisions within a number of statutes and contemporising law, so it takes account of the fact that it is not always necessary to have a handwritten signature on an official document. I think that is necessary and I agree with Dr Broad. It was interesting not to hear the minister talk about the removal of gendered language in statutes.

I will also point out to the House in case anyone did not notice, but for the purposes of *Hansard*, I have never heard Mr Barnett deliver a second reading speech as if he was wading through treacle in order to drag out debate on this legislation.

We will support the legislation going through. However, I also want to talk about the lack of consultation around the Leith overpass, the disregard for that community and people

who have lived there, in some cases, for a number of decades. I want to read into the *Hansard* correspondence to the Premier from a Leith resident. I have not had time to ask this resident if I can name them so I will read this in and assure members of the House in doing so that these are well-known and well-respected members of the local community.

In the letter to the Premier dated 15 March 2021 these Leith residents say:

Dear Mr Gutwein

It has come to our attention that the Leith Overpass is again on the drawing board with GHD and in fact is well beyond the initial planning stage, without any public consultation.

This matter has been talked about for over 4 years following a fatality in the area. A very unfortunate death that was not the result of any problem with the existing entry and exit to Leith. There have been NO fatalities due to the poor access to Leith. Minor accidents have occurred due to poor visibility and the fast-moving traffic not allowing residents to leave Leith and merge onto the highway in time, nor cross dual lanes to enter. Motorists just need a little more time.

It would seem that a knee-jerk reaction by several people in the area (who have since backpedalled) has resulted in an 'over the top' proposal by the Department of State Growth and the Tasmanian Government which could cost the state somewhere between 10 and 20 million dollars! Who can justify this expense when it is not warranted and the impact on the residents of Leith is enormous.

In 2019 an interactive feedback site through State Growth clearly showed the public DO NOT want an overpass, nor is it necessary. Letters to Jeremy Rockliff, Roger Jaensch and various other state government ministers and local government people, several public consultations at Forth, and ongoing concern from residents and the general public are all being ignored. Correspondence and feedback would all be on file with State Growth, in fact we were advised that names were included on a database to keep us abreast of progress.

A temporary fix of flashing lights has been a complete waste of money as no-one is taking any notice whereas a permanent change of speed limit will prove successful, especially with policing from time to time.

GHD have recently contacted one resident at Leith advising them that their property WILL be forcibly acquired to enable this overpass to be constructed. Other properties are obviously going to be affected but to our knowledge other property owners had not been notified. There has been NO further public consultation by anyone. Due diligence is not occurring, in fact the whole thing is being treated like a secret and in a rude and 'Hitler style' manner. Concerned residents and members of the public were previously

promised that we would be included in all discussions *before* any future plans were made.

The proposed overpass *is not needed* and the cost cannot be justified. There have been other alternatives suggested to assist local residents safely enter and exit Leith, but our voices are not being heard.

The safest and cheapest option is to lower the speed limit to 90 kmph for a very short section of this highway to give residents a little extra time to merge onto the highway, or enter Leith into Short Street. This has been mentioned numerous times and the response is always that the Bass Highway cannot be slowed down. Ridiculous response, when there is evidence of slowing down to roundabouts everywhere around the state, also reduction in speed limits in literally hundreds of spots in Tasmania. This is an absurd response as it would only add approximately one minute (yes one minute) to a motorist's journey. The Government may have 'promised' to spend this money on an overpass at Leith, but the questions remains - why?

I think we know why and it has a lot to do with pump-priming the northern electorates in the lead up to a state election. We have seen under this Government massive over-engineering and over-construction of road works. You only have to drive along the Perth bypass, which is like something from Berlin where vast sums of public money have gone into road works that are bigger than Ben Hur and dramatically over-designed.

That sounds like exactly what is happening at Leith. It is about pump-priming. It is about voters being able to see people in high-vis vests and rolling that money out the door before the next state election. It is regrettable that people's voices in communities are not being heard. They are being made promises about engagement or consultation that are being dashed. How awful for a long-term resident of Leith to find out from a consultant to the Government, not from State Growth but from GHD, that their home will be compulsorily acquired.

It is a bit like the compulsory acquisitions that have been flagged for the transmission line in the north-west where the company that is behind those works is talking to locals about the need for compulsory acquisition of sections of their property for a transmission line. It is disrespectful to communities and it is disrespectful to property owners because once a compulsory acquisition notice is issued there is nothing a landowner can do about that. More respect upfront is called for.

There are amendments to the Land Titles Act that make it easier for a person who is in a joint tenancy, should the relationship or circumstances change, to no longer be in that joint tenancy. That sounds like a positive step. Again, we are seeing in so many actions taken by this Government there is much more emphasis on the propertied class than there is on people who do not own their own home; they cannot save the deposit to purchase their own home. I heard Mr Jaensch, the Housing minister, when Mr Gutwein was talking about housing say that the solution to soaring rents is to build more supply.

**Mr Jaensch** - The solution to under-supply is to have more supply.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - Of course the solution is to have more homes. I understand that, but it is not a solution to soaring rents. There are 54 000 residential tenancies in Tasmania and on

1 February - and you would know this - a significant percentage of those tenants received notice of a rent increase. We have heard stories of rent increases of up to \$150 per week. Rents in Tasmania are soaring. We need more affordable energy-efficient homes but that is cold comfort to families now who are staring down the face of homelessness and eviction, particularly once the JobSeeker and JobKeeper supplements are withdrawn on 31 March.

If Mr Jaensch thinks that a promise to build more supply, particularly given his track record and this Government's track record on building new homes, is going to provide any comfort to tenants, he is delusional.

We have introduced an amendment bill to this place which is tried and tested policy. An amendment bill to the Residential Tenancy Act which reflects exactly the policy which is now in place in the Australian Capital Territory that was signed up to by a Labor-Greens government. It is supported by Labor in the ACT but the Greens have found out third-hand that Labor has made a decision not to support controls on rents. They did not have the courage to walk outside and say that. We found out through a back channel.

I am not going to put up with hand-wringing tomorrow from Labor on housing when they know that if they back this amendment bill we can provide almost immediate relief to the tenants of Tasmania who are staring down the barrel of homelessness and eviction right now, who are living in fear in their properties. They do not know how they are going to pay the power bill, they do not know how they are going to pay for their groceries because their rents are going through the roof. The data tells us that Hobart is the least-affordable capital in the country for rentals.

The Greens give this House an opportunity to do what we were elected to do, which is to make life better for the Tasmanian people and you have these people over here - Labor - squibbing on it. There are 54 000 residential tenancies in Tasmania; 54 000 people who do not benefit from amendments to the Land Titles Act because they are renting, because they cannot afford their own home. It is easy for Mr Jaensch and other people in this place to say they will just build more houses, because every person in this place, as far as I know, is not paying rent, we are paying a mortgage.

We were elected to make life better for the people of Tasmania. That is our core focus; well, it should be. We have offered this House an opportunity to support modest reform that acknowledges that now under the Residential Tenancy Act if a tenant has an increase that is unaffordable they really have no rights, they have nowhere to go. We saw last week a Magistrate Court decision that confirms that.

All we are offering this House is an opportunity to make sure that our residential tenancy laws are robust and provide some protection for tenants from excessive rent increases. Labor, which pretends to care about people, is not, as we understand it, going to support this legislation, which is supported by their colleagues in the ACT. It is good policy and we will be reminding Tasmanians all the way to the next election, no matter when that is, of Labor's perfidy, of their hand-wringing, of how they run for cover if they are given an opportunity to do the right thing if it comes from the Greens. It is shameful. We would have the numbers in this place if Labor did the right thing.

The Greens, of course, want to make life better for tenants. If Ms Ogilvie could see the light and we know that Sue Hickey has long fought for tenants' rights. We could do this in this

minority parliament. Labor members should be ashamed and when, as is expected, they vote against the amendment bill tomorrow, they want to have a long, hard think about how they are going to explain that to their constituents who live in rental homes, because this parliament could do it.

On behalf of the Greens, I have written twice to Ms White encouraging her to at least cooperate with us and other members in this place in order to improve the lives of Tasmanian tenants - twice and no answer. We are used to the contempt for the Greens, but the contempt that has been shown for Tasmania's 54 000 residential tenants, that is the next level.

We will be supporting the bill.

[5.41 p.m.]

**Mr TUCKER** (Lyons) - Mr Deputy Speaker, before I start talking about this bill, I want to comment on a few of Ms O'Connor's remarks about road works. I want to say straight-up that some of us are forward thinking and do not live in the past, we need the roads for the future. It is interesting because I do live north and I have only heard positive comments about the Perth bypass. May I suggest to Ms O'Connor that she might want to get out of Hobart and talk to the people in the north.

The material used on that road was quarried there alongside that road. It was a hill that was made into a dam. It took all those trucks off the road for building that section. It also built a dam for irrigation purposes, so there were many benefits that came from the Perth bypass. Anyone who speaks ill of that bypass I find very disheartening because it was one of the most positive things that I have seen in this state for a long time.

The intention of the Land (Miscellaneous) Amendments Bill 2020 is to improve existing land-related legislation. The amendments are generally considered to be minor and non-contentious. The amendments are principally to the Land Titles Act 1980 and the Land Titles Regulations 2012, both of which are administered by the Recorder of Titles. Consistent with these amendments are minor amendments that are also proposed to be made to other legislation which relate to the powers and the functions of the Recorder of Titles.

These reflect the amendments to be made to the Land Titles Act 1980 including allowing for the possibility of paperless certificates of title in the future, modifying references to duplicate registered dealings, and broadening gender references to the statutory position of the Recorder of Titles. The Valuer-General has proposed amendments to the Land Acquisition Act 1993 to create consistency of timeframes within the act and to permit electronic signature and service of notices.

A list of the legislation to be amended by the bill is set forth below: legislation administered by the Recorder of Titles, conveyancing, the law and Law of Property Act 1884; Conveyancing and Law of Property Building Title Plans Regulations 2012; the Land Titles Act 1980; and the Land Titles Regulations 2012. Legislation administered by other authorities: the Abandoned Land Act 1973; Associations Incorporations Act 1964; the Home Act 1935; the Land Acquisitions Act 1993; the Local Government Building and Miscellaneous Provisions Act 1993; the Local Government Highways Act 1962; Neighbourhood Disputes about Plants Act 2017; War Service Land Settlement Act 1950; and the Wellington Park Act 1993.

Consultation was undertaken by the Land Titles Office with other arms of government responsible for administration of legislation to be amended by the proposed bill. No negative comments were received in response to the proposed amendments. The Office of the Valuer-General published an issues paper on DPIPWE's website on the 16 June 2020 inviting any comments on proposed changes to the Land Acquisition Act 1993. The issues paper was also distributed to key stakeholders within Tasmania covering all organisations and groups that have had an interest or a role in the land acquisition process. This includes 29 councils, TasWater, Aurora Energy, Tasmanian Irrigation and government departments including the Department of State Growth. The consensus was that the amendments to the act to enable electronic signature and service of documents would streamline the process significantly. I also note that this Government is supportive of a land titles office more generally.

The COVID-19 pandemic has been one of the largest shocks to our precious way of life, our economy and our community. Thanks to our strong economy and strong balance sheet, the Government has been able to provide nation-leading support and stimulus measures to Tasmanians. As we now rebuild, we know that the best way to get our budget back on track and create jobs is to bolster confidence and grow the economy.

To help Tasmanians get on with building job-creating houses and infrastructure, the Government will provide additional funding to both the Land Titles Office and the Tasmanian Parks and Wildlife Service's Property Services, previously known as Crown Land Services, in this year's budget. These funds, an additional \$1.2 million over four years for the Land Titles Office and an additional \$2.2 million over two years for Property Services, will help resource these areas to help ensure timely decision-making.

Both the Land Titles Office and Property Services receive thousands of applications or lodgements annually regarding titles and the use of Crown land respectively. Now, more than ever, Tasmanians want government services to be more responsive, more accessible and more connected, and so they should be. The additional funding the Government is providing will mean faster processing of property transaction matters on Crown land and more timely release of titles to the market. The commitment will also enable the Land Titles Office to commence work towards transitioning from paper-based to electronic conveyancing, saving both time and effort. It will also enable the Parks and Wildlife Property Services unit to progress information technology improvements to its systems to ensure that the needs of Tasmanians are best met. On top of this support the Government will also provide an additional \$2.4 million over four years to build resourcing in regulatory and permitted processes, helping to ensure approvals are provided within statutory time frames.

Our support will help unleash investment and job-creating activity in Tasmania by cutting red tape, reducing hold-ups and letting Tasmanians focus on what they do best. These commitments respond directly to a priority recommendation of PESRAC and will maintain and grow economic momentum and business confidence.

The Government is rolling up its sleeves and getting on with the job. Our plan to rebuild Tasmania and recover from the COVID pandemic is working. In contrast, Labor has admitted it has no plan at all - typical. Labor is offering Tasmanians absolutely nothing except relentless negativity and desperate gotcha moments or Google jokes. In contrast, the Government's plan to rebuild Tasmania is working. We are getting on with the job of simplifying the planning and development approval process to help Tasmanians invest, build houses and support jobs



and confidence in our community. We have delivered for Tasmania before and we will do it again.

[5.49 p.m.]

**Mr BARNETT** (Lyons - Minister for Primary Industries and Water) - Mr Deputy Speaker, I thank all members for their contributions to this bill and note in particular the previous member and my colleague, friend and member for Lyons, John Tucker, and his strong advocacy for a strong economy creating more jobs, streamlining the process and cutting the red tape and I commend him for that. It is consistent with the Government's view with respect to getting things done and practical support. I know he is a person who wants to deliver for his local community and deliver practical support to help get things done and he does that, he is that sort of person. John Tucker delivers.

I will pick up the last point that the member made about streamlining the process and moving to a paperless title system here in Tasmania. Fortunately, or unfortunately, over past governments Tasmania is towards the back end of delivering a streamlined paperless process. That is why I am pleased and proud that as a government we could support improving in that area. That is why we provided funding in the recent Budget initiatives to support building job-creating houses and infrastructure and provided additional funding to both the Land Titles Office and Parks and Wildlife's Property Services, that was previously known as Crown Land Services, in this year's Budget. That was \$1.2 million over four years for the Land Titles Office and \$2.2 million over two years for Property Services and it will help provide those resources to deliver and ensure a timely decision-making process.

We are moving to an electronic paperless process going forward and I hope it comes sooner rather than later. I have talked with my department and identified it as a priority initiative. I meet from time to time with my fellow relevant ministers online. We have had quite a few Zoom meetings to discuss moving to electronic conveyancing which would save both time and money for Tasmanian businesses and individuals alike. We are moving in that direction. I have provided that instruction to my department to do that, and there is funding support there. At the end of the day we want to ensure that those approvals go through, they meet the relevant statutory time frames and we cut the red tape, reduce the hold-ups and we get things done.

This will help build houses and developments, whether they are residential or commercial developments. We are backing it in and the member for Lyons, John Tucker, has referred to that and I say thank you for that. It is one of the recommendations of PESRAC in terms of streamlining the process and getting things done.

**Ms O'Connor** - They say it's not about cutting red tape - those exact words.

**Mr BARNETT** - It will help grow the economy, it will help grow the momentum and build business confidence. We heard from the Premier earlier today in question time about our confidence being amongst the highest in the nation. We heard about our growing economy and our low unemployment rate. Why don't you want to back in this policy position of our Government? We have a plan to secure Tasmania's future and we are delivering on the plan. This is a small part of that but it is an important part to streamline the process, make it easier, cut the red tape and get on with the job.

I commend and thank the member for Braddon, Dr Broad, for his contribution in support of the bill. I also acknowledge and thank the Leader of the Greens for her support for the bill. I would like to reflect on a number of remarks that were made, first, by Dr Broad and then by Ms O'Connor. There is a reference to the Leith overpass. I want to make it very clear because I know the Minister for Infrastructure and Transport would also want to make it very clear that in that regard the Department of State Growth is planning to construct the road overpass at Leith on the Bass Highway in response to community concerns about safety. Surely safety is a top priority. The overpass will improve safety. It will eliminate the need for vehicles to turn right across the Bass Highway from Short Street and Braddons Lookout Road while maintaining the connection between communities on both sides of the highway. That is the advice I have received. Let us make it very clear, the advice is that the department has developed the design following previous community consultation and will release this design for public display in coming weeks.

**Dr Broad** - Well that is news -

**Mr BARNETT** - I am responding to Dr Broad, through you, Mr Deputy Speaker, of course, and this is important information.

Ahead of this, I am advised the department has contacted a number of landowners whose properties have been identified for either full or partial acquisition, and is following up with face-to-face meetings, I understand, this week. A design-and-construct tender will deliver a final detailed design and is expected to advertised mid-2021 with construction expected to start in early 2022. That is the advice I have received.

Acquisitions are managed by the Office of the Valuer-General and all affected landowners will be compensated in line with the process. We know the process; it is important. The Government is committed to improving that Bass Highway junction at Leith. There have been 20 crashes over the last 10 years, which is of concern to the local community. Safety is our priority. Surely, safety has to be our priority as a government and that is what we are doing.

It is part of the COVID-19 response - the economic support package - we have heard a lot about that. The Premier and Treasurer has made it clear that we want to help rebuild our economy, and we are doing that. We have a plan to secure Tasmania's future and that \$5 billion infrastructure package over the forward Estimates will underpin 25 000 jobs. We are proud of it, we are backing it in, and we thank the Premier for his leadership to keep people safe, rebuild our economy and getting on with the job.

That is what is being delivered. That economic support package will enable the construction of the Leith overpass. I hope that responds to Dr Broad's queries, concerns and allegations about the Leith overpass.

I am also advised that in response to the community feedback on the original overpass design, the Department of State Growth has conducted further planning work and design options development including incorporating slip-lanes into the design to reduce traffic impacts on Leith - although this increases the property acquisitions from two to four - and options analysis for improving safety at Leith. There is a fair bit of work going on with respect to safety. The department has consulted on these further design options with key transport industry groups and has received feedback from stakeholders on results of the additional planning work.

I would also like to respond to Ms O'Connor and indicate that Roger Jaensch is doing a great job as Minister for Housing and is delivering, backed in by our Government. Frankly, the houses are being built, more than ever before. He has been leading big-time. The developments are clearly on the public record. There has never been more spent by a government in Tasmania on getting those houses built and the number built. That is a top priority. We know there is an issue with supply and I back-in minister Jaensch, because a number of criticisms have been made and I object to those criticisms -

**Ms O'Connor** - I am telling the truth, Mr Barnett, about what is happening in the community.

**Mr BARNETT** - I appreciate your contribution. I am responding to that remark to support Mr Jaensch because I know he is working assiduously and delivering big-time regarding the number of homes being built, thanks to this Gutwein Liberal Government.

To finish off, there was a reference to the priority notices. I am a lawyer and as a very young lawyer acted in a range of conveyancing activities, acting on behalf of clients. The priority notice is very important. This is a key ingredient in the success of this bill, increasing that from 60 days to 90 days. That has been supported by the legal fraternity. That will provide further and better protections for our clients, for Tasmanians, residential, business, commercial customers and clients. They can get the job done.

This bill will provide further and better protections. It will streamline the process, providing further improvements by reducing red tape. I am pleased for the Labor Party support and the Greens support for this bill.

**Debate adjourned.**

## **ADJOURNMENT**

### **National Eucalypt Day**

[6.01 p.m.]

**Ms O'CONNOR** (Clark - Leader of the Greens) - Mr Deputy Speaker, today is National Eucalypt Day. It is a day that we celebrate this iconic marvellous tree. We find them in every landscape at pretty much every altitude in the country. For people who have travelled to other parts of the world we know that this is now an international tree. If you go to Spain or Portugal you will see eucalypts everywhere. Along the coast of California, you will see the mighty eucalypt trees, blue gums. This is a plant, our iconic eucalypt, which is colonising the world.

Each year, on 23 March, National Eucalypt Day aims to raise awareness of eucalypts and celebrate the important place that they hold in the hearts and lives of Australians. As we know these wonderful trees are habitat, they are carbon stores, they make great furniture and wood products. Many Tasmanians and Australians are waking up to the fact that current native forest logging is unjustifiable. We now have pictures of Forestry Tasmania felling what we believe are giant trees. These trees are in the Florentine Valley. You can see that that is a massive and old tree. There is another one. These trees would have been around since before European colonisation. These are incredible living organisms. Yet we live in a state where it is apparently perfectly acceptable to fell these centuries-old trees and send most of what comes

from what was once a miraculous living thing and home to myriad species off to the woodchipper.

Forestry Tasmania has a giant trees protection policy, but the Greens argue that policy is not being adhered to. The parameters around what you define as a giant tree are far too loose. Forestry Tasmania says it will:

- Protect currently known Giant Trees;
- Periodically remeasure known Giant Trees;
- Undertake surveys to identify any Giant Trees within coupes in the Three Year Plan ... ;
- Maintain a register of all Giant Trees recorded in Tasmania; and
- Promote with other forest managers a statewide tourism strategy for Giant Tree appreciation on all tenures and participate in its implementation.

In Estimates last year I had questions for the Minister for Resources about another very large eucalypt that had been felled as part of a logging operation. We get the same bland reassurances from the minister that all is well and there is nothing to worry about, that giant trees are being protected. They are not. I went into a logged coupe in the Denison Valley out the back of Geeveston last November. There was a massive stump there. A massive old tree that had been felled. I saw it with my own eyes.

One of the things that came through in the PESRAC Report once 3500 people were consulted is a concern that while we may have on paper a clean, green brand, a brand that is underpinned by nature and wilderness, that when you look at the facts of the matter that brand does not stand up. That is a highly regrettable perception on the part of 3500 people. Sadly, it is also true.

We count on this brand to underpin our agriculture and our visitor economy yet at the same time we are clear-felling and burning native forest. You have a rogue government business that is torching those forests, like they did six days after our summer's end this year and then clearly walked away and let that fire, which was supposed to be contained within a 25 hectare logged coupe, run. When I checked a few days ago, they were still water-bombing that fire.

These are the practices that make the claims of the Government about our brand not stand up to scrutiny. You cannot have industrial-scale native forest logging of our incredible eucalypt forests at the pace we have now and continue to convince Tasmanians and visitors that we are committed to a clean, green brand.

We should have much more respect for the *Eucalyptus regnans*. Its name comes from the Greek 'Eu' with 'kalypto' which refers to the cap which covers the developing flowers. This is the tallest flowering plant in the world. It is the sign of Aboriginal burning practices, because under these forest giants are rainforests that are younger than the *regnans*. If you read Bill Gammage's book, *The Biggest Estate on Earth*, he will tell you on historical texts that is as a result of burning practices of the past.

Within our landscape are some of the most miraculous life forms you will see anywhere on earth and the *Eucalyptus regnans* is a tree we should all be proud of. It is a tree we should be all working to protect. Those giant trees deserve much more respect than they are getting from this Government and Forestry Tasmania.

**Time expired.**

### **Derwent River - Pollution International Puppy Day**

[6.08 p.m.]

**Ms STANDEN** (Franklin) - Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to raise a couple of matters.

The first is on behalf of a constituent, Chris Monahan, who is concerned about Derwent River pollution. He is a long-term resident and has lived all of his life, living and boating in a section of the Derwent River. His property fence is close to the high-water mark of the Derwent River when it is in flood. As has happened on several occasions over the past 15 years, Mr Monahan has observed during heavy rainfall events raw sewage overflows from the sewer manhole at Main Road, Claremont, opposite Hilton Road. It flows into the Derwent River for several hours. It could be observed for a 48-hour period as a kilometre-long stream of raw sewage between Austins Ferry and Old Beach.

He says this is a repeating event that may happen again if the rain forecast for Tasmania in the next few days eventuates. Mr Monahan's question, which he has raised in emails to the minister for the Environment and the minister for Water on 18 February, is when will this flaw be rectified? When will TasWater's sewer infrastructure be investigated and scheduled for upgrade?

He raised this issue first on 1 February after the cancellation of events at the Hobart Regatta following significant rainfall and river pollution at that time. He received a call from TasWater, however, only to comment that they were aware of the problem but it is too expensive to resolve.

Are we really at this situation where significant rainfall events will continue to pollute our waterways? I campaigned significantly in 2019 and 2020 for improvements to Derwent River beach quality in the southern part of my electorate in Kingston and Blackmans Bay Beach. I am pleased to advise that the DEP regular beach-watch results are showing good results now in that part of the Derwent, so I urge the ministers to look at this as a matter of urgency.

I do not believe that constituents necessarily understand the serious public health implications of recreating on the beach and swimming in close proximity to stormwater outflows. It is unclear to me, as a person who grew up on the north-west coast where one could at that time go into the water at any time it seemed, why one has to avoid these outflow areas and for how long and what sort of proximity.

In the minutes remaining I want to raise another issue and that is that it is International Puppy Day.

**Mr O'Byrne** - Hear, hear.

**Ms STANDEN** - I did not know it was a thing, to be honest, until I looked it up and I want to say, 'here is to puppy paws and to ears and toetails', because they smell, look and feel fantastic. Here is to snuggles and chasing rabbits while sleeping because that is about the cutest thing you will ever see. To all the pet puppies, the adopted puppies and the waiting-to-be-adopted puppies, Happy International Puppy Day.

To the puppies who will become service dogs, keeping their owners or their communities calm, safe and happy, for all the love, the laughter, the exacerbation, sleepless nights and chewed shoes that they bring us, Happy International Puppy Day.

In our household we have two grown-up puppies now. I will update the House that Grady, the therapy assistance dog, has now started work at Kites Therapy Centre in Bellerive. He goes off to work on average a couple of days a week and is providing amazing service to kids with disability through that service. I hope that continues for many years to come. Happy International Puppy Day.

### **Workplace Protection Legislation**

[6.12 p.m.]

**Mr TUCKER** (Lyons) - Mr Deputy Speaker, we have a duty of care to ensure hardworking Tasmanians are safe in their workplace. Let us be quite clear: this is not about making protests illegal; this is about making protests on worksites, which deliberately disrupt workers and put lives at risk, illegal. It is about doing our bit for working Tasmanians and protecting them in their workplace.

It is disappointing that Labor and the Greens do not support this legislation. It is disingenuous for Shane Broad to stand up in this place and say that he supports working Tasmanians and that he condemns radical protesters in workplaces, if he will not support the very laws proposed to protect them. All words and no action, Dr Broad - or as minister Barnett has said, all hat and no cattle. Farmers and forestry workers see straight through you and this is just not good enough.

This has come as no surprise. Labor constantly changes its mind and is recklessly indecisive. When they were in government with the Greens they decimated Tasmania's forestry industry. They sold softwood plantations. They sold the Triabunna Woodchip Mill, handing Gunns \$23 million of taxpayer money which eventually wound up with the mill's closure. It was a sorry state of affairs and the hallmark of Labor's reckless decision-making.

Under Labor and the Greens, the Tasmanian mining industry had one of the world's highest uncertainty rankings because of the threat of more land lockups and two out of every three jobs were lost in the forestry industry. Under Labor and the Greens more than 4300 hardworking Tasmanian forestry workers lost their jobs. Confidence in the industry was destroyed and public production forest was cut in half. Shane Broad and Labor would have you believe they stand by our industries but their actions - both when they were in government and now - demonstrate they do not. If they did, they would do what workers and peak industry groups are asking for and support our workplace protection laws.

We have emerged from the greatest health and economic challenge in more than a generation with a strong economy, with opportunity, and I am pleased to say that the Gutwein Liberal Government has a plan to secure Tasmania's future. We also know, now more than ever, that every job counts and no one deserves to feel intimidated or threatened in their workplace or community. This Government respects the right of every Tasmanian to express their views and protest lawfully, and we are also committed to protecting every Tasmanian's right to work. That is why this Government introduced legislation for a workplace protection bill which complements legislation already passed in the federal parliament which will deliver Tasmanian businesses, workers and their families protection against intentional trespass designed to deliberately impede business activity. Too often Tasmanians are being threatened and harassed for simply going to work. It is causing hard-working Tasmanians distress. It is causing their families distress and they deserve better and they deserve our help.

We urge Labor to break ranks with the Greens and back Tasmanian workers, to do more than simply talk. As I said in this place last week, I have heard firsthand from people in the industry that they receive anonymous phone calls from radical protesters bullying them, intimidating them, and even threatening their lives. The distress is real and now is the time to ensure that we have the right legislation in place so that people can peacefully protest but not deliberately trespass and prevent people from going about their job. The forestry industry, the mining industry and our hard-working farmers are all rightly concerned about the safety of their employees.

We know the Greens are wedded to the trespassers but does Labor have what it takes to consciously uncouple from the Greens? Labor's Shane Broad says he supports industry. He shares Facebook posts saying he supports the industry. Well, when it truly matters, when he needs to vote on laws that make a difference, will he break ranks with his Labor/Green colleagues and act on his words? Labor says workers deserve to be safe, yet they shun proposed laws that offer the protection.

In stark contrast, the Gutwein Liberal Government does not shy away from making the decisions that need to be made in the best interests of Tasmanians. No, we stand shoulder-to-shoulder with them. These are decisions that improve our economy. These are decisions that create jobs and keep Tasmanians safe, that protect our way of life. We make no apology for standing by our hard-working businesses and hard-working Tasmanians in ensuring they go about their job feeling safe and feeling secure. We call on Labor to support our Workplace Protection bill and do their bit to support working Tasmanians.

### **Wheels to Waves Initiative**

[6.18 p.m.]

**Mr O'BYRNE** (Franklin) - Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise tonight to acknowledge the work of a number of people in our community. It was my absolute pleasure on the weekend to attend the Wheels to Waves initiative launch which celebrated a new fleet of beach wheelchairs that are going to be located around Tasmania. Wheels to Waves is an initiative and the brainchild of a group of Tasmanian Leaders Program graduates who are passionate about promoting inclusivity and this is a learning circle within the annual cohort who go through the Leaders Program. They break into groups and as a group they make a decision on a worthy project which they will pursue to make a difference in our community.

With the support of Surf Life Saving Tasmania and a number of generous project sponsors and supporters, the Wheels to Waves project aims to provide people with disability the opportunity to access the beach and ocean with dignity, promoting inclusivity and equality through the network of custom-made, therapeutic beach-access wheelchairs, managed by Surf Life Saving Tasmania and hosted by clubs across the state. The event was to celebrate the efforts of this initiative so far to date and bring together the project team, recognise its generous sponsors and supporters, and most importantly Tasmanian residents from across the state and their families who may have already or will plan to use one of the four beach access wheelchairs hosted by surf lifesaving clubs in Kingston Beach, Port Sorell, Ulverstone and the popular tourist spot of Bicheno. It will be available to the public 365 days of the year and many of the clubs are also exploring the opportunity to build infrastructure that will enable 24/7 accessibility to these life-changing pieces of equipment.

There were a number of speeches by the team and the various sponsors on the day but the speech that stole everyone's heart was one given by young Izzy, a 17-year-old young woman with cerebral palsy who spoke about the liberating moment of her first time in the wheelchair and her ability to access the beach, which she loves, and access the water in a very safe way. She spoke about the feeling of having sand under her feet and being able to safely enter the water with a friend or family member and just enjoy the beach, something that so many Australians do as a past time, take for granted and love to do on warm days and even on cold days, particularly here in Tasmania.

The way Izzy spoke was beautiful and it meant so much not only to her but her family as well. It was a fantastic event and it is a fantastic initiative. I acknowledge the work of the Learning Circle of the Tasmanian Leaders Program. There was funding through the Tasmanian Community Fund, the Rotary Club of Central Launceston, Just Like Jack, which is a tremendous not-for-profit here in Tasmania, the National Australia Bank and also the launch event supporters in Aurora Energy.

I congratulate Surf Lifesaving Tasmania and all those involved with what was an uplifting moment and an inspirational step forward to allow people to enjoy something that we take for granted.

### **Michael Chilvers - Tribute**

[6.22 p.m.]

**Mr BARNETT** (Lyons - Minister for Primary Industries and Water) - Mr Deputy Speaker, as Minister for Primary Industries and Water it is my solemn duty and responsibility and indeed honour to pay tribute to the late Michael Chilvers, who passed away last week. The agricultural community has been shocked and upset and are now grieving and mourning the loss of Michael Chilvers, beloved husband and father of two. I extend my deepest condolences to the Chilvers family, friends and colleagues following Michael's passing in a tragic accident at Mount Geryon in the Cradle Mountain Lake St Clair National Park last Friday.

Michael was a strong supporter of Tasmania's agricultural industry, running a successful mixed farming operation in the Northern Midlands near Nile. He was a Nuffield Scholar and advocate for Tasmanian agriculture, a valued board member and chair. He was an innovator and has been described as a ripper bloke. These are just some of the ways Michael has been described in the past few days.



He was a strong advocate for irrigation development and an active member of the Tasmanian Irrigation Board. He was near the end of his second term, so had served nearly six years. He was very competent and capable. He was a leader. Having spoken to the chair of Tasmanian Irrigation, Sam Hogg, just over the weekend I know how much she admired Michael Chilvers and was grateful for his contribution on the board and how positive and constructive he was. She, like me, could see his leadership skills and talents coming through.

He was a strong advocate for farmers, agriculture, irrigators and landholders alike. He had a strong emphasis on the importance of having a strategic direction for Tasmania and Tasmanian Irrigation. I acknowledge that specifically as a key instrument of growing agriculture in Tasmania through water as liquid gold and how important that is to agriculture in Tasmania and thank him for his contribution.

Last August I spent time with Michael on his farm and his property at Nile. We spent time touring his farm and looking at some of his water irrigation infrastructure, looking at how it could be done better with the connections with the transmission system with TasNetworks, and it was great to be able to spend time with Michael in his ute and learning more about his success on the farm and how he did it and he did it so well.

From my point of view, I got to know him not that well but well enough to know that he was innovative, capable, competent and very personable. He was clearly smart and insightful but he was really personable and friendly. That was clear to me and I know to many others I have talked to since the weekend, and with the feedback that I have had. I know many others will be very saddened by the tragedy that is the loss of Michael Chilvers.

He was constantly looking for ways of improving and expanding his business and the business of others. He was the Tasmanian chair of the Australia China Business Council for some time. In 2012 he was awarded the Nuffield farming scholarship before being appointed to the board of Nuffield Australia. Nuffield Australia described him as 'the most kind, innovative, smiling and generous of scholars - a true legend.'

Tasmanian Farmers and Graziers Association president Marcus McShane said Michael was a valued member. He described Michael as innovative and forward-thinking and said:

His contribution to agriculture in Tasmania was well regarded and Mike was a good mate to many.

Michael was highly respected and highly regarded for being an innovative and progressive farmer, for advocating for Tasmanian agriculture and, perhaps most importantly, as was described earlier, for being 'a good bloke.'

I pass on my heartfelt condolences to Mike's wife, Fiona and his children, Charlotte and Felix, and his broader family and his many friends in agriculture and in the community. He will be missed. My thoughts and prayers are with him, his family and his friends.

## **Deloraine and Districts Community Bank**

[6.27 p.m.]

**Ms WHITE** (Lyons - Leader of the Opposition) - Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise tonight to recognise the work of the Deloraine and Districts Community Bank, which has been operational in the Meander Valley area for 15 years. On Saturday night a celebration was held to commemorate the fact they have put \$2 million back into that community over that time as a community bank.

I recognise the work of Laura Richardson, the chair of Meander Valley Financial Services, all the board members both current and past, and also the work of Simon Rootes, the branch manager of the community bank branch at Deloraine and districts, as well as the former managers of the branch there including Darren Rumble.

It was such a celebration of community on Saturday night. It was terrific to see all the sporting community clubs that have benefited from the community bank's investment in that region come together to look at what they have achieved in that community. The event was held at the Deloraine netball courts which was a facility that received a financial contribution from the Bendigo Bank community bank branch and, together with government and council, that facility was realised and it provides an excellent playing surface for netball players in the Deloraine area.

One of the extraordinary things the Deloraine community bank branch has been able to do is inspire other communities to organise and establish their own community bank branches. I have seen that occur across Tasmania and the dividends and the contributions that go back into communities, into clubs and into different not-for-profit organisations has truly made a remarkable difference to the lives and wellbeing of people right across our state.

It is not usual to praise a bank but in this instance the community bank model that Bendigo has championed has proven to be such a success. It is in large part because of the work of the community members who sit on the board and the workers who operate out of that office in Deloraine that it has been such a remarkable success. Reaching a milestone of \$2 million returned to the community in just 15 years was certainly worth celebrating. I congratulate everybody who was involved.

I wish the Boyer Mill a happy 80th birthday. They had a celebration on the weekend to commemorate 80 years of operation in the Derwent Valley. They held a family day where they invited the workers of that mill, both past and present, and their families to come together on site to enjoy tours, if they had not had the opportunity to look at that facility for some time and to celebrate the remarkable achievements that have occurred on that site from 80 years to today.

It employs hundreds of people. In its heyday it employed thousands of people in the valley. There are generations of people who have worked at the Boyer Mill and it was terrific to meet some of them. In particular, I recognise Woody Brown who has served at the Boyer Mill for 52 years as a worker, starting as an apprentice boiler maker-welder in the workshop. He has worked in a number of different roles at the Boyer Mill site and has ended back in that same workshop 52 years later.

I commend the general manager, Patrick Dooley, and his leadership team at Boyer Mill, including Eric Luck, the Norske Skog regional president. He was also at the event on Sunday

and spoke about the important role that the Boyer Mill plays in Australia as a paper manufacturer, providing newsprint paper as well as a lightweight-coated paper for the Australian domestic market.

I also recognise the excellent speech made by the AMWU site delegate, Rodney Graham, on the day. He summed up the value of the mill to the community, the way that the workers and employers work jointly together for the best outcome of that site and the community and have done for a very long time. The culture promoted on that site is exemplary. Rodney summed that up very eloquently. He said the reason people truly love working there is because the workers are respected, they have their voices heard by management, their concerns are acted upon, they are taken seriously and management truly works collaboratively with the workforce to get the best outcome, not just for the Boyer Mill but for the broader community. They have set an example to other workplaces right across Tasmania and Australia for how management can engage with their workforce and unions to get the best outcome for the people who are directly employed on a site like the Boyer Mill.

The family day was a lot of fun. Sorell school was there with their animal studies students offering a lot of animals to pet and play with. The kids loved that. There was a jumping castle, face painting, food and entertainment. The weather was brilliant.

I congratulate them on 80 years, congratulate the management and workers at that site, both past and present, and hope that they have a very strong future for another 80 years.

### **Council of Ambulance Authorities 2021 - Women in Ambulance Awards**

#### **Catherine McNamara - Tribute**

#### **Workplace Safety Issues - Paramedics**

[6.34 p.m.]

**Ms O'BYRNE** (Bass) - Mr Deputy Speaker, it is always great when we see our hardworking paramedics rewarded and recognised for the great that they do.

The Council of Ambulance Authorities 2021 Women in Ambulance Awards gave out 60 awards across Australia, New Zealand and Papua and New Guinea. Six of those were to Tasmanians. Angela Hodgson got an award as an intensive care paramedic of 25 years experience; Helen Jenkinson from Queenstown, a volunteer ambulance officer and a volunteer unit coordinator for the last 11 years; Kerryn Bone, a volunteer ambulance officer for 23 years, citizen of the year in the Derwent Valley and a recipient of the National Medal for Ambulance Tasmania; Pam Woolnough has been a finance officer who has served for 40 years and is a recipient of the Long Service Recognition Award as well; Samantha Allender, an expert in secondary triage; and Sarah Pearce, a paramedic and our first dedicated peer responder in the south.

I am glad to see those women recognised. It is great also to see women paramedics recognised by such things as the Women Honour Roll.

This leads me to an article that was written about Catherine McNamara whose career is one full of firsts, most of which have been defined by her gender. When she joined the Tasmanian Ambulance Service in 1985, she was the only woman employed as paramedic in the state. She was the first Tasmanian woman to become a clinical instructor and the first

perform operational roles, including duty manager. As her career progressed so did the list. She is the state-wide director of volunteer services with Ambulance Tasmania, the first to fill this role. She was proud to have paved the way for more women to enter an industry dominated by men.

She was among a group of frontline workers recognised as part of a luncheon hosted by the Clifford Craig Foundation for International Women's Day. She said:

We have nearly 50 per cent of Tasmanian clinical work force who are women now, but we do not have nearly 50 per cent in management that are women yet. That is our next frontier. We really have to encourage that space and support women to move into that space.

I draw your attention to those articles because it led to a disturbing response that indicates we are not ready to address that next career, when it appears that we still have a way to go with how the existing frontier is approached and how people are responding to women in the service, particularly our paramedic service.

My inbox was overwhelmed with concern about a letter that was published in the *Examiner* under the headline 'Women, Listen Up'. I would like to read that message in case women are wondering whether they can do the kind of work the paramedics do:

Women, listen up.

Catherine McNamara, congratulations on an absolutely fantastic career in one of the most respected and revered organisations.

And your call for more women to play a part.

No one would ever question the expertise and skilled attention administered by these talented women paramedics.

However you must acknowledge women lack one necessary attribute to be equal to men and that is physical strength especially in this vital service.

So it is imperative that female and male combinations are always adhered to when on call out. Due to a health incident to myself personally, an ambulance was called and two female paramedics turned up plus a female trainee.

All of them were not strong enough to lift me on a stretcher, (119kg), necessitating for them to call the men at the fire brigade to do their job. It nearly cost me my life. I arrived at the LGH with a lifespan of 20 minutes remaining. I had a severe gall bladder infection that was closing down my vital organs and needed immediately extra-strong antibiotics.

You are talented, skilled, caring and needed but please there are boundaries that nature will never allow you to cross.

Women, please listen to Catherine McNamara, you are needed.

You can imagine my response to that but I wanted to touch on some of the responses that I was sent:

I speak for myself, although I am sure many relate. I am angry, I am upset, I am tired. Every day we, as women in ambulance, go to work to do our jobs, to help people. That is all we want to do. Unfortunately, just trying to do our jobs also means we get hit on regularly by male patients. They comment on our looks and how we do things every single day. Now, thanks to this article, a man is telling me I cannot do my job without the help of another man. In regards to this we have strict manual handling policies that are the same for men and women.

Another person wrote in:

I was at work this night. The firies were called because ambulance was so busy that there was literally no other option for extra help, not because the crew needed men, but because the extraction was unsafe for two people, no matter what their gender.

Another person said:

This article is wrong in so many ways. No one should tell me I should always work with a male, I am more than capable of doing my job with another female.

I was pretty outraged and I was going to raise this issue with a fair bit of anger tonight, but I was very pleased to see a response from Joe Acker, the interim CEO of Ambulance Tasmania, who was disappointed at the comments. He said that Ambulance Tasmania is proud:

to be able to provide women with a challenging and exciting career path where they can provide emergency health services to the entire community.

Historically one the biggest causes of lost time injuries for Ambulance Tasmania paramedics is lifting patients.

That is regardless of what gender you are.

Accordingly Ambulance Tasmania has a 'no lift' policy for paramedics, male or female, with equipment, including electronic stretchers, used to lift patients if needed.

As such there is no requirement for any paramedic to have to lift a patient, and it is against policy to do so due to the risk of injury. Again, this applies equally to men and women.

These are skills which paramedics, regardless of whether they are male or female, deliver to the community day in, day out, and we are proud of all of them.

Ambulance Tasmania does not roster based on its employees' gender. We roster based on getting the job done and Tasmanians can have confidence if

they need a paramedic-led medical intervention, there will be one with the skills they need to deliver emergency care.

This is not a gender issue. This should not have been a gender issue. It is a workplace safety issue. If people are genuinely concerned about the impact on paramedics and genuinely concerned about an impact on waiting times and delivery to hospital, then they should be calling on the Government to ensure that we have proper lifting equipment in every single ambulance.

It is outrageous, particularly in the light of debates and conversations that we have been having in the last few weeks where we recognise that women are being demeaned, demoralised and targeted based on their gender, that this sort of thing can be provided to the paper and then printed. I was extremely disappointed. It is a WorkSafe issue. We need to ensure that all of our paramedics are safe. Gender has nothing to do with it.

### **parkrun Events**

[6.40 p.m.]

**Mr FERGUSON** (Bass - Minister for Infrastructure and Transport) - Mr Deputy Speaker, parkrun is changing lives around Tasmania. It is helping Tasmania become a healthier community. That has certainly been my experience and that of thousands of Tasmanians in recent years.

I rise tonight because I want the Tasmanian Parliament to better understand the benefits of parkrun and the benefits of doing physical exercise in the community with the community - with fellow members of our neighbourhoods. It is for families, it is for neighbours, it is for friends and it is healthy and it works.

There are now 17 parkrun events held every week around the state. What makes parkrun special is the fact that it is in your local park, it is run entirely by volunteers, it is free and the focus is, of course, on personal improvement and striving to achieve your own personal best rather than winning or taking a place.

To be completely clear, the competitive element is there for some people who want to run hard and there is a sense of competition, perhaps, amongst some of those front-runners. I am sure that rivalry does exist between regular attendees. In fact, I have seen it, but it is very friendly competition. In the main, parkrun and the ethos behind it is to encourage anybody to join and encourage that person to do their best on their first visit: just do your best and try to be a little bit more active than you would have otherwise been. Then come back next week and see if you can do it a little bit more strongly.

I would like to tell the parliament how it works. First of all, as I have said, it is completely free. You register online and you receive a barcode to print out. You turn up at the venue, say 15 minutes early, for a briefing and friendly welcome. You then run, walk or jog the five kilometres and receive a token which identifies the time that you reached at the finish line. You then take the token and your barcode to the marshal so that your time can be recorded on your account. It is all computerised. Later that day you get an encouraging email telling you your results. It crunches the numbers and it lets you know how you went compared to your

own previous times and how you are going compared to other people in your sex, in your own age group.

parkrun is an international community. It is designed to help give people like you and me the extra motivation to have a go and keep going and, I hope, keep running. The first ever parkrun was in Bushy Park, Teddington, in the United Kingdom, where 13 intrepid parkrunners got together in 2004. Since then, and with some very clever design work to make the event easily reproducible by others in their local communities, parkrun is now a truly international network. There are now 412 parkrun locations around Australia. That is an incredible growth in just a few years in our country.

There are 17 parkruns in Tasmania. These are greatly supported and have been assisted with some of the start-up costs - particularly in some of the ones that have started in the last two years - by the Tasmanian Liberal Government under the Healthy Tasmania grants, which I am proud to say I administered as minister for Health.

In my own electorate of Bass, I celebrate the continued success of Launceston parkrun which was the pioneer for the north; Windsor Precinct parkrun which is my local; Cape Reid Parkrun, which is of the newest ones; and George Town parkrun and Whitemark parkrun on Flinders Island.

My closing message to parliament and to the broader community is to please have a go and get involved at parkrun. It is very friendly. It is not a judgmental atmosphere and there is a genuine sense of helping other people in your group to do their best and strive to be a personal best for you and perhaps your family, and enjoy the benefit. It is not just about your physical strength or your physical cardiovascular health but also your mental health, and your ability to get around other people and be supported.

The message on the parkrun website says:

Whether you walk, jog, run, volunteer or spectate you can learn new skills and enhance your health and happiness in the great outdoors while making new friends, feeling part of your local community and improving your fitness.

I commend that message. In closing, I say a big congratulations to the founders of those 17 parkruns around Tasmania, around our community, particular thanks to the volunteers who turn out each week, often a different group and sometimes the same faces. They make it possible for the rest of us to turn up.

I also commend the participants, including you, Mr Deputy Speaker, at Port Sorell, and commend our parliamentarians and the local community to really get behind your local parkrun and have a go.

### **Michael Chilvers - Tribute**

[6.45 p.m.]

**Dr BROAD** (Braddon) - Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise on the adjournment to also pay my respects to Michael Chilvers. Michael Chilvers was a farming identity and he was a good bloke. He was a decent bloke and that certainly is coming across on all the commentary. It is

one of these moments when you hear about the accident, you hear about somebody who fell to their death while climbing. It was one of those moments when I was looking at my computer screen and I saw the ABC report of who it was and was absolutely shocked to find out that Michael Chilvers had unfortunately passed away as a result of this accident.

I knew Michael Chilvers, like the minister. I first met Michael Chilvers as a university student when we went up to his property at Nile to have a look at some of the things that he was doing. I know that I and my fellow students were very impressed with Michael because he was a very hands-on bloke. He got out a shovel, and he would be digging in the soil there, showing us what was going on, on his property. We all got a lot out of that visit. We were taken there because Michael Chilvers was one of the leading lights and he was not much older than me, I might add. I certainly appreciated what I got out of that particular field trip, but it was later on that I worked with Michael in a more professional capacity, many years after I graduated from university.

I worked with Michael and his wife, Fiona, and the Chilvers family. They are pioneers. They are innovative in the ways they do things: the different crops that they trial but also in the way they develop properties. As a family, they developed multiple agricultural properties and were involved in bringing some of the first dairies into the Midlands. That was the Chilvers family, and I know that Michael certainly had a large role in that.

He had a big presence in the agricultural community because of all the other committees and other groups that he participated in, that the minister has already mentioned. He was taking his role as an agricultural leader very seriously.

This is an absolute tragedy. Michael Chilvers is one of those people who I would have thought would have a long and illustrious career in agriculture and a long and illustrious life. It is a shock to me that somebody like Michael Chilvers was taken at such a young age. This is definitely a tragedy, not only for him, for his family, but also for the wider agriculture community.

I offer my sincere condolences to his wife, Fiona and his children, Charlotte and Felix, but also to his other family members especially Bill and Jill Chilvers and Jo and Rob Bradley. I know that they must be hurting right but they should have some comfort in knowing that he was well-respected, well-loved and was taken far too early.

### **Tasmanian Devil Deaths**

[6.49 p.m.]

**Dr WOODRUFF** (Franklin) - Mr Deputy Speaker, the other day I received some very concerning news from residents in the Westbury area. The Concerned Residents Opposed to the Westbury Prison Site has posted a very disturbing picture of a juvenile Tasmanian devil that has been run over by a car, right outside the Brushy Rivulet Reserve - the Westbury Reserve, as it is known - the place where the Government is proposing to put an industrial prison on that site.

It is more evidence than we need that this is the wrong place to have a prison. It is the wrong place for so many environmental values that are present there, especially and including



the Tasmanian devil. Tasmanian devils are endangered under the Commonwealth legislation and thousands and thousands of Tasmanians have spent years fundraising to do everything they can to save the devil from the facial tumour disease which has devastated the population to the extent that at least 80 per cent of devils have disappeared.

It is an incredibly important top predator in Tasmania and the Liberals in government have invested millions of dollars to protect this endangered species, as they should, but now instead they will do everything they can to ignore the reality of the environmental values of Westbury Reserve and have chosen to put their failed experiment for a northern prison at the site.

This is the worst place not only for the devil and the dens that exist on Westbury Reserve and the evidence the community has collected from audiovisual night cameras of the existence of devils near and around Brushy Rivulet make it really clear that devils live in and around that rivulet area. The dens are obviously being visited from time to time and the existence of juvenile devils makes it really clear that there has been a young family of devils and they are roaming around the area. There should not only be no prison on that site but there should be speed limits posted on that road so that people can be aware with signage that they need to slow down at night to protect these endangered animals.

The wonderful Sarah Lloyd, who is an Order of Australia medal recipient and a great naturalist, has been steadily documenting the environmental values of this site and collecting together information from other naturalists. These details are loaded into the Natural Values Atlas that Westbury Reserve is the home of not just one but four top-order Tasmanian predators. As well as the Tasmanian devil, a wedge-tailed eagle nest has been found on the boundary of the Brushy Rivulet Reserve and has been there since 2007. That has caused, as it should, a standstill to aspects of the planning application because it must go to federal assessment when there is an eagle nest. We will continue to make sure that the federal minister is aware of the values that are special about Westbury Reserve and of the importance of keeping these beautiful eagles with us in Tasmania. There are so few that remain. Local farmers see these eagles circling around their properties so it is certainly clear that there are eagles right next to that reserve.

There is also in the Brushy Rivulet Reserve the Tasmanian masked owl which is endangered under federal legislation. A nest and a roost tree were found at the reserve in October last year and several pellets have been found at the reserve during recent outings, also recorded on the Natural Values Atlas. Masked owls have a permanent home range of about 2000 hectares and that is why this area is such an important place for them to be protected. The grey goshawk is also endangered. An active goshawk nest was found on 20 January this year. We have the green and gold frog which is listed as vulnerable under federal law and that was observed on 5 July last year.

The information from the Tasmanian devil captured scats as well as dens on the southern boundary of the reserve make pretty clear that if we care about the long-term survival of Tasmanian devils we have to take every opportunity for habitat such as the Brushy Rivulet Reserve which is one of the few remnant areas of vegetation that are left in the region because it has been steadily fragmented over decades by grazing and weeds, particularly gorse. There are plenty of farmers surrounding Brushy Rivulet reserve, along with the locals of Westbury, who are determined to keep this beautiful place intact and the natural values there. They understand, as well as the crazy cost of this northern prison, the disastrous location on a road that is very substandard and windy and how totally inappropriate it is to have a prison built for

270 inmates and all the staff. The vehicle movements every day on that road would be an unbelievable increase on such a windy and inappropriate road. There is absolutely no reason for this to go ahead and the community will continue to defend it and we will stand with them.

**The House adjourned at 6.56 p.m.**