



PARLIAMENT OF TASMANIA

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

REPORT OF DEBATES

Thursday 19 March 2020

REVISED EDITION

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

DUTIES AMENDMENT BILL 2019 (No. 56)

Consideration of Amendments made in the Committee of the Whole Council

Amendments agreed to.

Bill read the third time.

PREMIER'S ADDRESS

Resumed from 18 March 2020 (page 67)

[11.06 a.m.]

Ms RATTRAY (McIntyre) - Mr President, as somebody mentioned yesterday, we live in interesting times. You only have to listen to this morning's media reports to know that, regrettably, we have an increase of three people affected with the COVID-19 virus in Tasmania. My thoughts are with those people and their families, who must be struggling to cope with what is presented to us as a state, a country and the world. We have had many conversations on the situation. I wrote my contribution to the State of the State before this virus had hit. I apologise that some of the things I am going to say today might not seem to be a priority. But that was my electorate when I wrote this at an earlier time.

I acknowledge the retirement from the parliament of the former premier, Will Hodgman. On behalf of the people of McIntyre, I say 'thank you' for the dedication and commitment to our state over his time as the member for Franklin and as the forty-fifth premier of Tasmania. As so many have already said, our thanks must also go to Will's family - his wife, Nicky, their children and extended family for the sacrifices that are made to family life as a member of parliament. We all know what they are.

All the best for the future, Will. We will be interested in where your new life path takes you.

That brings me to the congratulations that are in order to our new Premier, the honourable Peter Gutwein. Well done for putting your hand up to be considered for the top job and receiving the support from your Liberal team. In the Premier's address on 3 March, Mr Gutwein indicated he would continue on the path put in place at the 2014 election and reaffirmed at the 2018 re-election of the Liberal Government. We are not in the same times we were when the Premier made his address. We do not know what will unfold. The member for Murchison touched yesterday on the effect that these times will have on the budget. There will more likely be more outgoing funds than there will be incoming. That is a huge issue.

Ms Forrest - We also should expect to get a lot more money from the Commonwealth Government, which has the capacity to put money into the economy. It is starting to do that. There is a bit more work to do yet.

Ms RATTRAY - I have something I want to touch on regarding the federal government later in my contribution. I acknowledge the member for Murchison's comment. Before I comment on various aspects of the address, I acknowledge the appointment from this House of the honourable Jane Howlett as the Minister for Racing and the Minister for Sport and Recreation. Congratulations, member for Prosser; I wish you all the best. I look forward to the opportunity to source information directly from you as minister in those areas of responsibility at question time. We already had that opportunity a couple of days ago, so it will be a busy time for you.

My next congratulations must be for the member for Pembroke and her partner Daniel, who have welcomed a baby daughter, Ivy, into their family. In turn, that welcomes little Ivy into the Legislative Council family. I look forward to meeting this little bundle of sheer joy when we can. I am sure that the honourable member -

Ms Forrest - She will be 12 months old, the way we are going.

Ms RATTRAY - Yes. I feel sure that the member for Pembroke will be really enjoying this time with her little one, self-isolating, which is probably what she would have been doing anyway as a new mum and in getting the hang of all those routines. I wish her all the best and I know that everyone in this place, part of the Legislative Council family, would do the same.

Down to business, the State of the State address generally focuses on a number of issues that directly affect my McIntyre communities and individual constituent issues that require action. I was interested in the announcement of what was referred to as a headline piece of the address - the major projects legislation and the pledge to speed up approval processes for energy, water and sewerage services. Many businesses and individuals in our community will be saying, 'Well, about time.' I am well aware of the frustration experienced by the lack of timeliness when, for instance, a contractor submits a request to have works carried out to facilitate, in this instance, on-farm irrigation. The delays and lack of contact back to the customer have been unacceptable.

My question to the honourable Leader is: will this type of issue be addressed under the proposed legislation? I expect not because it may not be considered a major project. For my contractor and the client, when you are outlaying hundreds and thousands of dollars on pivots - and I know the honourable member will be well aware of this - pipes, dams or buying water to increase your ability to produce on farm, let me tell you, that is major.

Mrs Hiscutt - Was that a rhetorical question or do you want me to look for an answer?

Ms RATTRAY - I would love an answer. It is an issue. I have an example of a personal situation, of someone looking for an Aurora/TasNetworks connection for a new property. The request was submitted at the middle of February and it was only put into the system yesterday, the next person in line to submit it to Aurora and then TasNetworks need to do their bit. We need 10 days to deal with that, then we need another six days to deal with that. Meanwhile, you could possibly be paying a builder or a builder could be losing time while they are waiting around for a connection, and it is not always possible to source power from next-door neighbours.

Mrs Hiscutt - And the season moves on.

Ms RATTRAY - We have some issues if we are looking to be able to build more accommodation. We have talked about the lack of houses until most of us are blue in the face. I have something else to say about that later, but that is another example of delay. It is the process that is letting us down. It has to be, otherwise why are we waiting? That is not 10 full days - that is 10 working days and another six working days. Add your weekends into that as well and we are looking at a month's delay and as far as I am aware the application was submitted in a timely manner. I will be happy to take it on board if not the case, but I know the contractor and how efficient they are and would say it is not that contractor's fault.

Back to the outlay of hundreds of thousands of dollars; I suggest, Mr President, that it should not matter if your project is minor or major. There should be in place a timely process to address all applications for the very services we rely on to do business in this state.

Housing - or lack of it - continues to be a major issue in my electorate and I expect in most others across the state. At the moment, not a week goes by when our office does not see a request for assistance with housing. A single mother with five children - a model tenant - the owner had sold the home; a guy living in a shed and a long-term housing tenant with an eviction notice for her and her family. When I read the notice, listened to the story through sobbing, I was less than impressed with how the agency had gone about this action. I acknowledge a complicated set of circumstances led to this action, but no-one should ever receive an eviction notice from the assessor, who only last month told the tenant two outstanding issues were to be addressed and then arrived on the doorstep of the property with the eviction notice and a big smile. This is not the way we treat people in this state.

I phoned the number provided to the client because she was obviously too upset to hold a conversation with anyone. That person is not available today. I contacted the minister's office - I am still waiting for a return call after speaking to an advisor who followed up with a contact from Housing Tasmania. Thank you to Housing Tasmania for returning my call. I was able to negotiate an opportunity for another assessment before the 17 days to vacate is acted upon. That 17 days has not expired yet. We talk about compassion for our fellow human beings - well, let us see some of that compassion.

Authority does not give anyone the right to treat people without respect. I was encouraged yesterday when I read the Premier's State of the State address and again listened to those words the member for Mersey provided us with, when he said -

We will be a government of conviction. We will be a government of compassion.

Well, this has to filter down to the departments or there is no point in the Premier saying that to the people of Tasmania. More so than ever in the times we live in right now there has to be some compassion. I said to the person who gave me a call from Housing Tasmania, 'If you put this family out on the street because they have not cared for the house in the way you want them to' - I acknowledge we all live in different environments and we do not always have the same requirements and needs - 'you will not be able to put another family in it anyway, so what do you do? You end up with two families without a home instead of the one.' It did not make sense to me that that would be the case.

I am encouraged by those words from the Premier - 'a government of compassion', and we are going to need a lot of compassion, not only for people in housing situations but people who are in business, people who are part-time workers.

Having breakfast this morning, the lovely young girl next door to where we stay said she did not know what was going to happen, but if her hours get cut back, she will not be able to cover her rent. How do you deal with that?

That brings me to something I read yesterday regarding the Commonwealth Government. It talks about the state governments putting in place measures to support people and businesses in the state, but it questions whether some of these are state government responsibilities. Should the state be dealing with its responsibilities and the Commonwealth deal with the responsibilities which belong to it? For a person who may not secure the number of hours of work they have in the past because people are not going out and using the services, should Newstart come into play? That is a Commonwealth initiative, not a state government initiative.

There has to be a cooperative approach between the state governments and the federal government to work out who takes over what in the compassionate times we live in. People who normally would have 25 hours a week work may well be cut back to 10 or 15 hours and then they cannot cover their commitments. We need to know what is happening. There is a lot of pressure on this Government, but there is also pressure in our community on people who are trying to stay across what we are doing.

Ms Webb - I do not think people will find Newstart is going to be sufficient to pay their rent or mortgage. We will have to think about what people might need to meet the full costs of the basics.

Ms RATTRAY - I appreciate what the member for Nelson has said. There will be people who possibly will lose all income. However, this was a particular situation where the normal hours of work, albeit casual and part-time, will not be at the same level. Perhaps there needs to be a top-up. I appreciate the situation the member highlighted. We are in uncharted waters, but that means we must come together as a country and put in place the arrangements necessary to support those people. We do not want a situation where, if you cannot pay your rent, you are also out of somewhere to live. We would then have more people in a homeless situation. That is the last thing we want. It is hard to self-isolate or to do any of the things required at this time if you do not have a home to self-isolate in.

We need more public housing. We know the appropriate housing configuration is important. The mix of family homes and smaller units is the model that providers working with government should be continuing to work towards.

Mr Dean - Will we ever have enough public housing for those people in need of it?

Ms RATTRAY - According to the person whom I spoke to in Housing Tasmania - who, mind you, was pretty sharp in their response to me when I rang about the person who received the 17-day eviction notice. They said, 'Well, how do you think we are going to house the 3000-odd people on the housing list if we cannot move on people who do not do the right thing?' He did not pull any punches in what he was saying, and I cannot argue with that, but sometimes we do not always understand why or how people get themselves into this type of situation. At that time, I was especially looking for that compassionate aspect and was more frustrated by the fact that person

who received the eviction notice was given the notice with a smile. I do not expect people delivering such notices should stand there with tears in their eyes, but I am sure there is a better way of providing those notices.

On the mix of smaller units, we hear time and time again that we have single people or a couple living in a three-bedroom home because they have been living there for the last 10 to 15 to 20 years - maybe longer - who could quite possibly move to a two-bedroom unit and free up some of the family homes. I saw the last batch of houses built by CatholicCare in the north-east. About 15, two-bedroom units were built. Obviously such units are not conducive to a family when they are only two-bedroom, but it would free up the three-bedroom homes if you could move people out of the them and into the two-bedroom units.

I know we do not have many four-bedroom houses. The lady whom I spoke about who has five children - even a three-bedroom house would be a bit of a struggle for somebody with five children. That is what we are working towards - and no, member for Windermere, I am not sure we will ever have enough because that 3000-plus number has been a figure I have heard since I have been in this place - believe it or not, that is just on 16 years - and it does not seem to be getting any lower. Perhaps, the mix is different than what it was 15 years ago, but still the number is significant. Whether they are all as genuine as they feel they are, I do not have -

Ms Webb - We stopped building public houses - that is part of the answer to why that number has not gone down. We stopped investing in it. We started selling it off and not replacing it. There are myriad reasons we still have the long list. It is not the fault of the people who are on it.

Ms RATTRAY - Yes, I acknowledge we are still trying to play catch-up.

I was around when we had the - forgive me for not remembering the Lynn Mason-led housing initiative 10 years ago now. There were supposed to be hundreds of houses built and they did not eventuate. No disrespect to Lynn Mason - she was a good operator in local government, LGAT, Flinders Island Council and all those places, but under that initiative we just did not see the promised outcomes delivered.

I was exceptionally pleased, and I expect the former member for Western Tiers would be even more so, to see the announcement finally that a government has announced the introduction of a waste action plan and the delivery of a container refund scheme. Only another two years to wait. I would have preferred to have it in place much sooner than 2022.

Mr Dean - Did you read the question in the *Mercury* yesterday on this very point - a very strong point on it?

Ms RATTRAY - No, I did not. Do you want to share while I have a drink?

Mr Dean - I will when I speak.

Ms RATTRAY - We can wait to hear that from the honourable member, but, no, I did not. I can live with what has been committed to, and I understand the need for extensive design modelling to be completed, albeit South Australia has had a successful model in place for decades. Let us not try to reinvent the wheel - let us get on with it. That is me being the practical person that I am.

Mr Armstrong - There will be a cost to the consumer.

Ms RATTRAY - There may well be a cost to the consumer, but there will certainly be a benefit to the environment. I am sick to death of driving around our roads and seeing the terrible amount of rubbish. If I had more time to stop and get out of the car, I would pick it up. I cannot stop every 20 metres, when I see another load of rubbish. Kentucky Fried Chicken would have to be the worst offender -

Mr Armstrong - And McDonalds.

Ms RATTRAY - Yes, and McDonalds - the worst offenders for rubbish. People must buy it wherever they are and eat it on the way. I do not know how you eat - I suppose not everyone is driving.

Mr Armstrong - You will not get a refund on any of that, so that is still going to happen. They are bits of cardboard.

Ms RATTRAY - I am hoping that, with a waste action plan, the mindset of Tasmanians and the people who travel around our state will eventually change. It will have to change. It is a really difficult situation to see the rubbish. If we could have 5 or 10 cents for bottles or cans or whatever - you can already get a refund for cans - people could have a lot of them squished up to take them back. I know people who do that and they must make money out of it or they would not continue to do it.

Tourism continues to be a major focus of this Government. Yes, I support that focus but, again, the state needs to have the supporting infrastructure in place to achieve that. Many of our visitors travel the state on our roads to get to those desired destinations, and we still have poor-quality road infrastructure in areas that continue to miss out on funding to deliver those much-needed upgrades. A few members of this place have been invited to write opinion pieces for a particular newspaper media outlet. My first, it will come as no surprise to members in this place, was on lay-bys. It did not take me long to find 800 words to talk about lay-bys, or the lack of, in the McIntyre electorate.

Mrs Hiscutt - Is that pull-overs you are talking about?

Ms RATTRAY - Lay-bys. I had some really good feedback from a number of people in the community, saying, 'Yes, you are right.' It is the delivery of 'Yes, I am right, we need these lay-by areas for slow-moving vehicles so they can pull over.' I have said it again and again and again.

Mr Valentine - I am sure the minister got the message, too, when he was in the car.

Ms RATTRAY - I hope the minister got the message. I read with interest last week that an analysis is being undertaken on the Great Eastern Drive as part of the Tasmanian Journeys Project to determine whether it remains relevant and appealing. As far as I am aware, the roadworks that support the Great Eastern Drive experience are not even completed. I will watch with interest for the results of that project. I can tell you one thing: if there were more lay-bys, pull-over areas, whatever you like to call them, well-signed and ready for people so they know that they can pull over in 300 metres and let someone wanting to get somewhere a little bit quicker overtake them, if they were in place between Launceston and the other side of Dianas Basin on the east coast, that would make a travelling experience a lot better than it already is.

Mr PRESIDENT - It would decrease road rage. Drivers of heavy vehicles are just as frustrated when they block the traffic flow, so it works both ways

Ms RATTRAY - They want to get off the road but there is nowhere to get off that is safe for them. They do not want to be a hindrance on the road. I know many of those drivers and they share that frustration.

Last week when I was travelling to Smithton I took particular notice of two slip lanes that were very close to each other around Port Latta. I have been working with the owners of the Trowunna Wildlife Sanctuary at Mole Creek to have an eastern approach slip lane put in place, given the high volume of traffic the park generates. Sadly, I have not had any success.

Mole Creek Road is not the Bass Highway, but two slip lanes so close together to enter the homes in that area makes me ask why 65 000 annual visitors accessing the Trowunna Wildlife Sanctuary in a safe manner are not as important as the residents of the area around Port Latta. I will again ask the minister for some consideration. The department does not want a bar of it but the minister has the final say. I will not give up on this. The sanctuary gets 65 000 visitors annually and we cannot get an eastern slip lane. We are not asking for a four-lane highway; we are just asking for a slip lane, yet there are two in the Port Latta area. Forgive me for not knowing what the township is, I am not a north-western girl. It is around Port Latta where you have the big building on the side and there are two small communities. Not far from each other there are two slip lanes.

Why is my community not just as important? When I recently visited my island community, where I am heading back to tomorrow, a couple of significant issues were raised with me. Thank you to the member for Mersey for his work and for attending Flinders Island. We had a lovely meal at the Whitemark pub while he was over there delivering his seminars for the end-of-life choices. Even though we had small numbers, they appreciated that we took the time to come. I have been doing the roadshow as much as I can with the honourable member. It has opened my eyes to this issue.

One of the biggest issues for the island is a reliable and cost-effective shipping service and the level of support TasPorts provides to the island residents. At the moment the shipping service the island has from Furneaux Freight is exceptional. I want to send the message to the minister and to TasPorts that this is their highway. This is where they get their goods in and out of the island through the Lady Barron Port. There are some significant stock movements from that island, not to mention all the goods and services that come over on Furneaux Freight.

It is so important that we continue to have that fantastic service. We have been in troubled waters before with shipping. We all remember Southern Shipping. We probably do not want to think too much about what that was like for the island, but we remember it. So TasPorts needs to do whatever it has to to make sure the island continues to receive that. Furneaux Freight is exceptional, so TasPorts, do what you need to do. The minister, who is also the member for Bass and represents the island, will make sure we have a reliable and cost-effective shipping service in place.

The safe harbour project, with the right business plan in place and the appropriate support from government, could be a game changer for the island. We certainly have the opportunity to have lots of bigger boats come to the island. They go to the island for shelter when the weather cracks up. It is a project the council is grappling with because of the cost but may be able to do with support from the community and the government, which you particularly need to put something like a safe harbour project in place. There will be more to talk about in future. They were key issues raised with me while I was on the island a couple of weeks ago.

Cattle are now largest in stock numbers; they are bred and raised on the island. The days of sheep being the main source of income for island farmers is somewhat diminishing. We still have sheep and lambs, but the cattle are fast becoming the biggest numbers on the island. There is a lot of movement. We need to make sure that highway -

Mr PRESIDENT - A lot of moo-vement.

Ms RATTRAY - Moo-vement, yes.

Anyone travelling north at the moment will know about the roadworks at and around Perth, which are starting to make significant changes to the way people enter and exit the town and surrounding areas. It is always interesting to watch the works unfold and, boy, did these works create massive earthworks. There are plenty of people who think it is overkill to the nth degree. I am not an engineer. Whether we needed those overpasses to that degree, who knows?

Mr Dean - Do you have any idea of the cost of that whole project, the Illawarra Road connection and the bypass at Perth? I have been told the cost of it has been more than the rest of the money spent on the Midland Highway.

Ms RATTRAY - I would not be surprised if that were the case. No, I do not have a figure. That is something that the honourable member might be able to find for us. The minister, when he finds out how much the cost is, will need to take a Bex and have a lie down. The accessing of all that land behind the Perth township is amazing. When you drive onto it, you think, 'Where am I going to end up?' I would not like to do too much night driving around there until it is all properly signposted and finished. You are not sure where you are going.

Mr Dean - Are we bypassing Campbell Town, do you know?

Ms RATTRAY - Never. No, I do not know. I do not think Campbell Town would want to be bypassed, but I do not know. I probably should not say that. That is the member for Prosser's area now. Members will be interested to know that I remain the member for Conara.

Recent visits to Cressy and Longford were examples of the new approaches. When I visited Cressy, I chose to head back to the Midland Highway to avoid the maze of roadworks and signage. While we know these are necessary disruptions to achieve the desired end result, it is no wonder the cost of this type of work is so substantial.

Mr Dean - You would be happy with the decision to build a new police station at Longford.

Ms RATTRAY - I have not had any negative feedback about that. I have not reached police stations yet. There is always plenty of discussion in our communities as to how a road project should occur and what it should look like, and I am no exception. I consider myself a significant road user as I nudge 1 million kilometres in this role. I have been a member over 15 years and do about 60 000 kilometres per year, close to 1 million kilometres. That is not a bad effort.

Mr PRESIDENT - What has your average speed been?

Ms RATTRAY - I would rather not answer that. I still have a current licence and certainly wear my seatbelt every time I get in the car.

The Cressy Road upgrade has significant deep edges along this. No-one is complaining about having their road upgraded - absolutely no-one - but the question always arises about how we ended up with this great big ditch on either side. It seems they just run the next lot of roadworks straight over the top and then all of a sudden you have these deep verges. With large vehicles on the roads and needing to sometimes pull over to take phone calls, people are starting to question how they can pull off the road when there is no road verge. Many of my communities will never get edges on the side of the road, but perhaps they could strategically place a few strategic places where people can pull over safely. It is something we need to think about.

The Tasman Highway has significant deep edges from St Patricks River across to The Sideling. The new seal along the Gladstone Road is fantastic, but, again, a sharp drop-off, which is not ideal for heavy vehicles and the considerable stock and milk product pick-up activity on that stretch of road. Along with this is an increasing number of visiting motorists, because now you can drive your hire car from Bridport through to Gladstone because we now have a fully sealed road. It has taken a long time and we are very grateful for this. Plenty of people in hire cars would find they could not continue if they did not want to drive on a gravel road because their insurance would be negated. Now people can travel all the way from George Town - your area, member for Windermere - to Gladstone; then they can loop around and perhaps come back through South Mount Cameron, Pioneer, Herrick and to St Helens. You still cannot go all the way through Gladstone out to Ansons Bay because it is still a gravel road and then Ansons Bay into the back of Priory and St Helens is still a gravel road, but we are getting there.

Mobile phone service is not a state Government issue but -

Mr Dean - They can influence it.

Ms RATTRAY - Yes, they can absolutely influence it. It continues to deliver frustration in our rural and regional communities. Ten kilometres from Launceston on the Tasman Highway is one of the worst service spots.

Do you know where the old sawmill was?

Mr Dean - Yes, I do.

Ms RATTRAY - There is no service.

Mr Dean - I travel that area a lot across to Lilydale - terrible.

Ms RATTRAY - Yes. How hard is it to put up the necessary tower infrastructure? A recent example of the stupidity - and I will say stupidity - of the telecommunications world is when funding was available to upgrade the network in the Pyengana-Goshen area - I see you are taking notice now, Mr President, when you are up in that area -

Mr PRESIDENT - I have always been taking notice. I am just doing emails.

Ms RATTRAY - Obviously, we know the President has strong connections to Pyengana.

The feds gave the funding to Vodafone and you guessed it, the residents of the area are walking around with two mobile phones in their pocket - Vodafone for home and a Telstra mobile for when they are away from home. How smart is that?

Mr PRESIDENT - I do not understand why there are not shared towers.

Ms Howlett - The new towers that will be going up on the east coast will be hybrid. They will be shared between Telstra and Optus.

Ms RATTRAY - I would like to think that they would have thought that was a good idea when they put up a new one to service Pyengana and Goshen. Talk about a lack of communication between the telecommunication's minister. It shows how little those in the Commonwealth arena, who are in decision-making positions, know about our state and the needs of our communities. Say no more.

I thank the member for mentioning the St Helen's police station. I will never forget my police stations, anyway. The proposal on the table to move to the greenfield site adjacent to the new St Helens Hospital, in my view and the view of the entire community, is a win-win outcome for everyone. Council supports it; it is happy to hand over the land, and that would take the police station off the main street. They would have somewhere for their vehicles and the people who work there, and they would also have somewhere to house the rescue vessel. It makes sense. It is a greenfield site, so you are not going to disrupt anyone while building the new station. Anyone who has been into the St Helens police station will know that the work conditions for those officers are less than ideal, and I am being generous in my comments.

Mr Dean - There was a problem when I was there 20 years ago.

Ms RATTRAY - Less than ideal. The minister knows the situation; he is also the member for that area. The time is right to make that announcement. I do not say that the Longford station was not necessary. Everyone likes to see new, updated buildings, and particularly an appropriate work environment. We understand that. Why not take up that offer? The council will possibly take over the land where the police station is now and that will suit it as well. It is a no-brainer - we have to get in and do it.

The proposed northern correctional facilities site adjacent to the Westbury industrial precinct continues to generate a high level of debate and varying views. I acknowledge the Government continues to engage with the community. One can only wonder. If that level of engagement was undertaken prior to the announcement of the proposed site, much of the angst and negative views may not have been so strongly held. I genuinely feel there is a need for a correctional facility in the north of the state, but, as I have not been involved in the assessment of the proposed sites, it is impossible for me to know if the site proposed is the most suitable site.

I can only take what has been provided to me - I am listening, I am relaying any views expressed to me and handing those views on. That is where I sit. I have supported a northern correctional facility and I continue to do so, but I have no clear view on whether that is the most appropriate site. An industrial precinct certainly generates in your mind that, yes, it would be appropriate. Others feel differently in their views on that. It will be something we will work through as a community and as the Government continues to engage with those concerned about the site.

Mr Dean - Are you aware of the concerns held by some people in that community in relation to Tasmanian Alkaloids when that was going to be developed in Westbury?

Ms RATTRAY - That is prior to my time knowing the community as well. Possibly, the

former member for Western Tiers, Greg Hall, would have a good handle on whether that was the situation.

Mrs Hiscutt - The member for Windermere is right. Because it was classified as a drug company, there were concerns there would be thefts and crime. Of course, it is just an industry. We know now that it is okay; none of that happened.

Mr Dean - No, it did not happen.

Ms RATTRAY - Mr President, I have been wandering around the electorate while we have been away from this place, getting to know more areas of McIntyre. I feel welcomed wherever I go. They are getting to know me. I recently had a conversation on local government amalgamations. I read with interest the opinion piece only a week or so ago, where there was a call for the conversation to commence and, in some cases, recommence.

This issue will always be challenging for many. I am not suggesting I have the ideal arrangement, but it is time to have a mature conversation with our communities on this important issue. I do not disagree with that. There are opportunities to progress. I am not saying that 29 down to nine, or whatever has been suggested, is realistic. I have not done hard and fast numbers or boundaries. I am now the member for McIntyre so my boundary readjustment success is probably not looking so good when I lost half my electorate. I am pleased to be the member for McIntyre now. That is an important issue and one that needs a mature conversation with our communities.

I noted with sadness yesterday - there will be hundreds of events cancelled around the state - that the thirty-seventh annual Agfest has been cancelled. Not postponed - cancelled. Event after event will not go ahead. The opportunities for communities to benefit from those events is gone. Agfest brings millions of dollars into the community and Tasmania's economic bottom line. It is significant. Not only is there an election on the first Saturday in May for two members in this place, but also we were looking forward to Agfest at that time.. We will not be looking forward to Agfest and doing what we normally do.

The independent Legislative Council members have not had a site for a couple of years, but we still made our way out to Agfest, put on our shirts and jackets with as much name recognition as possible on our backs and caught up with as many people as possible. To those who have had to make that decision, I feel for you. It is not easy to cancel an event like that. It is as distressing as any small event that has had to be cancelled and will be cancelled in the future. Even postponing an event around the COVID-19 virus is going to be difficult. We do not know for how long.

My offering is there. I look forward to the Leader providing some responses and feedback to the issues I have raised on behalf of McIntyre constituents and the other issues I feel need to be addressed. I thank members for their time and interest in some of the things that happen in what I consider is the best patch of Tasmania.

[12.00]

Mr DEAN (Windermere) - Mr President, I do not like speaking to members behind me, but unfortunately that is what the Chamber situation is.

Mr PRESIDENT - I will let you know if they make any gestures you should be aware of.

Mr DEAN - Thank you - the only reason I stand here is so I can look at all members.

The coronavirus situation, as other members have mentioned, is unprecedented. A state of emergency was declared this morning. Having a state of emergency declared puts us in a position that demonstrates the importance and seriousness of this whole matter. I am not aware of any other state of emergency in Tasmania. There was probably one in 1967 when we had the bushfires, if we can go back that far. Whatever state level there was, I am not too sure, because I was not here at the time. To have a state of emergency declared is identifying the seriousness of a situation.

If there is any good news here, it is that there is evidence that this virus has a similar impact on the human body as the influenza virus. A number of people have said it is good from the point of view of allowing a vaccine to be prepared much more quickly than otherwise might have happened. There are currently human trials underway in relation to a vaccine. Maybe we will have a vaccine sooner rather than later. We all hope that will happen.

I do not know who reads the very good newsletters put out by Julian Amos. He comes up with some very -

Ms Rattray - It pays to highlight what you want to say out of it though, when you try to read it.

Mr DEAN - You are right. He does identify a lot of good points. The way I see it, he is quite happy to tell it as it should be in most cases. I am not saying I agree with everything he says in his newsletters, but I certainly agree with quite a lot. He was a Labor member, and a good Labor member. He makes this comment - it is something I am struggling with at the present as well -

(tbc 12.04)

There is a sense, when traversing this information maze, that advice has fallen behind the actuality. Furthermore, there is no indication as to which specific information is being updated.

I am also finding this. New information is coming in, but you cannot follow a lot of it. My view is that in this place we should be given probably a briefing each morning on exactly where we are and what is happening.

Mrs Hiscutt - I can inform members the Premier gives a briefing every morning at 9.15.

Mr DEAN - You cannot always pick that up. For instance, travelling this morning - that is what I was doing, trying to pick some of it up and trying to get here. I listened this morning to what was happening downstairs to get a clear understanding of exactly where we are right now and what is going on. My position is we should be updated daily about what is going on from the Chamber, particularly when we are sitting, as the other place is.

Mrs Hiscutt - It is very difficult because the Director of Public Health and his assistants are extremely busy, as you can imagine. We cannot get them here every moment.

Mr DEAN - We are expected to know exactly what is going on. I have had, and I suspect other members have as well, calls asking me exactly what is happening. People are raising issues that will be coming up in this Chamber in future. I will raise one later, as to where they are at -

what can happen, can those people come here, can they brief us and can they talk to us? It goes on and on.

Mrs Hiscutt - For members' information, members can direct questions directly to the Premier at dpac.tas.gov.au and that will be answered.

Mr DEAN - Thank you for that.

Mr PRESIDENT - To give you some reassurance, we are keeping a pretty tight eye on it through the Legislative Council and we will keep members and staff informed of the measures that we are taking.

Ms Forrest - I have been communicating directly with the Premier's office this morning about a particular issue with a very free flow of information. They are doing their absolute best and the Facebook live feed is really good each morning.

Mrs Hiscutt - You can access that feed at any time, such as during your lunch hour - it is all there.

Mr DEAN - Yes. With everything else that is going on, it is getting into it and following it and so on. I am addressing a number of things, and I suspect other members are as well.

I raised the matter - the member for Elwick raised it with me this morning - that the impact on employment in this state is going to be huge. I am not sure what the recovery process is going to be like. People point the finger at us. I was at Bunnings on the eastern shore last night, and there was an elderly gentleman there I thought I knew. He obviously knew me because he called out across a number of people in the Bunnings store - Anne was with me at the time - and he made a comment like, 'It's all very well for you with what's happening; you're on plenty of money, the Government's supporting you.' This was in the Bunnings store, an open place with a lot of people present. It becomes a little upsetting and a little annoying. Anne turned to me and she said, 'If that's true, I want to know where all the money is.' I could not answer her.

Mr PRESIDENT - Unfortunately situations like this can bring out the worst in people and the best in people.

Mr DEAN - It does.

Ms Rattray - We heard that yesterday from the member for Murchison.

Mr DEAN - Yes. The panic buying situation is just crazy. As I think the Prime Minister said the other night, what is happening is un-Australian in that regard. I listened to the news last night. A gentleman who is responsible for gathering food produced within Australia commented that there is no need for panic buying, it is an absolute nonsense.

Ms Forrest - That was the CEO of Woolworths.

Mr DEAN - It might have been. He said that Australia produces enough food for 75 million people. That was the comment he made.

Ms Forrest - It might not have been him who said that, but someone did. I saw him on the *7.30 Report*. He gave a really great -

Ms Lovell - I think the Prime Minister said something along these lines.

Mr DEAN - It would have been about 9.30 p.m. that I heard this. He said that Australia has 25 million people or thereabouts, so there is no need for this panic buying. It is un-Australian, it is a nonsense. We have to work through that.

Like the member for McIntyre, I wrote my speech before all of this began. I congratulate our new Premier on taking on the position he has in this state. It is a very important position, the second most important position in the state to the Governor. The Governor could be seen as probably the most important position because of her requirements. I want to publicly extend my congratulations to the Premier. I did personally and now publicly. I also extend my congratulations to the outgoing premier, the honourable Will Hodgman. I do not think it matters what colour you are; in my view, he performed admirably in that position and moved Tasmania forward in many respects. I wish that to be acknowledged publicly, Mr President. He is a great person, a great family man.

In the State of the State address, the Premier commenced his speech by extending his thanks to our partners, our husbands and our wives. That was well done because they are often left out. It is their support that allows us to do what we do and to give the time we do to this state and to helping people right throughout the state. They are right there, right behind us, right with us. They suffer a lot of the poor comments made from time to time. It is good the Premier recognised the contribution they make. If I might say, my family has supported me right throughout my life. As a police officer, I was often called away without any notice at all for days on end, without my family even knowing where I was; it was just part of the job. They were there, they supported me and I want to thank them so much.

The mainland fires were raised by one member -

Mrs Hiscutt - It was me.

Mr DEAN - By the Leader, thank you. An absolutely tragic situation we saw occurring on the mainland this year. Now, on top we have this virus. If you look at the other traumas we have suffered, the drought, the floods - it has just gone on and on. But Australians are a resilient lot. I am quite sure they will bounce back.

The mainland fires were interesting. I went across to the mainland at the height of them. On the ferry we met the smoke, the haze, halfway across Bass Strait. Then, of course, I drove through that from Melbourne; it was right up almost to Goulburn before I started to get out of the smoke.

But the first night was interesting. Foolishly I had said to my wife, 'We do not need to book in to somewhere to stay for our first night, we will find a place as we move on.' Ten o'clock at night we were still looking for a place to stay, all of them were chock-a-block full. They had the full capacity signs out. Not one place out of Melbourne had any accommodation available at all. What did we do? Slept in the car. It was amazing; the accommodation was all taken up by emergency services; they had booked out most of it. A lot of it was taken by other people who had been dislocated. The significance hit you when you were over there.

Health was referred to in the State of the State address. It is not unique to Tasmania. There are health issues with hospitals throughout every state. However, it is a big issue and something we really need to get on top of. Access to health care is far - as some would say - from satisfactory. Elective surgery access is not as good as it ought to be. With what is now happening, many cases may be put off and will not be attended to, so issues and problems will be exacerbated.

Ms Forrest - The issue for health workers and nurses, if you watch what is happening in northern Italy, which is a more sophisticated system than we have here, is that they are having to make decisions about who they treat and who they let die.

Imagine the trauma of a health professional having to make that decision. It is unfathomable. We need to take measures here to ensure our health workers are not faced with making those decisions. That is not just about people with coronavirus. It is people who have a heart attack; people who fall over and break their hip, and they are elderly; people who have other medical conditions.

Mr DEAN - Good comment. I thank the member for raising it. Healthcare workers should not be put into a position like it. It is traumatic and something that is difficult to get over.

It is not surprising that people are moving from private health cover to the public system. We got notice the other day that there will be an increase of \$12 a month in private insurance as of April for single family cover. That is the position with my family.

That will raise it to \$212.15 per month, which is about \$2545.80 per year. Without the government rebate, it would be \$317.10 as of April.

It is not surprising people are moving away for, I guess, two in a family. I am not sure what it would be; I do not think it is quite double, but it would be up around \$4000.

Mrs Hiscutt - It is a catch 22 situation. The more who leave, the more the premiums go up.

Mr DEAN - It is. I feel for people. That will put more pressure on our public hospitals. It is difficult to see just where we are going to go with this.

What the public health system needs is a brush to sweep through it. To look at what is happening in it. To look at the work being performed. To look at the resources within the public hospital system in the same way that we are currently looking at the State Service.

The current review of the State Service is the second one I am aware of in the past years. It has happened before within the State Service, but I do not know of any occurring within the Health department.

It happened in the police department. They made enormous changes within that department as to how it operates, staffing numbers, where they should be, where they should not be and their core responsibilities. It was an amazing transformation. That was back in 1990s. I was a part of that. Health, in my view, needs a similar review.

I have spoken to a number of people working in the Launceston General Hospital who have urged me to raise it. I am raising it. Maybe I need to do more about that.

One sister there said to me, 'There are many people who do not know what they are doing. They are simply carrying paper around looking busy; they are not needed. There are three and four tiers to a lot of activities which are not needed. There need to be big changes in the organisation.'

The Premier refers in his speech to the fact that we have more staff within the health system than any other organisation. I think he said that. The Premier said Tasmania has a higher level of hospital staff per capita than any other state in Australia.

That might be so, but it is what those staff are doing that matters.

I attended a recent meeting in the northern suburbs, where housing developments, under the Better Housing Futures program, were discussed for my electorate. One of the issues raised by the attendees was that it is all very well to bring all these people into our area, but what about hospitals and their access to doctors, medication, medical assistance and support? In the northern suburbs there is no real availability at all. The current surgeries are flat chat and cannot take any more on. They are working extremely hard. We know where the LGH is with taking in patients. If we are going to do this sort of thing, and Huntingfield is a good one down Kingston way, we have to have the other resources necessary to support to these people.

A triage facility has been mentioned and that would assist and support. They should build into it a centre that can be occupied by the qualified nurses to treat people in the first instance who do not have to go to hospital by way of ambulance. In other words - the cuts, abrasions and those types of things could be treated at a triage centre in a locality like the northern suburbs. That is going to be discussed, and I look forward to seeing where this goes.

If the Premier is really serious when he says, better health outcomes were the Government's number one priority, he should not balk at supporting T21. T21 will, without any doubt whatsoever, reduce smoking numbers in the state and in the younger generation. This reduction will see significantly fewer people requiring medical intervention and hospitalisation. It will improve the health of Tasmanians immeasurably and at the same time impact on the smoking cesspits we all have to walk through. There is one at the back of Henty House and every time I go through it, I take a deep breath before I go through the door and try to get through it all before I start breathing again. It is horrendous.

For the information of members I indicated I was going to move my bill in May; however, at this time that may well be on hold because of what is happening around us and the need to bring people into the Chamber for briefings. Also, there is some evidence now to show there is a connection between the current coronavirus and smoking. Studies are being done on that at the present. I advise members at this stage that the bill may not be brought on in May as suggested and indicated.

The Premier says this about employment levels in his State of the State address. He says –

21,100 jobs have been created since 2014, with 256,100 Tasmanians now in work, the highest on record. Employment levels are now higher in every Tasmanian region compared to when we came into Government and in the past year we have had the highest employment growth in the country.

Things may well change, sadly, because of what is happening around us which is going to be quite cruel. We then have the Leader of the Opposition saying this about employment, and I quote -

Despite the Liberals boasting on jobs Tasmania's employment rate is still the third worst in the country.

And then she went on to say -

It is underemployment where Tasmania is truly failing. At 11.2% underemployment is not only the worst in the country - it is the worst it has ever been in Tasmania and the worst it has been in any State or Territory.

That is taken from a newspaper article. I do not think it has ever been changed and I am accepting that as being correct. Other members may have read it as well. Listening to the Premier and the Leader of the Opposition, it is not surprising people could be confused. When we start looking at employment in this state, to hear those two statements and try to marry them together to work out exactly what is going on is difficult.

It is not surprising that other people have made some contact with me and asked what is going on. Who is telling the truth and who is not, or is it this political speech? The statements being made are interesting - and I am not saying who is right, who is wrong, whether they are both right or whether it is political spin - but they do not do anything for credibility and reputations and that is damaging. I have said in this place many times that it is not surprising we are about 20 rungs below everybody else on the status ladder. It is not surprising and that is disappointing, but I cannot do a lot about that, unfortunately.

I want to touch on some of the areas that impact on my electorate. Unemployment in George Town: unemployment numbers in this state are the highest in the George Town area and there must be concentration on making changes to provide employment opportunities in George Town. We have to do something about it. I am pleased to see the Government committing to a renewable hydrogen industry in Tasmania and, further, that George Town, Bell Bay, has been supported as a potential site for this 100 megawatt hydrogen plant. I am told that such a plant would provide something in the region of 1700 jobs.

Hopefully, many of those jobs can be for people within the George Town area, within that region. For that to happen, it is important to know what qualifications will be required if the hydrogen plant does get underway in Bell Bay. It is no good to say that these people will not get employment there if they do not have the qualifications and they do not have the right background to take on that employment. That ought to be considered right at this moment, with some emphasis placed on what is required for them.

Some members here might not be aware of the significance of Bell Bay; 60 per cent of the state's gross domestic product comes from the Bell Bay area. A tin smelter for this same locality has been mentioned. There has been a lot of talk, which sounds good, but it will be interesting to see what happens. Ray Mostogl, who is well known to most of the people in this Chamber, was the CEO of Bell Bay Aluminium for a long period and took it a long way. He has commented on this and he is not all that positive about the smelter. He understands this business, having been the longstanding general manager of Bell Bay Aluminium. I discussed this with the George Town Council the other day. The general manager and mayor said we should be looking at the work qualifications and, when we are talking about smelters and hydrogen plants, it is important we do that.

I also take this opportunity to congratulate Shona Markham on her appointment as the new general manager of Bell Bay Aluminium. I have not yet been able to speak to Shona but will do shortly as soon as I have a chance. It is great to see that appointment occurring.

Temco - I understand we will, or should, know more on the future of Temco by the end of this month. The temporary position of Temco is hurting George Town now, but there remains an air of positivity that it will survive. One-third of its employees are residents of the George Town area. Temco is an important business for the northern part of Tasmania and that is concerning George Town inhabitants at this time. However, George Town is a resilient place. It has survived hardship before and will again. Currently, we have strong support from local government in the George Town area with our mayor and general manager, and they will continue to move it forward. The bike trail has funding and it will bring more people into George Town. I look forward to that happening, but more is needed.

Housing - progress has been made here, but it is clear to me and many others that it does not matter how many affordable houses are available, there will always be people living on the streets. That is a sad fact, but it will always occur. Housing in my area, as I have raised in this place many times, is probably more serious than in most other areas in this state. I have a lower socio-economic group area than any other electorate, and it is creating and causing a lot of concerns. There are more Housing Tasmania properties in my area than in any other electorate in the state. It is a real issue. My office deals with more of this in a week than some other electorates would see in 12 months. They are coming to me on a consistent basis - people wanting housing and people being thrown out of their houses. Interestingly, the member for McIntyre raised some issues here about evictions.

I am currently supporting a person at George Town who is beside himself. He has been living in a Housing Tasmania home for 20-plus years, never reneged on his payments, but is currently being threatened with eviction because they do not like the look of his front fence, a small back fence that does not meet the criteria set by Housing Tasmania, and because he has a small shed measuring about 1.5 metres by about 1 metre. It is really a dog kennel and he has been told if he does not remove it and fix these fences, he will face eviction. I have taken the matter up. He lives in conditions you or I would not, but that is his choice. He is not trashing the property. He is now becoming bitter and has a health issue. He lives alone. I have written to the minister and am hoping the minister can get back to me shortly in relation to it because this man is currently living there not knowing what his future is going to be. I have seen the report he has, because they do not like his fences and shed he has. The shed he has does not need any council permits. He has not built it illegally as far as council is concerned. I have spoken to the council about it. I can understand why some people get upset. As I have said to him and as said in my letter to the minister, there are far worse Housing Tasmania or Community Housing properties in my electorate than this one. I will take them around and show a few if you want me to.

Talking about homeless people raised here, Anne was with me the other day when I spoke to a chap who was sitting on a street with a sign that said 'Homeless' and he had a container in front of him. Next to him was a large dog, a labrador, and it was in really good condition. At the time, he was on a mobile phone and had a dreaded piece of poison weed hanging out of his mouth - in other words, a cigarette.

I had a talk with him and told him, 'You have to be joking. You are able to have a dog; you are smoking and you have a mobile phone, and you are obviously on Centrelink payments, so why

do you do this?' He mumbled something but he wasn't nasty in any way, saying he required further help, support and assistance. I shake my head. If a person is truly homeless, do they need to sit on a footpath with a mobile phone, with a cigarette and with a big dog, calling for other help and other support? We will always have homeless people and people wanting low-cost housing. It does not matter how much and how many we have, it is a fact of life.

Stamp duty concessions for eligible pensioners was raised in the State of the State address as well. I ask the questions: How many people have access to the downsizing program? Has it helped in any way in freeing up homes for those families seeking a rental or purchasing property? I would like to know what impact that is having and how much that has cost the state to date. Those figures must be available. Perhaps the honourable Leader is able to get that or I can put it on notice. That is, downsizing properties for more mature people living in large houses who do not need those large houses at the present time. The Premier refers to that in the State to State address.

Mrs Hiscutt - Yes, I referred to it in my contribution. A great policy.

Mr DEAN - Recycling has been mentioned. I met with the George Town Council mayor, general manager and senior planner on 5 March, and one of the things on the agenda for discussion was recycling. I then received an email from Shane Power, the general manager at George Town, who is doing very well and he said -

Good afternoon Ivan,

Thank you for your time today.

As discussed, GT Council is among many within the northern region of Tas that has been hit with a 35% increase in recycling costs from its kerbside collection contractor. The contractor has cited significant reduction in commodity prices following the Chinese ban on imported waste from Australia.

The increase in costs takes effect as of the beginning of March which of course will have an impact on Council budget. Officers will recommend passing the increased costs directly to residents as part of the waste charge from 1 July 2020.

Kind Regards,
Shane Power

Recycling is an issue. It is causing problems and I am not sure where we go from here. As a council member said to me during the discussion, it is now far more cost effective for them to bury the recycling waste. Something needs to be addressed fairly quickly. Once again, the community will have to pay. Council has not budgeted for it but neither has the public, so it is a two-pronged impact that needs to be addressed.

This brings me to Envorinex, a George Town business collecting plastic waste from around the state, at no cost to those who have to get rid of it, and turning it into other valuable and useful products. I have spoken about that company twice in this place. It is supported by other countries buying and using its products, but it has not been given similar support in or by this state. Since my last parliamentary speech, I understand our new Premier has spoken with the owners and company directors, Jenny Brown and Mike Turner, and the Government may now be taking some interest in what they are doing. While the company is producing guideposts and other products

from this waste material that are required in this state, some of their products have been overlooked for similar products purchased from the mainland or from overseas. I am advised the costs have been competitive, but other things might be at play. I am not sure what they are.

What support has the Government given or will give to Envorinex? A waste action plan is referred to by the Premier in the State of the State address. He says the levy to be introduced, there is talk of 2021, will see support given to recycling businesses. Envorinex would be receiving some of that support, I hope. The Premier could start right now by calling on all government departments and contractors to do business with Envorinex. The business is building and is currently recycling in excess of 2000 tonnes of waste steam plastics annually, saving them from entering landfill sites in Tasmania. They go around at their own cost, pick up these plastics, reprocess them and so on. It is an interesting factory. If any member here would like to look through the two parts of the factory, I would be very happy to arrange something.

Mr Valentine - That would be good, I would like that.

Mr DEAN - I will look at that and take it further with them. It is certainly worth looking at.

Ms Rattray - An electorate tour.

Mr DEAN - I do not think I will be doing any electorate tours at this stage.

The member for McIntyre touched on the container refund scheme. Delivery of the scheme is set to occur in 2022 and this will be some five to six years after the honourable Greg Hall called for its introduction. He was passionate about it and is not unreasonable to question why it is taking so long. When I read this in the State of the State address, I wrote next to it 'The toad will be pleased'. It has worked in South Australia for 40 years.

I will quote from a document on this scheme in South Australia -

South Australia introduced its container deposit legislation (CDL) in 1977, and in 2017 celebrated its 40th anniversary. Our container deposit scheme continues to be a highly successful environmental program aimed at litter reduction and resource recovery.

...

South Australia leads the nation in the recovery, recycling and litter reduction of beverage containers with a current, overall return rate of 76.4%. With the refund scheme, beverage containers make up only 2.8% of litter.

The member for McIntyre was saying she could walk every 20 metres or so and pick up some of these containers. In South Australia it only makes up 2.8 per cent of the litter. We are always going to have litter. It does not matter what we do we, we have those bogans out there, unfortunately, who believe it is their right to toss their rubbish out the window wherever they are and it does not matter when or what it is, they do it.

Ms Forrest - I am not sure if it is 'bogans', for the want of a replacement for that terrible word, who do that. I think that is very much a generalisation. There are many people who throw rubbish out.

Mr DEAN - I am probably, in a way, classifying those who do that as 'bogans'; maybe it is a strong word, but why would you do it?

Ms Forrest - People have no regard for the law.

Mr DEAN - No regard for the law whatsoever and no regard for the environment, more importantly. The look is enough, but they just do not consider it at all.

Ms Rattray - They must see what we see when we drive around.

Ms Forrest - No, some of them do not.

Mr DEAN - No, they do not.

Ms Forrest - You know how some people do not see mess on the floor. Not naming anyone in particular.

Mr DEAN - Just a further quote -

In 2018-19, over 612 million containers (41 372 tonnes) were returned to collection depots for recycling.

That is in South Australia. A huge amount. I mentioned the good article in the paper yesterday. It refers to the container situation somewhere here. It is headed, 'Container Scheme Allows Tasmanians to Share the Benefits.' That article was written by Jeff Maguire, the Coca-Cola Amatil's group head of container deposit scheme development and implementation, and Edward Dowse, who is the Lion Company's commercial manager, container deposit scheme. It was written by both those gentlemen. They are urging the Tasmanian Government to get on with bringing this to fruition so it can start working and operating. They refer to the other states; some other states now have it and Western Australia is coming online later this year with a container refund payment. A good article on that point.

Police - just a short comment on police. The additional police are welcomed and more so because in the last financial year, according to the 2018-19 annual report, the numbers in Launceston or in the Northern District increased by a full-time nine from 238 to 247, but decreased by three part-time officers. It is difficult to understand the numbers because Southern District, according to the annual report saw no additional full-time police, but an additional three part-time members.

How many additional police went to Glenorchy and Bridgewater, as the Premier mentions in the State of the State address? The additions must have occurred since July 2019 because they do not show up in the 2018-19 annual report. That is the reason I ask the question. It must be a similar situation with the Western District, as according to the annual report, they lost one full-time member. How many new police went to Burnie, Devonport and Smithton and when? There is a contradiction here. It must have happened since the 2018-19 annual report was put together.

Extra police to a number of outstations are promised for this year and that will be watched closely. From a northern perspective, it would be good to see Deloraine, Scottsdale and George Town all with sufficient numbers to become 24-hour stations. Currently, in the Northern District,

Launceston station is the only 24-hour station in the district and it is expected to serve to some extent as far as Deloraine to Campbell Town, St Helens to Scottsdale, to George Town and everywhere in between.

While we have police on call, it is far from a satisfactory situation for any person outside Launceston requiring quick police attendance. Sadly, Launceston is experiencing a huge amount of crime. I feel for the commander there, Brett Smith, who is doing a great job. He is doing great work. He is a hardworking man and intent on lowering the crime rate in that area. As I said, he is doing a lot of work to do that and making the changes necessary. He is not just sitting back with his head in the sand, hoping it happens. He is out there doing his very best.

We have had seven or eight shootings in the Launceston area in the last few weeks. We had another one on Tuesday night with the person being admitted to hospital. The sad thing is that they are uncooperative, are not supporting any inquiries or investigations and require the hospital, with the stresses and strains it has, to carry out the work needed to bring that person into good health again. It is beyond me.

Mr Armstrong - Have shootings increased over the past few years?

Mr DEAN - I am not going to say whether they have increased. They have certainly increased in Launceston over the past period. Crime goes in waves. Having been there, I know what happens. One day crime is up here and then it drops away. You get on top of it and it is back up again. It depends who has been released from jail. It depends who has been paroled. It depends on who is out and about again. Police can follow it. They look at those who are being released from jail - as I did. As soon as a certain person has been released from jail, you know your businesses are going to be hit, you know that these crimes are going to occur again. You target them and watch them as best you can and you pick them up again - sadly, in a very short period of time. It is a sad fact of life.

Whether shootings have increased or not, I cannot answer that. I will be able to do that when I speak on the police annual report, hopefully next week. Launceston is going through a bad time right now. That is why the numbers have to be increased. I fought for it when I was a commander of police. I fought for it for years - but my pleas fell on deaf ears. Now it is finally getting through that one of the reasons for that is that police numbers there are not where they ought to be, not at similar levels to the Southern District and the Western District.

I have a son in the Special Operations Group, so I have a slight conflict of interest. We are waiting for a full-time SOG rapid response team. The Police Association of Tasmania has been wanting this for a long time. The Premier tells us four officers will start the first stage of a full-time response team, but he does not tell us what the positions will be. I received answers to a number of questions yesterday, and I am now satisfied on where this is going, so I do not need to take that any further. It is a full-time core SOG capability. I will probably ask this question on notice: what will be the numbers in a full-time core SOG capability?

I was interested in the reports in relation to the mandated safe levels at 24-hour stations. I ask that all members in this place support mandatory safe levels of police in 24-hour stations. This is a welcome move. It pleases the Police Association of Tasmania, which has worked on it for a long time. It will please those police who attend violent and serious situations without proper and effective back-up because the shift numbers are not what they should be as police are absent.

Nowhere else I am aware of could operate its workforce's shift function without adequate and mandated numbers, as happens with the police. I understand there are mandated levels for nurses, prison officers, fire service and, I think, Ambulance Tasmania. A similar situation should apply with police. Probably more importantly because of the violent situations that police are expected to attend to, particularly on 24-hour shifts through the night when very few people are working. That is a welcome position. It will be interesting to see how it works.

Ice police have been mentioned. The six specialist ice police arrive when there is a call to legalise the taking of drugs, including ice. I have read that in the papers. I cannot understand the logic behind anybody wanting to legalise the taking of ice and those stronger drugs. Ice is behind many murders. Ice is behind a lot of the serious crime that is occurring. You ask a guy at Mayfield - I will give you his name; he is happy to talk to anybody - whose son had a great job. He was a great young fellow. He lost his job, immediately became entangled in ice, went off the ropes and committed some very serious crimes. Robberies, arson, motor vehicle stealing and a number of others. He is now on bail with strict conditions. His father says that the turnaround in that kid is back to where it was. He is now off ice and is again a strong and good member of that family. I hope this comes out in his trial. I do not want to go into much detail because the trial has not been concluded.

It is good to see six specialist police positions. I take it they will be domiciled in Hobart with a state responsibility. It will be interesting to see where they go and what they do. There is a huge amount of work in this area for police. I think it is a good move.

Tourism has been mentioned. Triumphant Tasmania - we certainly did well.

Ms Forrest - It is all about to change.

Mr DEAN - You are right. We did well at the Qantas Australian Tourism Awards. The results identify the strong position Tasmania holds on tourist sites in Australia. As the member for Murchison said, unfortunately it could change.

Ms Forrest - It will change. It will. The word out there is that already there is an enormous impact on the operators out there. It has already happened.

Mrs Hiscutt - My contact in Queenstown, who owns a motor lodge there, has already lost \$15 000 in cancellations.

Ms Forrest - It is already happening. Businesses are going to go out of business.

Mr DEAN - I just feel so sorry. The hotel licensee, the one just across the road, said that the morning Dark Mofu was cancelled, eight people phoned and cancelled their accommodation shortly thereafter. The impact will be enormous.

If you look at those Qantas awards, winning 17 medals, including seven gold, was a great effort. Who got the gold? Port Arthur site, gold; Ashdowns of Dover, gold; the Maria Island Walk, gold.

Ms Forrest - I was at those awards. It was a pretty sombre affair because the event was organised outside and then the rain was so bad in Canberra, they had to move into a different facility at the last minute. Everyone was very aware of the coronavirus issue. It was a pretty measured affair because of that because another matter was unfolding as they feared.

Mr DEAN - Thank you. Just to mention the other gold winners at that award night. Roaring 40s Kayaking, MyState Australian Wooden Boat Festival, Ibis Styles Hobart hotel -

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

QUESTIONS

Transfer of Former St Helens Hospital Site

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

[2.32 p.m.]

- (1) Has the transfer of the former St Helens District Hospital site to the Department of Communities Tasmania been finalised?
- (2) If not, when is this to occur, given that in August 2009 this was to take place in the near future?
- (3) Has the community consultation process been completed on what will happen to the site?
- (4) If yes, what are the outcomes?
- (5) If not, when is this processing intended to be concluded?

ANSWER

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

Before I start, the Leader's office was inundated with questions just before we came back to parliament. I thank my advisor, Will Coats, who has done a wonderful job in getting nearly all the answers here. I will proceed with this one -

- (1) The operational responsibility for the site was formally transferred to the Department of Communities Tasmania from the Department of Health earlier this year.
- (2) A community consultation session was held in July 2019 with staff from both the Department of Communities Tasmania and the Break O'Day Council. The session was well attended and a number of ideas were suggested, including a community hub and activity centre, respite care, a crisis and affordable housing development, a new neighbourhood house, a fitness and preventative health centre, and a gallery and art space.
- (3) The Government welcomes community input, and the Department of Communities Tasmania will continue to work closely with council to further refine the ideas and test the feasibility for the future of the site. I am advised this will include a needs analysis as well as financial and economic analysis of the options raised.

- (4) The department will continue to undertake analysis and will communicate further information to the local community at an appropriate time.

Revised Estimates Report 2019-20

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

[2.34 p.m.]

I refer to the Revised Estimates Report 2019-20 -

- (1) How much of the grants of \$3923.3 million - the revised estimate for 2019-20 as per the income statement on page 18 of the report - have already been included in the income statement in prior years?
- (2) If double counting of income has occurred, should this not be disclosed in the Revised Estimates Report - RER?
- (3) What are the unspent grant amounts projected for 2019-20 and for the three years of the forward Estimates, and where do these appear on the balance sheets on page 54 of the RER?

ANSWER

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

- (1) Budget Estimates are prepared at a particular point in time and reflect the best estimates of the likely outcomes for a particular year. Following the date of the preparation of a particular set of budget Estimates, the Estimates, whether they be for revenues, expenditure, grants or other sources of revenue, will change for a wide variety of reasons. These changes do not reflect double counting as they are removed from the Estimates for one year and are not included in actual outcomes and included in the Estimates for the revised year.

As at the 30 June 2019, there was a one-off transaction to AASB 15 Revenue from Contracts with Customers. The impact of this new accounting standard was detailed in Appendix 1.2 Impact of New Accounting Standards of budget paper no. 1, published in May 2019. The introduction of this accounting standard had implications for the treatment of revenue from the Australian Government, in particular, revenue relating to national partnership payments. As a result of the transition process necessitated by the introduction of the new accounting standard, some revenues previously recognised under the former accounting treatment will be recognised in 2019-20 or subsequent budget years. There is no double counting of this revenue. This is because, as at the 30 June 2019, an adjustment was required to be made to equity in the Government's balance sheet to reflect the removal of the previous year's revenue impact. This adjustment can be seen on page 19 on the 2019-20 Revised Estimates Report, on the line for 'Other non-owner movements in Equity'.

- (2) As noted in (1), there has been no double counting for revenue.
- (3) In relation to the impact of the new accounting standard AASB 15 Revenue from Contracts with Customers, the adjustment of around \$242.4 million is reflected in the balance sheet on page 54 of the Revised Estimates Report 2019-20 within Other liabilities. This amount

represents revenue that is to be matched against expenditure over the budget and forward Estimates period and beyond.

Feral Deer - Meat Production

Mr FINCH to LEADER of the GOVERNMENT in the LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL, Mrs HISCUTT

[2.38 p.m.]

- (1) Is the Government considering allowing wild deer to be processed commercially for meat, given the overpopulation of feral deer and the problem they pose for farmers?
- (2) Is the Government aware that the present ban on processing wild deer for meat results in many thousands of wild deer shot to protect farm crops simply being left to rot?
- (3) Given large-scale markets for venison, which now have to be supplied from other states, what is the argument against processing Tasmanian feral deer for food?

ANSWER

Mr President, I thank the member for Rosevears for his question.

The Government is implementing in full its comprehensive response to the 2017 Legislative Council inquiry into the wild fallow deer population in Tasmania.

Our policy on wild deer is clear and balanced, and has been publicly available since 2017; it is advised by the new Tasmanian Game Council, chaired by former MLC Greg Hall.

Wild fallow deer are not classified as feral animals in Tasmania. Rather, they are partially protected wildlife under the Nature Conservation Act 2002. The Government's focus is on maintaining a sensible balance between managing the impact of deer on our important primary industries and natural environment and maintaining a deer herd as a traditional hunting resource.

The Government recognises that farmers, foresters and community members have expressed the desire to use deer taken under crop protection permits for commercial purposes. The Government's policy is clear in this regard. We acknowledge there is genuine interest and potential in developing value-added and branded wild deer products. We are committed to evaluating the feasibility of a trial of deer farmers and landholders to develop value-added commercial wild deer products, and are progressing this in collaboration with the Tasmanian Game Council.

This approach considers the issues raised during the Legislative Council inquiry regarding potential commercialisation, including impacts on deer farmers and associated downstream jobs, quality control of wild product, food health and safety, impact on recreational hunting, and arrangements between landholders and hunters, law enforcement risks and regulating product in supply chains.

Farmed or wild shot animals must be processed in a manner that meets the requirements of the Primary Produce Safety Act 2011, and the Food Act 2003. Advice from Game Services Tasmania is that information provided by landholders and hunters suggests the carcasses of almost all wild

fallow deer shot under crop protection permits are utilised either for human consumption or pet food.

TT-Line - COVID-19 - Financial and Operational Risks

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

[2.41 p.m.]

- (1) With regard to the potential impact of COVID-19 on TT-Line, what specific risks, including financial and operational, have been identified by TT-Line?
- (2) What risk management controls are in place to address and or mitigate each of these risks?
- (3) What measures are being taken to educate and inform staff and customers of TT-Line to reduce risk?

ANSWER

Mr President, I thank the member for Murchison for her question. My answer is qualified - it was received after question time yesterday, so it may not be up to date today with regard to TT-Line.

Ms Forrest - We ran out of time, and I did not get a turn on Tuesday.

Mrs HISCUTT - For (1), TT-Line is working with federal and state authorities in relation to COVID-19. It will continue to provide information to its passengers and crew in line with that provided by authorities, to limit the spread of COVID-19. It is expected there will be some financial repercussions from COVID-19 on the company as customers make decisions about their travel plans into the future.

- (2) TT-Line is part of the Tasmanian Government's COVID-19 North Western State Emergency Management Committee, which will provide urgent health alerts to the company. On the vessels, the following information can be advised - I would like to put that precursor again: this is a moveable feast.

Ms Forrest - It obviously will have changed.

Mrs HISCUTT - What was appropriate yesterday may not be appropriate today, or tomorrow, for that matter -

- A medical attendant is on board at all times and will work with the crew to implement procedures should any passenger or crew member present with symptoms. TT-Line is actively mitigating risks of further infection through public information on board vessels as well as providing facilities to isolate its suspected cases. Two cabins per ship have been allocated for isolation purposes should a passenger or crew member report with symptoms.
- TT-Line can use communications on board vessels to increase passenger awareness of how to adopt risk-reducing behaviours while in public areas of the ship. The digital boards on the

vessel provide COVID-19 information. Announcements are made on board regarding COVID-19.

- Hand sanitation stations are situated in key areas on all main decks of the vessel.
 - After each journey the ship is cleaned. This includes cleaning and disinfecting surfaces in cabins and common areas.
 - There is no recirculation of air on the vessels. All accommodation spaces on the vessel are supplied with conditioned air in a total loss system, where fresh outside air is drawn into the system and cooled, and/or heated as required. An exhaust air fan then removes air from the space, and expels it into the atmosphere.
 - If required, TT-Line is in a position to restrict total passenger numbers on individual sailings.
- (3) TT-Line is providing information to staff from a number of sources, including: Tasmanian Department of Health, 'Simple things you can do to protect yourself from novel coronavirus (COVID-19)'; Johari Consulting, 'Looking out for your mental health during the coronavirus outbreak'; Newport and Wildman, consultants, 'Support for your people through the international coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak'; and TT-Line's own information, 'What to do if a suspected case of COVID-19 presents on board or at the terminal or after travelling on board'.

Customers booking online are provided with information in relation to COVID-19 on the company's website before the booking process. Customers calling the customer contact centre via phone are advised by a pre-recorded voice message. That message reads -

Thank you for calling the *Spirit of Tasmania*. *Spirit of Tasmania* will continue to operate its daily Bass Strait crossing as normal. Passengers must comply with Australian Government guidelines relating to novel coronavirus before booking and travelling with us. For more information please visit the Home Affairs website.

Customers who have booked with the company will receive more information sheets on COVID-19 with their e-tickets.

I can imagine some of those will have changed by now.

AFL - Decision to Continue Season

Ms RATTRAY to MINISTER for SPORT and RECREATION, Ms HOWLETT

[2.46 p.m.]

I noticed the AFL has decided to play AFL games tonight. Given that Tasmania is not playing any sport - maybe golf is an exception, but all other events have been cancelled - I am interested in what directions AFL Tasmania has had from the AFL big guys in relation to this particular -

Ms Forrest - A rugby player has been diagnosed as positive for COVID-19.

Mr Dean - They are playing as well.

Ms RATTRAY - Does the minister understand why? There are no spectators at the stadium tonight, but still they are going ahead with the game. It is a contact sport.

ANSWER

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

Last night the AFL agreed that it would continue the AFL season. It is going to reduce the season to 17 rounds. With the strict new border controls introduced here, the eight Tasmanian games are unlikely to go ahead. There is still a chance they might. Everything is moving so quickly, it is unlikely they will.

Ms Forrest - When is the first Tassie game?

Ms HOWLETT - The first Tassie game is not until July. At the moment, it is a day-by-day proposition with the AFL. As far as players self-quarantining when they come here, we have that in place - 14 days for anyone coming into Tasmania. It is a matter of waiting to see what occurs.

AFL - Decision to Continue Season - Consequences

Ms RATTRAY to MINISTER for SPORT and RECREATION, Ms HOWLETT

[2.49 p.m.]

In light of what the minister has just said, has the Tasmanian Government considered holding back its contribution to the AFL teams that will not be coming to Tasmania and using that money to support Tasmanian clubs who will be under extreme pressure, due to COVID-19, for this season?

ANSWER

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

It will be a matter for the Premier to have discussions with AFL House in the coming days or weeks, whenever it is possible.

Ms Rattray - I would like you to take that suggestion to the Premier. Thank you.

Ms HOWLETT - Certainly.

Oxycodone Addiction and Availability of Treatments

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

[2.50 p.m.]

The current Australian Criminal Intelligence Commission National Wastewater Drug Monitoring Program report indicates that Hobart has the highest city use of the opioid oxycodone, which has a very high potential for addiction. Although oxycodone can be legally prescribed and consumed and wastewater analysis cannot distinguish between legal and recreational use, I note that Tasmania is one of the few jurisdictions in the country to offer the anti-opioid overdose drug naloxone only through pharmacies and not community health providers.

Will the honourable leader please advise -

- (1) Do the Department of Health and Human Services and the Government believe this correlation between high oxycodone use and low naloxone availability is worth investigating?
- (2) If not, why not?
- (3) If this is to be investigated, can the Leader please indicate what plans are in place to do so?
- (4) Will widening of the scope for availability for naloxone be considered?

ANSWER

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

(1) to (4)

The Department of Health and Human Services is assessing the merits of improving access to naloxone in Tasmania and will be informed by the findings of current national pilot programs while also considering the needs and circumstances of Tasmania.

Honourable member for Launceston, the Health department is under extreme pressure at the moment and they can only provide that little snippet for me at the minute. I did press them a little, but that is all I was able to get. If you are not happy with that answer, I am quite happy to take that back as long as you are happy to wait for it. We have a lot of Health questions to work through now.

Ms Armitage - In the current circumstances, I would probably be happy to give them a little bit more time.

Mrs HISCUTT - Thank you very much. It may take a little while.

Existing AFL Contracts - Hawthorn and North Melbourne

Mr DEAN to MINISTER for SPORT and RECREATION, Ms HOWLETT

[2.52 p.m.]

The contracts currently in place with Hawthorn and North Melbourne are for them to play seven games in Tasmania this year.

- (1) What will happen in relation to that contracted position and the moneys the Tasmanian Government, sponsors and so on pay to these clubs?
- (2) It looks like they will not be playing those games in Tasmania because of what is going on. Is this matter being discussed with Hawthorn and North Melbourne?

The AFL does not necessarily come into that part of it. Our contract is in existence for them to play those games here, which is a great boost to the economy of the state.

ANSWER

Mr President, I thank the member for Windermere for his question.

As the Premier said this morning, he will need to speak to the North Melbourne and Hawthorn football clubs and the AFL. They will chat about any reimbursements of matches that will not be taking place in Tasmania. These and any other matters will be worked through with the relevant parties, and it is too early to comment on that at this stage. Understandably, the coronavirus is the main focus at the moment, and we are in very difficult and trying times -

Mr Dean - I take it we will be kept up to date on what is happening in this area?

Ms HOWLETT - Absolutely, the Premier has had a constructive and positive meeting with the AFL Chief Executive, Gillon McLachlan, and the Tasmanian Liberal Government is committed to securing the AFL and the AFLW here. At this stage we are focusing on what is occurring at the moment in these difficult times and more discussions will be had.

Hydro Tasmania - Provision for Onerous Contracts

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

[2.54.p.m.]

I refer to the 2019 annual report for Hydro Tasmania. Note 16 on page 51 of that report includes an amount of \$195.83 million recognised as an additional provision for onerous contracts. What does this relate to?

ANSWER

I thank the member for Murchison for her question.

Hydro Tasmania follows accounting standards on how to recognise onerous contracts relating to the sale and purchase of certain products on its balance sheet. The contract themselves are commercial-in-confidence.

Tasmania Police - Leave

Mr DEAN to LEADER of the GOVERNMENT in the LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL, Mrs HISCUTT

[2.55 p.m.]

- (1) How many sworn police, as at 29 February 2020 - it is just a date I selected - were on special leave, leave without pay, extended work/sick leave or any other form of special leave?
- (2) What are the numbers in each category?

ANSWER

Mr President, I thank the member for Windermere for his question.

- (1) There were 55 sworn police officers on leave without pay, workers compensation or any other form of special leave as at 29 February 2020.
- (2) There were 24 sworn police officers on leave without pay; 21 on workers compensation; seven on sick leave greater than 20 days; and three on maternity leave as at 29 February 2020.

TasPorts - COVID-19

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

[2.56 p.m.]

I hope we get some information on the financial performance because we did not get that with TT-Line; it was all about the other risks.

With regard to the potential impact of COVID-19 on the operations and financial performance of TasPorts -

- (1) What specific risks, including financial and operational, have been identified by TasPorts relating to COVID-19?
- (2) What risk management controls were in place to address and/or mitigate each of these risks?
- (3) What measures have been taken to educate and inform staff and customers of TasPorts to reduce risk?

ANSWER

Mr President, I thank the member for Murchison for her question. I ask her to please bear in mind that this answer was prepared - we took a lot of questions after question time yesterday.

Ms Forrest - This one was in last week.

Mrs HISCUTT - I want to emphasise that the answer was ready prior to today's announcement.

- (1) TasPorts is currently undertaking a thorough risk analysis, both financial and operational, to understand the potential impacts of COVID-19 on industry sectors, including the flow-on effect

on trade volumes. TasPorts' primary objective is to ensure that Tasmanian ports remain open and operational to facilitate critical trade activity, including the import of fuel and essential goods and services; export of commodities to national and international markets, including forest products and bulk minerals; and ensuring the health and safety of employees remains paramount along with ensuring highest standards of maritime safety in Tasmanian waters.

- (2) Financially, TasPorts is undertaking significant steps to develop a resilient, robust business model. TasPorts' business model is not financially reliant on a single customer or industry sector, and has successfully navigated previous trade disruptions, including the global financial crisis. Operationally, TasPorts is continuing to work alongside government agencies, including the Department of Health and Australian border protection to facilitate the implementation of government measures in responding to COVID-19.

In addition, in consultation with government, TasPorts has also implemented the following measures: prior to coming into port, ships are required to provide information on crew and passenger health, including health monitoring along with standard biosecurity declaration information; and in addition, all ships departing Italy, Iran, South Korea and China must have passed a 14-day period before they may berth at a Tasmanian port -

Ms Forrest - You could add any other country in the world to that list.

Mrs HISCUTT - Well, that is possibly true, but this is correct as at when the answer was written. All personnel on board vessels originating from Italy, Iran, South Korea or China, or any vessels where crews have come from or transited through Italy, Iran, South Korea and China will be required to remain on board the vessel when in port. If, for operational reasons, they must leave the vessel, they are required to wear protective clothing and limit contact with port staff.

TasPorts has also supplied stocks of masks, glasses, gloves, personal hand sanitiser and sanitising wet wipes to operational employees at each site around the state. On Sunday, 15 March 2020, the Tasmanian Government directed TasPorts to suspend all cruise ship visits to Tasmanian ports until 30 June 2020, at which time a review will be undertaken. When this direction was provided, there were 21 remaining scheduled cruise ships, including five to Hobart, five to Burnie and two to Port Arthur. We know now that that information has been updated.

Following the Government's direction, TasPorts has worked, and continues to work, closely with impacted cruise ship lines and industry stakeholders to facilitate and enable safe diversions of cruise ships to other ports. At this time, sea freight operations between Tasmania and mainland Australia continue as normal. TasPorts is working, and will continue to work, alongside government and key customers to facilitate trade for the benefit of Tasmania.

- (3) TasPorts is proactively responding to the evolving COVID-19 issue and is providing regular updates, both internationally and externally, including regular updates to all employees, internal briefings for senior leaders, implementation of signage at sites to remind employees of simple workplace health and hygiene, and regular updates on TasPorts external website, including an online form for any inquiries. TasPorts has been regularly meeting and communicating with government agencies to ensure the most up-to-date information is available to its employees, customers and local communities.

In early March, TasPorts implemented a restriction of non-essential interstate and international business travel for an indefinite period of time for all employees. I think all members know some of those conditions have been updated.

Biosecurity Tasmania

Mr FINCH to LEADER of the GOVERNMENT in the LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL, Mrs HISCUTT -

[3.02 p.m.]

Three important questions on behalf of the constituents, so do not shoot the messenger.

- (1) Is it a fact Biosecurity Tasmanian is to stop paying a share of the import cost of flowers brought here from Victoria?
- (2) Is it true the cost has risen from \$27.54 to \$55.08?
- (3) If this is the case, why has Biosecurity Tasmania stopped helping small Tasmanian florist businesses?

ANSWER

Mr President, I thank the member for Rosevears for his questions on behalf of his constituents. That is good to see.

- (1) In October 2019, the fees relating to Biosecurity's examination of imported goods were increased. Changes in our biosecurity risk profile meant Tasmania's biosecurity system also needed to change and adapt in order to remain effective, and to maximise the benefits gained from a robust biosecurity system.

Before the increases were implemented, a regulatory impact statement was released for public consultation in July 2019. The RIS provided complete information of the changes to fees, plus specific inspection services, and an assessment of the known impacts of the changes and the initiatives being supported to strengthen Tasmania's biosecurity systems.

The importation of commercial consignments of goods, including flowers, into the state is a significant contributor to the biosecurity risk to Tasmania, and it is reasonable the cost of the biosecurity system is shared between the beneficiaries of biosecurity and significant contributors to biosecurity risk.

- (2) The increase in fees was kept well below direct cost and full cost-recovery levels, meaning the state still significantly subsidises the true cost of the service. Analysis undertaken by Biosecurity Tasmania found the actual direct cost, not the full cost, to be \$54.19 per 15-minute inspection, which rounds out at \$216.75 per hour for delivery of services, including travel time. On 2 October 2019 the fees for biosecurity inspections on a weekday in working hours were increased from \$19.44 per 15 minutes to \$27.54 per 15 minutes. A typical cut flower consignment will be charged a fee of 30 minutes, consisting of a paperwork check and a physical inspection of cut flowers. This means the fees have increased for a typical cut flower consignment from \$38.88 to \$55.08.

- (3) The state is committed to working with stakeholders to minimise the impact the increasing fees may have. If any businesses feel they have been unreasonably impacted, they should contact Biosecurity Tasmania to discuss their situation.

PREMIER'S ADDRESS

Resumed from above.

[3.06 p.m.]

Mr DEAN (Windermere) - Mr President, before the adjournment, I was talking about tourism. I was on the point of talking about the Qantas Australian Tourism Awards, and I mentioned our gold award winners. There were also a number of silver and bronze award winners; I do not want to forget them either, because it is very important to get to that level. It is an indication of how important our tourism is, and how good our people who are involved in tourism are. It is a high level.

As the member for Murchison rightly pointed out, tourism is going to be seriously dented over the next months, sadly.

I also raised T21 at one stage. T21 has never been so urgent as it is now. A lot of work is being done in China, and I guess a number of people here are following the research being done there now. We know very well they have every reason to do it, I might add. They are also doing a lot of research on smoking and coronavirus. The figure coming out at this stage is that people who smoke are, I think, up to 14 times more likely to get the disease, and suffer quite intensely if they get it. Much more work is still being done on that.

For the member for McIntyre's information, it goes to show that Australia does in fact revolve around AFL and NRL football; both are being played at this stage. It makes you wonder, really.

Ms Rattray - Contact sport.

Mr DEAN - You are right. As a number of people have said, it is a contact sport. They cannot not make contact - that is what both games are about. It will be interesting how long it proceeds, and what is going on.

We were talking about tourism, and the Premier in his State of the State address talked about driving tourism in the regional areas, and how important this is. It is extremely important. That came out of a study I was involved in a number of years ago. It came out during the built heritage tourism inquiry - the need to get tourists into the regional areas where we have a lot of attractions and a lot of things happening, and what we need to do that. The Premier is now recognising the importance of that, and all people involved in tourism are aware of that as well.

There is no better chance here than ensuring the North East Line, which I would like to talk about. The North East Line not only provides an opportunity for the younger people and people who are able to ride bicycles, but there must also be an opportunity for those many mature people who do not ride bikes to get into those areas as well.

Just as important, if you look at the tourists coming to this state, they would go into that area if they had the ability to do so - in other words, heritage rail.

We cannot allow the destruction of the rail line between Lilydale Falls and Miena. It is the greatest tourist attraction section of the North East Line by far. It includes the magnificent Denison Gorge and the tunnel at Tunnel. This is the reason the rail trail wants access to that area. As came out of the briefings in this Chamber, there ought to be an opening for heritage rail, Launceston and North East Railway - LNER - to get into that area.

What happens up there will be watched very closely. The Government needs to say that the area from Lilydale Falls to Miena will be a combined rail trail and heritage rail. It is the most significant area. Take that away, and you do not have that drawcard. The drawcard for heritage rail and tourism is Bridestowe lavender farm.

The number of visitors to that area is growing immensely. Mr Ravens has indicated he will put on buses to meet a heritage train to transport those people to his business, the lavender farm, and back again.

It has to be kept open. We were given certain undertakings in this place. I ask that the Government watch this very closely.

It is up to the Government as to what infrastructure can be removed. It must sign off on that. It is up to the Premier, not the Dorset Council, to decide what infrastructure can be sold. We have to protect that area, whatever happens.

I will read a letter written by LNER and provided to the Launceston City Council a couple of weeks ago -

I would like to address the North-East Corridor and the resolution of this Council of the 24th September 2018.

As you are aware the Dorset Council has been declared corridor manager between Lilydale Falls and Tullendena.

What will be the role of the Council in relation to the removal of rail infrastructure that falls within the City of Launceston boundary.

Will the City of Launceston Council be the planning authority to consider development application from the Corridor Manager for alternate use of the Lilydale Falls - Wyena section of the line.

How will the City of Launceston deal with the development applications under the Land Use Planning and Approvals Act and especially the consultative process.

Is Council aware that the lease has been signed by LNER and is about to be formalised between State Growth and LNER for the 14.7km section of the line between Turners Marsh and Lilydale and that an affordable solution for the \$200mill insurance requirement is likely with a joint policy with the 4 main tourist railways using crown infrastructure and government support.

This will enable a tourist attraction of initially the rail track rider type vehicles while we have \$30mill coverage and the next stage will be the rail car, once the \$200mill policy is in place.

LNER is working with the state government to secure access to main Line at Coldwater Creek to enable the operations out of Launceston. This is a further 8.86km and we are hopeful of securing rail operations to the Lilydale Falls - 0.5km from Lilydale.

We would welcome an opportunity to meet Council at your convenience to discuss both the Lilydale Falls-Wyena 14.5km section of track which we believe will provide a positive marketable rail destination of the tunnel, Dennison Gorge and bus links to Bridestowe Lavender Farm from Launceston and the wider regional opportunities. It would be an absolute travesty if this section of track was not available for rail use once we demonstrate that we have the higher value proposition use for this section.

Is Council aware that Dorset Council cannot remove rail infrastructure to Wyena unless they have planning approval to do so?

I would say without the approval of the Premier in fact to do that.

I point out that this line is being watched very closely as to what will happen. They are not against - and I have to be careful here - rail, trail and bicycles. What they are saying is that we need to work together. We can do that and together we can make this work. We can make it work together. That is what they are about and what we should concentrate on particularly for that section of line I referred to.

Regarding education and the initiative for the three-year-olds. A similar initiative was discussed in this place at some length during the changes to the Education Act and so on. It is good to see that is operating and successful. The strategy is now in place in that regard, but as I raised in this place during the debate, and it did not get through, we need to make sure the right families and kids are being targeted - the three-year-olds who are in families at greatest risk of issues moving forward in their lives. We have to make sure we are getting those children into this early age group education. Very important indeed and I hope they are concentrating on this. It is all very well to have three-year-olds from families that will be supported and who we know are going to do well. It is those other children we should be concentrating on - the ones who need the help and support and what this was all about. It was getting those children an opportunity they do not have. Has this happened?

I wanted to mention Queechy while I have an opportunity and extending year 12 to all high schools. I have supported the extension of year 12 but I still do not support the extension of year 12 in those schools within a dropkick or a cricket pitch, whatever you want to use, of the colleges.

Mr Valentine - A short dropkick.

Ms Rattray - I think that is a stab pass.

Mr DEAN - A stab pass now. In my footballing days, it was always a dropkick. It shows how old I am.

We will see changes. We have two great colleges in Launceston, LC and Newstead College. The Newstead College has the greater opportunity for expansion than LC. It has the area and wide-open spaces. It is a great building. It is a great place. I would not like to see anything happen that could be to the detriment of that college. We need to watch this.

Queechy is already at a high level of attendance and without facility changes, extensions and this century's facilities and a gymnasium/amenity block that can be used, all sorts of troubles are likely to occur. I have raised with the Premier and Premier's advisers that it is a shame we have a school in this state - I do not know whether there any other schools - that has a gymnasium/amenity block that cannot be used. It does not meet the occupational health and safety standards, the hygiene standards, and is blocked off. Parts of it are blocked off, and it has been like that for a number of years. Something has to happen. The department tells me it does not have the money for all the changes that need to be made at Queechy. A lot of changes have occurred. There has been a lot of new building put in at Queechy, but there is still a long way to go. I can accept if they want to put off the other changes to the last century's classrooms they are using, but they have to do something about this amenities block, for hygiene purposes and for the benefit of these kids at Queechy.

They need to address some money towards fixing those up. I raised this with the minister's adviser only last week, and it was indicated that, yes, there could be a way forward. However, I would not like to see changes there impact on putting off the further extensions that need to be done. I would not like to see that used for the purpose of postponing further works that have to be done as well. The amenities block has to be attended to. It is an absolute must. That is the middle ground.

I will touch on the AFL team. We are moving forward with it. I admire what the Premier has done, and what the Brett Godfrey group has done in relation to that. A strong position was put to the AFL as to why it should include a Tasmanian side in the future. It will be very difficult for the AFL to come up with a strong reason, an acceptable reason, as to why they will not accept a Tasmanian team moving forward. It will mean so much to Tasmania. Whether you like footy or not, it will mean so much to the economy of this state. We are told it will be 300-plus employees -

Ms Howlett - Three hundred and fifty.

Mr DEAN - Yes, you are right. That is probably being conservative, because of all of the others that will fit on the side and so on. It has so much going for it, and for the businesses, tourism and the economy, it will mean so much. We really do need that.

Some people might read some of the other mainland papers. I think it was in *The Advertiser*, the South Australian paper, where on Monday this week Graham Cornes said he was appalled - some of you would know Graham Cornes, a great footballer and coach - that the greater number of presidents of the AFL football teams did not accept and did not support Tasmania entering into the AFL. Further follow-ups were done and it looks like Graham Cornes has it all wrong, they did not go that far at all. A vote was not taken, and he was unintentionally misled and simply made an error. When I first had that information, I saw red, and thought 'Where do we go to from here?', but that is not right. If any member read it or heard about it, I am told it is not right and the presidents did not take a vote at all.

Mr Finch - Relax. Hose yourselves down.

Mr DEAN - Relax, settle down.

I want to finish with an important matter, as far as I and many people in this state are concerned. A media release was put out headed 'Understanding and preventing veteran suicide'. I thank the Government for its understanding and prevention of veteran suicide. At the last COAG meeting, this Government strongly supported setting up an inquiry in relation to this. As a returned serviceman, having been involved in active service, I know very well and understand exactly what is going on, and I understand the reasons for why there needs to be an inquiry into this area.

If you look at the number of veterans who have returned to this state and have sadly suicided, and who sadly suffered immensely as a result of their service, the numbers are quite extraordinary. I am very pleased our government has taken a very strong and supportive position in moving this matter and I thank them. I suspect Guy Barnett would have been involved in it, so I applaud him and the Premier for what is happening in that area.

Having said that, I note the State of the State address and thank you.

[3.25 p.m.]

Ms ARMITAGE (Launceston) - Mr President, a lot has happened since the Premier's State of the State address. The coronavirus has taken a terrible toll on our state with the cancellation, temporary closing or postponement of MONA, Targa, Supercars, weekend and weekday events from bowls to AFL, Agfest, swimming pools, Relay for Life, theatre, Queen Victoria Museum and Art Gallery, TMAG and many others, including our wonderful harvest market each Saturday morning in Launceston.

It is certainly a difficult time for our state. It is hoped people, while many are self-isolating, will remember to shop locally and holiday within our state. While a crisis often brings out the best in people, it also sometimes brings out the worst in people. It is sad to see the bulk-buying of essential items such as toilet paper, pasta, flour et cetera. This makes it very difficult for those who cannot afford to buy in bulk and need these essential items.

Ms Forrest - Are you aware people are now panic-buying Ventolin puffers? They have actually had to put them behind the counter in the pharmacies. There are people like me, who might need a puffer to save their life, not from coronavirus but from asthma, who cannot get it.

Ms ARMITAGE - I have seen advertisements on some internet sites saying that people need to stock up on medicines for four weeks supply, so perhaps that is part of the reason.

Ms Forrest - These are not asthmatics who are buying them.

Mr Dean - The problem may have started when a doctor on the radio the other day advised all people with medical issues to ensure they had four weeks of medical supplies.

Ms ARMITAGE - This is what I was saying. Prescription needs for four weeks. Unfortunately rumour and innuendo travel a lot faster than even the virus. It is a worry.

It is a difficult time for our hospitals and with winter coming up, it can only get worse. Launceston General Hospital has many challenges, particularly with regard to adequate specialists, sufficient nurses and beds. We are a country of baby boomers and unfortunately many of our local

specialists are reaching an age of retirement and it is not always easy to present a salary package competitive with other hospitals around the country to encourage relocating to LGH.

I note from answers to questions this week with regard to ENT surgeons, in the north-west, one ENT surgeon is employed as an ENT visiting medical specialist working 0.47 full-time equivalent. The LGH is currently searching for a permanent ENT specialist and continues to have on-call coverage provided by two local ENT visiting medical specialists for one week per month with urgent cases being referred to the Royal Hobart Hospital if required, with Hobart not much better off, so that is not the answer.

In Hobart there are two ENT surgeons as visiting medical officers, each working 0.09 FTE with a career medical officer and an ENT registrar also working full-time. This is a severe shortage and very grim as there is no capacity in public or private hospitals. What happens with a patient if there is a serious bleed and we do not have an ENT or plastic surgeon trained in head and neck?

I am pleased to see the new THS structure and it is hoped hospitals can again be in charge of their own destinies. Each hospital knows what is best for that area, rather than being dictated to by bureaucracy based in the south.

The emergency departments continue to be blocked by ambulance ramping, but it is more a lack of beds in the wards than problems with the Department of Emergency Medicine. The Department of Emergency Medicine would work perfectly well as an emergency department but does not perform well as a ward. There is nowhere to put patients so they stay in the emergency department. To get it right, we need more beds. We need a better system as basically, we are being killed by demographics.

To get the department functioning, we need to decongest it as the only overcrowding occurs in the emergency department. It is a well-known fact that the longer you stay in the emergency department, the greater your morbidity risk. We also need a purpose-built mental health facility. We need a dedicated standalone hospice for palliative care. We need more specialists and we need students, interns, residents and registrars who want to stay at the Launceston General Hospital. There was a time when it was the only place to work. We need to lift morale so it can be that place again.

With the coronavirus, the outlook is bleak, so let us do all we can to stay well. I feel for our extremely hardworking doctors, nurses, ancillary and other staff who have no option but to look after patients. They need support and appreciation, as we simply could not survive without them. It is a similar story for our police force, our emergency services, ambulance officers - the list goes on. We are fortunate to have so many dedicated people in our community. We should never forget to recognise them and appreciate the work they do.

To the planning scheme - having spent nine years on local council, I am well aware of the deficiencies and the intricacies of the Land Use Planning and Approvals Act. More than once I have seen people deflated, angry and left scratching their heads when something that seems so simple was refused. Refused not because the planner did not think it was reasonable or met many conditions of the planning scheme, but because at least one criterion was not permitted under the act. It is not just the big developers who are affected and whom we hear about regularly, it is also the everyday person - be it mum and dad, young couples renovating, or in some cases people making what seems a simple addition or change to their home.

We are seeing residential developments suffering in cases which can be characterised as vexatious and at times downright absurd. An example is a shed, which incidentally could not be seen from the road or other properties, proposed on a large rural residential block in a current rural living zone, with many of the neighbouring blocks already having sheds much larger. This constituent jumped through lots of hoops before being advised that under the current interim planning scheme, he cannot have greater outbuildings when combined of 150 square metres in this zone. However, he was advised that if he waited for the new statewide planning scheme, this would be discretionary and in all likelihood approved. Where is the common sense in all this?

The north of the state, Launceston in particular, has already seen two significant developments slip through its fingers due in part to burdensome and confusing planning and development regulations, with which they are expected to comply. As *The Examiner* has already amply reported, developers Errol Stewart and Josef Chromy have decided to move respective developments to the south of the state. The loss of these developments from Launceston translates into the loss of tens of millions of dollars of investment to our region. All developers need certainty and confidence to go forward, as well as a level of consistency across this small state.

The push for a statewide planning scheme goes back years, my recollection being it was to have been in place from 1 July 2017. A Tasmanian planning scheme is slated to deliver consistency in the planning controls applying across the state and provide the necessary flexibility to address local issues. To this end, the Tasmanian planning scheme would consist of state planning provisions which are the baseline standards to which all developments in municipalities must comply. The local provision schedules are council-specific and allow them to make variations to development applications to preserve local character, as local councils are best placed to determine specific requirements or unique places in their own municipalities.

A Tasmanian planning scheme still seems very much unsettled. Until it is, interim planning schemes are in place. Some degree of statewide standardisation is apparent under the interim schemes, but clearly some municipalities in the state are more attractive to developers than others. As I understand it, most councils submitted their draft local provision schedules in the latter half of 2019. It is expected that the entirety of the Tasmanian planning scheme is to be finalised and in place later this year. I believe the Tasmanian Planning Commission will publicly exhibit the draft provisions in the coming months. Following this, the commission will then provide final approval with sign-off by the relevant minister, allowing the statewide provisions to take effect. We have waited long enough and the consequences are already being felt.

Launceston is a city which is aspiring to be one of the great regional cities in Australia, if not the world. However, if the Tasmanian planning scheme is not implemented properly and expediently, we will become further ill prepared to meet the future needs that are quickly becoming apparent. With hundreds of millions of dollars being poured into our regions through the City Deal and the university transformation project, among other projects, we need to be thinking and acting quickly to ensure our infrastructure is well prepared to accommodate the associated growth in population, business and services. This means that our planning schemes also need to be similarly accommodating. Our regional cities have much to recommend them but we cannot idly allow their good qualities to speak for themselves. We must make our cities as appealing as possible to retain our families and young people as well as attract the vibrant future-focused professionals to our regions that we will increasingly rely on.

It was good to read today in the *Mercury* about the city infill living boom and very pleasing to see that an initiative of the Launceston City Deal aims to turn underused central Launceston properties into residential apartments.

The chamber of commerce's Neil Grose said nearly 40 developments were completed and sold in Launceston last year, with plenty more opportunities for development with vacant, underused space.

The Minister for State Growth, Michael Ferguson, said the city was seeing greater diversity in living options. People were starting to look at buildings behind city streets, alleyways, attics and an opportunity for an extra level to be added. That is driving a positive economy and one of the many reasons this state has the highest confidence in the nation. We need that, particularly in view of the coronavirus and people with jobs and things that may be under threat. It is good to see that there are other areas with something positive happening.

Another area that has great concern to me, apart from the planning, is the Building Act. I have been concerned with the Building Act and problems associated with it for quite a few years. For some, I have been hearing of issues with the Tasmanian Building Act brought into force in 2016. The act enumerates four different categories of work based on the level of risk involved. The act also allows for so-named 'competent persons' and owner-builders to undertake a wider range of works in the lower risk categories.

However, the act has failed to provide clear guidance on how that work should be undertaken to maximise safety, consistency and legality. The Building Act is supplemented by directives issued by the Director of Building Control. These directives are for the making of determinations for miscellaneous procedural requirements or the issuing of guidelines to assist in complying with the act. What has occurred in reality is that rules are being made on the run with little scrutiny or input from those working in the industry. As a result, the operation of the act has had the perverse effect of increasing red tape by making the categories of work harder to understand.

As work becomes more difficult to undertake and riskier to complete, insurance for builders and building surveyors may fail to cover the work. Consequently, insurance becomes more expensive to obtain, especially where builders or surveyors are working to advice which is difficult to comply with properly. This is especially relevant to professional indemnity insurance, the nature of which requires a policy holder to mitigate all risks as much as possible. This made headlines in Launceston last year when building surveyor, Protek, closed after the company's insurance premiums rose from \$25 000 to \$80 000 and its excess from \$5000 to \$50 000. Seven people lost their jobs.

Owing to misunderstandings of the act and difficulty in knowing when permits and reports are required, much of the defective work being carried out residentially leaves home owners with little prospect to recover damages. Residential work is being completed by 'competent persons' and not necessarily registered builders. The building act allows this for certain jobs that are defined by the act as being lower risk. However, even jobs that are lower risk can have a significant effect on the overall quality of a home. Consequently, the only legal option for those seeking recompense for defective work is to personally sue the person who did the work, assuming they can afford a lawyer and the person being sued could actually afford to pay out. A typical family who buys a residence that has had unlawful and/or unregistered work may therefore be purchasing a liability and not an asset.

The Building Act does not seem to have delivered the benefits it promised. To be transparent, I voted to pass this bill in 2016. I particularly believed that it was important that small building works could be undertaken by an owner-builder or a competent person in order to make things easier for residential developments such as construction of a lean-to or a carport. Over time, the practical effects have become clearer and not only have industry practitioners had difficulty adapting to the requirements of the act, non-professionals do not possess the expertise to understand what these rules actually mean.

The number of determinations issued in the interim has also meant that the system of rules and regulations is now manifestly different to what it was when the act was initially passed. In 2018, the building confidence report, the Shergold Weir report, which examined the building industry nationwide, identified a number of issues and made suggestions for remediation.

One issue identified was the inconsistent requirements for registration for industry practitioners to operate between jurisdictions. Some states and territories have been reluctant to register practitioners in other jurisdictions on the basis that they believe the registration standards set by other jurisdictions are of a lower level, according to the report. In one case I am aware of, the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal determined that conditions for registration under the Tasmanian act was so radically different to the conditions in the Victorian act that a Tasmanian practitioner was refused permission to work in Victoria, even though they were capable of doing the work in question. Reading between the lines, one could argue that the judiciary is making a statement about the quality of the Tasmanian act.

Practitioners I have spoken to are increasingly dissatisfied and in some cases are looking to get out of the industry entirely. They are working harder than ever before and are competing with unqualified practitioners who suffer minimal consequences if their project fails as they work in an occupation such as landscaping, which falls outside of the act. What is clear is that the act needs to be reviewed to improve safety outcomes, to provide certainty to those working in the industry and bring some degree of flexibility to lower risk jobs. This will require meaningful consultation with those who work across this entire industry for the safest and most production outcome for all Tasmanian building projects.

Onto something a little different, I am pleased to see climate change recognised by our Premier and that he has taken on this portfolio. I believe we have the cleanest air in the world and the lowest per capita of omissions of all states and territories. While we are one of the lowest net emitters of carbon dioxide on the planet, it is also good to see we have already set a target of zero net emissions by 2050 as well as committing to being 100 per cent renewable by 2022.

Homelessness continues to be a growing issue worldwide and I am also pleased to see \$4.5 million dollars to be spent on Thyne House in Launceston, as well \$2.2 million dollars to be spent on the Launceston Youth at Risk project. I note in the Premier's State of the State address that the First Home Owner Grant is being extended for a further two-year period until June 2022, providing \$20 000 dollars for Tasmanians building their first home, as well as a stamp duty concessions for eligible pensioners downsizing and first homebuyers of an established home, as many first homebuyers cannot afford to build a new home.

Another vexed issue that has come across my office over the last few weeks has been the changes to Metro services. There are situations in the community, particularly for people who rely on the Metro bus service and who are older or have mobility or other issues, where the new service plan makes it less accessible or less convenient. Many people in the community I have spoken to,

especially in places that have lost or changed services, are feeling disadvantaged. I would also urge consideration for frontline workers as it is not just bus users who could get caught up in this. Spare a thought for bus drivers who often go out of their way to assist passengers and Metro staff managing calls and emails, who all work so hard but can cop much of the flak for these decisions and changes.

The implementation of the new service plan, depending on the route, has caused concern and disappointment for many. There is a level of discontent in the community with some of these changes and I have counted at least a dozen letters to the editor, with these and more comments left on Facebook during the last few weeks. I have also been approached with regard to some bus stop and route changes and, in the wake of a new service plan's implementation, many people I have spoken to feel ignored and alienated from the decision. In addition, some bus routes to the Launceston General Hospital have changed and are somewhat confusing. I am told that a route that had previously taken ten minutes and went straight past the hospital now takes people from West Launceston 40 minutes and requires a changeover in the city.

The consultation campaign was from April to June 2019 using letterboxing, newspaper, radio, posters and social media to advise people that a review was taking place and passively relied on members of the community getting in touch with the Department of State Growth rather than proactively seeking feedback. From this feedback, five major changes were proposed. Unfortunately, it is often only once change is implemented that we appreciate the difficulties. Hopefully it is not too late for some tweaking to ensure the community is well catered for.

I am told the changes are for the good of the community, to make it easier to catch a bus and to take less time to get where you are going but some people may have a longer walk. Many of the people I have spoken with do not agree, and it will be harder in some areas for elderly people, especially those who may have further to walk, because they cannot all get taxis or community cars. What may have been a 100-metre or shorter walk to the bus may now be a 400-metre walk. That is fine for someone fit and healthy, but not for the aged, infirm, perhaps a mum with a stroller, toddlers and shopping et cetera. A quicker trip might be attractive for some but we cannot forget those who have no option but to catch a bus and find 400 metres downhill hard, but 400 metres uphill impossible, especially in Tasmania's colder and hotter months.

Understandably, any organisation would want to review bus services that have few passengers. I am advised that Metro trips are free before 7.00 a.m. to encourage people to go to work earlier, thus finishing earlier and meaning fewer cars on the road. I believe if State Growth wants to make a real impact and fill Metro buses, they could be free for users before 9.00 a.m. and after 5.30 p.m. This would have a really positive impact on our CBD and peak hour traffic, with more people catching buses and fewer cars on the roads.

Metro is a government business enterprise, which operates the majority of the state's public metropolitan bus services. This imposes on them an obligation to service customers who rely on these services in the manner that is most efficient, reliable and safe. I believe Metro must provide services to people who rely on them even if it is not always to a profit. After all, according to Metro's website, its values are safety, respect, resilience, unity and service-driven.

Interestingly, the Metro board currently comprises six people, not one of whom is based in the state's north or north-west. I hope this will change as it is something that I have raised with the Government time and again - the number of north and north-west board representatives compared with southern and interstate representation on a number of boards. This needs to be balanced.

On a positive note, I believe Metro changes have been welcomed in some areas. I am pleased to hear that more weekend services have been put on, as many suburbs have been disadvantaged in the past with a lack of Saturday and Sunday buses. I have met with the Minister of State Growth and Metro and urged them to take notice of community concern and implement changes on the new service plan where and when it disadvantages people who need the service the most and have relied on it for so long. I believe there is still time to listen to the community and get their priorities right, servicing the community safely, reliably and respectfully.

I agree with the member for Windermere with regard to the expansion of years 11 and 12. While it is very good for many of the country schools to expand years 11 and 12, many of the schools in the CBD and in the city, such as Prospect, Kings Meadows, Queechy and Brooks, have been serviced well by the Launceston College and Newstead College in the past. To see numbers decreasing, particularly at one of those colleges, you really have to consider whether it would be time for the Government to make a commonsense decision and combine Launceston and Newstead Colleges, making them one large college with two campuses; Launceston and Newstead. It would be a simple decision.

Madam DEPUTY PRESIDENT - I am not sure simple would be a way some people would describe it.

Ms ARMITAGE - We will say 'commonsense'. I am not sure it would be that difficult, in all honesty. I have spoken to some of the teachers at Launceston and Newstead colleges. I have been told by some teachers that Launceston College classes are very large, which can make teaching difficult. To have those larger classes, but others teaching very small classes in the same discipline at Newstead College on some occasions, it would seem sensible if they were two campuses. You would not have one very small class and one very large class. You would have more spread-out numbers. It must be very difficult for teachers at one school to be teaching huge classes, and another one getting paid the same amount of money but teaching a very small number of students. I have raised this with the minister in the past and I will continue to raise it, because I am concerned that one college is having difficulty with numbers - they are both having difficulty with numbers; one is overcrowded. I will take that up further with the minister and not go on about it here.

Another area of concern to many of us is the Tamar River, or kanamaluka as it is also known, which runs through our wonderful city of Launceston. It has experienced some extraordinary changes since Launceston was first developed as a city, and changes drastically from year to year. As an estuary leading out to the sea, the Tamar naturally shifts from fresh to salt water during the year with ebb and flood tides, and along with the changing weather develops mudflats, which while unpleasant to look at, are a part of the estuary's natural cycle.

Dredging - a process to drag along the bottom of the waterway to artificially deepen it - has historically been used as a way to move larger vessels into and back out of the river. It is a practice that continues to be raised as a possible solution to target the mudflats to clean the river, but as they continue forming despite this, dredging has been more or less debunked as a practical solution to restore the Tamar back to optimal health. It has also been found that dredging in times of high floods, while somewhat successful in removing the silt, had detrimental effects further downstream.

While the mudflats are aesthetically displeasing, I believe the biggest issue by far is the amount of faecal matter in our river. In Launceston, our combined draining system, involving over 9200 homes, was constructed in the 1860s, and during periods of heavy rain has no option but to

release stormwater and raw or partly treated sewage into the waterways. In 2018-19 there were 15 spills due to wet weather, ranging from 400 000 litres, to one consisting of 1.2 million litres. A river running through a city containing combined stormwater and sewage is not what you would expect to see in a First World country. It is not something we should be willing to tolerate.

I note TasWater and the state Government have a 10-year plan, with a new secondary treatment plan to cut raw sewage emissions into the Tamar Estuary, at a cost of about \$285 million. I believe this should happen much earlier. In the meantime we have the River Health Action Plan, an initiative developed under the Launceston City Deal, which details the main issues affecting river health and quality, and establishes a framework to resolve the issues that are most pressing. The task force has quite rightly decided to make its initial focus to look at actions to improve public health measures - for example, faecal contamination from human and other sources, as measured by *Enterococci* levels in the water.

Under the Launceston City Deal, \$100 million has been provided to address this, and much of this funding will go towards catchment works, such as fencing out livestock from the river and thus reducing contamination. More of this funding will go towards improving system catchments. It is expected that a considerable amount of the contaminants that currently enter the Tamar will be eliminated once the combined system catchment improvements are made. It is hoped this will occur sooner rather than later. What enters the river upstream affects what occurs downstream. By monitoring and eliminating waste that goes in, the river health as a whole will be improved. Leadership on the health and amenity of the Tamar River estuary is required, and the City Deal does present an opportunity to do this.

My sincerest hope is that there is adequate follow-through to ensure that our river is made an asset to our region and provides amenity for generations to come. Over the preceding decades, there has been report after report, and incalculable dollars spent on experts and working groups, so that it becomes more talk and less action. So many interests, individuals and groups have had a say in discussions on how to improve the Tamar's health, from more gorge flow to barrages or weirs, but to date we still have a river that is more of a liability than an asset to our city.

We can only imagine the kind of interest and economic activity a clean, beautiful river would generate. There are plenty of issues, and possible solutions on the table, but there seems no one group able to take responsibility and leadership, and the steps needed to improve the state of the river. I believe this has to change.

As the famous quote says -

The definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over and expecting a different result.

It has been suggested a single authority could be established and charged with responsibility over the Tamar River which is certainly a discussion worth having. Getting to the stage to task one organisation or authority with these responsibilities would likely be a challenge, but the dividends would be extremely valuable and the state Government should take note of this as a possible course of action.

Our state of Tasmania and Launceston - the best city in Australia - is the perfect place in the world to be, especially now with this pandemic. I have never lived anywhere else, nor would I want

to. It is good to read in the Premier's State of the State address that we have a strong economy as this is going to be needed in the weeks and months to come to see us through these dark days.

We need to support each other and our local businesses. When the travel restrictions are lifted, we need to travel within Australia to the many wonderful and varied places we have to offer. The grass is not always greener somewhere else.

As many here, I also was impacted with a trip to the four-year event, the Tall Ships Festival in Brest in France in July, I am not sure whether it is going ahead but unfortunately I will not be travelling overseas.

Many of us are impacted and I will use the vouchers from the airlines, if I can, to travel in Australia to many places I have not seen, and that is probably what lots of us should be doing. Even in Tasmania, there are places I have not been and we can all learn from this. We should be trying to find some positives from this pandemic. I am sure we will be able to and will come back stronger in the long run.

Speaking of travel, the latest restrictions today with Tasmania declaring a state of emergency, while impacting on many, will hopefully stem the growth of the COVID-19. That relies on people doing the right thing and self-quarantining for a period of 14-days. It is hoped everyone will do this, but unfortunately, there will be some who will not and it will be difficult for authorities to keep a check on. Hong Kong is apparently using electronic wristbands to enforce quarantine and reduce the spread of the coronavirus.

The Launceston Airport, now in my electorate, is open and continues to operate with the focus being the ongoing health and safety of passengers, airport users and staff. We are advised they work with their cleaners to implement a significant increase to the scope and frequency of cleaning and disinfection of public high-touch areas at the airport, everything from security screening trays to toilet doors and handles, buttons on parking machines through to tabletops and armrests.

It would be hoped that other airports around Australia are also cleaning the security screening trays. They have never looked that clean in the past when you pick them up and put things in them.

Finally, my appreciation for the many years of service from our former premier, Will Hodgman, on his well-earned retirement from politics. I wish him and his family all the best for the future.

Congratulations to our new Premier, Peter Gutwein, and a huge thank you to Mandy, Millie and Finn for being agreeable to Peter taking on this extremely important busy and onerous role. Congratulations also to our colleague Jane Howlett, on taking on the ministries of Racing and Sport and Recreation. No easy task and she will do a creditable job.

Now to great news to finish off on. Congratulations and best wishes to another colleague, Jo Siejka and her partner Daniel, on the arrival of their beautiful baby Ivy. We have only seen her on Facebook and email to date, and look forward to seeing her in person in safer times.

Mr President, we are in difficult times currently, with the goalposts moving daily. It is hoped better days are on the horizon in the not-too-distant future. I note the State of the State address.

[3.59 p.m.]

Ms LOVELL (Rumney) - Mr President, I rise to deliver my response to the Premier's address. As other members have noted, this is a strange time for us all. For many it is a worrying time; for some quite a distressing and anxious time. In light of this, I will keep my contribution brief, as many members have also acknowledged at various points this Chamber is not particularly conducive to taking the most critical and safest steps we can take to protect, not just ourselves, but the staff, our families and the wider community.

The COVID-19 pandemic is the issue that is preoccupying us all. There is no doubt that this will have an enormous impact on Australia and Tasmania. It is at times like this when members of the community look to their government for leadership and guidance. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Premier for his courage today in taking the appropriate steps to best protect Tasmania. We are in a fortunate position where we are able to implement quarantine measures that will have a significant impact on public health in our state.

I understand the impact this decision will have on many Tasmanians, those whose work requires them to travel and those with family and loved ones on the mainland. I have some very close family members in Melbourne and am feeling very emotional about what this means for our family. But I understand how important it is. I believe that it will save lives and I unreservedly support this decision.

I also want to take this opportunity to acknowledge those who are on the front line of this pandemic situation. Obviously our healthcare workers in our hospitals, in primary care settings, in pharmacies and certainly those staffing the public health hotlines. I have heard many stories from around the world and around the country about what could be in store for these members of our health workforce. I am hearing stories from many here in Tasmania about the steps they are taking to protect their families and the community. Discussions with partners about what they can do in their household to enable them to essentially quarantine themselves from their own families for extended periods of time, knowing that they will most likely be exposed to this virus at some point, doing everything in their power to make sure they can keep serving the community.

Make no mistake, enormous sacrifices are being made. We should acknowledge this and thank them for it. Health workers are not the only ones on the front line. Emergency service workers, first responders, cleaners in our schools and our hospitals, our offices, hotels, airports, on public transport and in other public areas, teachers, support staff and administration staff in our schools, retail workers in our supermarkets, pharmacies, butchers, bakers, bus drivers, transport workers bringing essential goods, neighbourhood houses, community service workers, our own electorate offices.

I would like to particularly acknowledge Annette Branch in my office, just because I can. Others can do the same, I am sure. I know they are working very hard. I know Annette, like all our electorate officers, is working particularly hard at the moment to support worried members of our electorates who are struggling to cope with this situation and the various impacts people are experiencing. It is not easy to be the one taking those calls, listening to some heartbreaking stories and trying their best to support distressed people. I and the Rumney community are extremely fortunate to have someone like Annette in that role in my office. I am sure that all members would say the same about their own electorates.

Members - Hear, hear.

Ms LOVELL - There are so many who are doing their bit to keep society functioning as best we can in these uncertain times. I want to thank you all for everything you are doing and hope that you are being treated with kindness and respect in a time when emotions can be running high. This is a situation that most of us have not experienced before. There is a great deal of uncertainty in the community. I am quite sure we are all feeling different levels of anxiety and stress at different times, as we all react on a personal level, as well as in the roles we hold in our communities and in the parliament.

This pandemic will impact on most Tasmanians in some way. This is not just a public health emergency, but an economic emergency. Many Tasmanians are already feeling the economic impact, with casual workers suffering from lost hours in many industries. The arts community has been devastated. Our tourism and hospitality sectors are taking a major hit. This will be widespread and it will be severe. As a state we must support each other as best we can. We will likely need to take steps to support Tasmanians, the like of which we have not seen before.

It is critical we acknowledge and accept without question that there will be members of our community who will no longer have an income - casual workers, contract workers, many sole traders and many others who are already losing work. The gig economy and the shift we have seen take place to insecure work means, through no fault of their own, there will be people who cannot pay their bills, cannot put food on their table for their families or afford required medication. This is the reality of the situation we are in and there is no way around it. We must find a way to support people in this situation better so they do not have to decide about keeping their communities safe or feeding their family if, indeed, that is still a choice they can make. There must be financial support and stimulus packages for people in this situation.

We need to be mindful of the less obvious impacts of this pandemic - the mental health impact of isolation, of lost income and financial distress and of the many other ways people will be affected. The devastating but undeniable requirement for increased funding to family violence support services, for increased food relief, utilities - these and many other areas will need additional investment and support in the days, weeks and months to come. Our Government will need to step up and I reiterate what the Leader of the Opposition has said, what many of us have said: the Government will have my support as long as it acts decisively, honestly and with the best interests of Tasmanians at heart.

To finish, I would like to touch on some of the more positive things I have seen in the last few days. With access to information from anywhere in the world at our literal fingertips, it is very easy to be overwhelmed by distressing news at the moment and many people are looking for something brighter. There are many people doing good things and I have a couple of examples to share.

The Kindness Pandemic is a group that has formed just a few days ago on Facebook, an initiative of a social enterprise called Celebrate Ageing, which advocates respect for older people and the description for this group reads as follows -

We set up #TheKindnessPandemic because so many people need acts of kindness right now; and so many others want to hear stories of kindness. Kindness won't make COVID19 go away, but it will make our lives easier and more rewarding. We particularly encourage intergenerational kindness, but welcome you sharing all acts of kindness.

The group has over 67 000 members and is full of stories of kindnesses that have been offered, received, or witnessed by members of the group. Things like people paying for each other's groceries when a card transaction fails or someone does not have enough money to cover what they need, sourcing needed supplies for people and delivering them, taking small gifts like chocolates and other treats to be shared among supermarket workers, people leaving out baskets of toilet paper for their neighbours and parents offering to do a run to the shops for their children's teachers. Thousands of acts of kindness which are in equal parts a reminder there is so much good in the world and a source of inspiration for things we could all look for a chance to do.

Another local example is one that started on Twitter and was the idea originally of local WIN News director, Alex Johnson, who as a keen patron of the many fine eating and drinking establishments we have here in Tasmania, was torn between wanting to support local businesses and wanting to follow the public health advice to restrict social gatherings. Alex's idea was to buy a voucher for someone who would then pay it forward and buy a voucher for someone else and so on. The voucher could be either for takeaway, for a service or to be used when social distancing measures can be relaxed with the plan being this would generate income for businesses that are being hit hard by the requirement for social distancing. This has since taken off with a Facebook page being set up, a conversation on ABC radio and of course a hashtag - #Ivouchforyou. I encourage members to have a look and hopefully participate.

This is a tough time for many and it is likely to get tougher, but there is good news out there. I encourage everyone to follow the public health advice. Choose sources of information discerningly and be kind to one another. Look out for your neighbour, ask for help when you need it and be mindful of the community. This is a public health emergency and the worst thing anyone can do now is underestimate it.

Mr President, I note the State of the State address.

[4.09 p.m.]

Mr ARMSTRONG (Huon) - Mr President, I congratulate the Government on the continued sound economic situation of the state. No matter what else is said, Tasmania leads most other states on economic indicators. I note the Government acknowledges there is much more work to do.

In very recent time the coronavirus has caused additional issues to deal with, issues with far-reaching consequences for much of our economy and our everyday life. More than ever we need to rely on our Government and the chief medical advisors to guide us through this crisis and bring us out the other side. I walked into the city at lunchtime. At the traffic lights, where people gather, there is no social distancing. I know it is law that you are not allowed to cross lights when flashing. Today, people were breaking the law, but you could understand why. I hope the police are lenient and do not start arresting people for that sort of thing. I did the right thing but there were a lot of people crossing when the lights were red because there was 20, 30 or 40 people at some of the lights.

People who have booked trips interstate have spoken to me. One had booked a trip on a Murray River cruise. They rang the cruise operator to tell them they could not go because they would have to self-quarantine for 14 days. They were told they could not readjust their schedule and the operator would not give them a refund.

Ms Rattray - That is pretty harsh.

Mr ARMSTRONG - It is harsh. It is not as though they are cancelling their booking because they do not want to go; they have to come back here and then self-isolate for 14 days. Some people would have saved up for these holidays and lost everything. Some things are happening that we do not think about. Those things can be hard on a family that has booked that holiday, saved for months or years, and then there is no refund or rescheduling.

Ms Armitage - It is my son's fortieth birthday in Western Australia in April, but obviously I cannot go. I was coming back on the Sunday and the Monday is a sitting week so I cannot self-quarantine for two weeks. There are many things we cannot do now, unfortunately. It is just the way it is.

Ms ARMSTRONG - That is just one issue I have heard of. There are probably dozens of them. There are probably people who have booked 14-day holidays. I do not know whether they are getting refunds or not. I am sure more will surface over the next few months. The person not refunding the money is probably quite within their right to do that because they might have been able to book that period of time to somebody who lives there, but there should be leniency shown.

Anyhow, back to the State of the State. I welcome the review of the public service and eagerly look forward to reviewing that report and eventually seeing the outcomes.

I welcome the investment in sport. The economic spin-off from sport and event sponsorship is sometimes lost. I am on the committee currently looking at the feasibility of an AFL team in the state. Modelling suggests it would add \$110 million to the state's economy each year. There are also health advantages of increasing participation in sport.

We are all aware of climate change and in the main we all do our bit to help. Our state does a pretty good job already. It is fantastic to note Tasmania has the lowest per capita emissions of all states. One of the other honourable members already touched on that.

We are one of the lowest emitters of carbon dioxide on the planet. We must ensure we maintain a balance to enable continued sound economic development. Despite the good work being done, Tasmania has enormous opportunities in renewable energy with such things as Battery of the Nation project and the recently announced renewable hydro industry growth project. I will support endeavours to grow these opportunities.

I will also support such initiatives as fast charging stations for electric vehicles and transitioning of the government fleet to low emission and any other balanced initiative that helps counter climate change.

I welcome the proposed legislation designed to make it easier for landholders to reduce fuel loads while at the same time balancing community and environmental concerns. We cannot be complacent and I rarely understand those against fuel reduction burns. On that subject well done to the Government on the creation of two new fuel reduction teams and the creation of specialist Aboriginal ranger positions. These measures will go towards making our communities safer in the face of a changing climate.

Mr President, to infrastructure. While a lot is happening and in the pipeline, I remain disappointed in the funding allocation to my electorate and call on the Government to do more. South of Hobart is one of the fastest growing areas in the state and with the proposed projects like

the Huntingfield development, we will need the infrastructure to support those projects. I will continue to lobby the Government on this matter.

The same can be said for parks. I am expecting a good proportion of the \$31 million committed to this term to be directed to the Huon electorate, especially given a large proportion of our land is national parks and they are a big tourism attraction. I support the sustainable development of tourism in our parks and it was fantastic to be able to attend the re-opening of the Tahune Airwalk attraction that closed down after the January 2019 fires. Congratulations to all concerned with that, not least the lessees and Sustainable Timber Tasmania. I was able to see the devastation the fires caused to this attraction and to revisit and see the work done since has been truly amazing. It was so interesting. I went there after the fires and had a look. It was not only the structure they had to do some work on, but where you enter the airwalk, it was the walkways up to it. They had built it so sensitively for the environment - sensitively with the steps going up, built it into the banks and wooden steps and natural type of things. All of that was completely burnt out. To go down there and look at it after the fires was devastating. You just cannot imagine how the fire went through there and what it did. I suppose we are lucky in some ways there was not more damage done. They saved the visitor centre and everything, but the work that has gone on down there - even with the road going in, every tree had to be assessed to see if there was any danger of it falling over et cetera.

It might have been 12 or 13 months closure, but to get it up and running in the time they did is an absolutely fantastic job. As I said, it was truly amazing to see the work they have done down there.

Mr Dean - What is tourism like there since it opened? We know now it would have been impacted tremendously.

Mr ARMSTRONG - I asked the first Saturday it was opened. I heard it was reasonably quiet, but there were other things happening on that day too. I believe there has been a steady number going back. It is probably a completely different experience now to what it was. You go in there and you can see what a fire can do and a lot of people do not understand the damage a fire does when it goes through. Nature is a wonderful thing when you can see how they are regenerating. Imagine how it will look in 12 months time. I encourage everybody to go down there for a look because it is still a fantastic place to go and a great tourism attraction.

We need to do more in housing. That is one of the reasons I voted for the Huntingfield Housing Land Supply Order. I will continue to support legislation to promote housing supply. I have taken on board a common complaint made by Tasmanians about the time it takes to gain development approvals from TasNetworks and TasWater. In that regard, I have lobbied to simplify the approvals process and I am pleased to see the Government intends to introduce legislative time frames for the permit process for energy and water. I am also pleased the Land Titles Office will be better resourced to allow titles to be released to the market. It is worth noting the reforms already seen in cutting red tape. We have debated some of those in this place and these make doing business easier in Tasmania.

It was interesting to see the number of houses leased out to Airbnb when I was doorknocking in the Snug and Margate area and over the Huon electorate recently. Places you would not even know were Airbnb until you knocked and a person comes to the door and said that they are not the resident, they were only there for two nights. It is not only in patches; it is all over the electorate.

Ms Rattray - The member may be able to help the Government with their statistics, to have some real understanding of how much housing is on the short stay accommodation market.

Mr ARMSTRONG - It is particularly in waterfront properties in my electorate and a lot of my electorate is on the waterfront.

As to Health, it was great to finally see the Government announce it has accepted possession of K Block. With the coronavirus challenge, I hope it is up and running as soon as possible. While on coronavirus, it is my firm opinion we must be guided by our governments and their health advisers, who have the necessary expertise. Going against this advice and publicly putting that out there only causes confusion, anxiety and inconsistent responses to this horrible situation.

More needs to be invested into Health, but we also need to ensure our current spend gives the best bang for our buck. I wish I knew the answers. Closer to home, I often hear mention that the ambulance services in the Huon are lacking and the Government can be assured I will continue lobbying to improve those.

Education is another area that could do with more investment but there has been good progress, with initiatives such as Working Together and the extensions of high schools to year 12. In my electorate, where some children have a long travel time to the city, the extension to year 12 has been very well received and accepted. I am proud of the achievements of the schools in my electorate, both public and private. The future looks bright, judging by the quality of the many students I had the pleasure of interacting with at the end-of-year assemblies and award presentations.

I could go on, but it would be remiss of me not to mention some of the most important industries in my electorate. For the aquaculture industry, the latest figures I saw suggested that the Tasmanian salmon industry supports 2290 direct full-time equivalent jobs and that is the tip of the iceberg. It supports more than 6000 indirect full-time equivalent jobs and they are vital to the Huon electorate.

There is a lot of criticism directed towards the industry, but I believe the implementation of the Sustainable Industry Growth Plan for the Salmon Industry goes a long way to allay that criticism. This plan was developed only after a full and transparent public consultation process and is the subject of review. The first such review was recently completed and the details are publicly available. It provides key information on work to date and initiatives to be delivered. I support the work being done to underpin responsible, environmental, sustainable industry growth, with a focus on biosecurity and transparency. I give my support to that plan, directing the way forward for this industry and for this vital industry as a whole.

I also need to mention the fruit industry and the extreme benefits it provides our area. It is difficult to gain accurate employment numbers on agriculture and, in particular, horticulture and berries, but it is enormous, even during the off-season. The additional activity generated during the picking season is extraordinary. That is evident in my electorate. Development by way of new plantings and associated infrastructure abounds and those who have the foresight to invest in growing and contribute to our economy are to be congratulated.

I also welcome the renewed growth of the forest industry and congratulate Ta Ann on the reopening of their plant following the 2019 bushfires. That was another area I visited after the fires. If you could see the devastation that went through that plant, it was just terrible.

As we know, we are in very challenging times. I hope everyone stays safe and healthy during this crisis. The industries I have talked about and many others will help us get through this crisis and, hopefully, come out the other side bigger and better. I wish the former premier, Will Hodgman, and his family all the very best now that he has retired from parliament. I would also like to note the State of the State address. Thank you.

[4.27 p.m.]

Ms WEBB (Nelson) - Mr President, I note the Premier's State of the State address. I begin by acknowledging the Tasmanian Aboriginal community, in particular the muwinina people as the original owners and custodians of the land on which we are today, nipaluna, Hobart, in lutruwita, Tasmania. I pay my respects to their Elders, past, present and emerging. I acknowledge the continued connection of the Tasmanian Aboriginal people to this land for over 40 000 years, despite invasion and dispossession, and the rich and enduring culture that lives with that connection.

I would join with my colleagues here, many of whom have acknowledged the former premier, Will Hodgman, on his retirement from parliament. I thank him for the service he provided to the state and to our community, and wish him well with his endeavours henceforth, for him and his family. I particularly congratulate the new Premier, Peter Gutwein. Not many new premiers step in and face a challenge of such magnitude in the early days of their premiership. I thank him for the efforts he is making. Congratulations to the member for Prosser on her new position as a minister, and I join others in very excited congratulations to the member for Pembroke, Jo, and Daniel, her partner, on becoming parents of Ivy.

I thank all the members in this Chamber for their thorough and considered responses so far, today and yesterday. We are all making these speeches in response to the Premier's State of the State address, an address which could have been given in a different world to the one we are now in. It is challenging for us to frame our contributions as a response to that address, but I also recognise these very difficult, fast-moving and uncertain times that we are in today. Members have walked this line in their speeches very effectively and I thank them for it, speaking eloquently and passionately about the issues that are important to their constituents and communities.

This is the first time since being elected as the member for Nelson that I have had the opportunity to provide a reply to the Premier's State of the State address. To do so in such unique circumstances will certainly make it memorable for me in years to come, but it will probably be quite a departure from the usual model. It is now clear to all of us that 2020, as a year, will be very memorable in all lives and quite a departure from the norm.

The disruptions to our normal lives we have in store for many months to come will render 2020 quite an exceptional experience. I have spoken to my children about the fact they may well one day tell their grandchildren about this year and describe to those future grandchildren the challenges we all faced together.

I recognise we here are among the most privileged in our capacity to weather this storm. Compared to most others in our community, we have a great deal of advantage. Compared to most others in our communities, we are financially secure. I suggest all of us would have secure housing we are able to afford. We have the capacity to meet our health needs. I suggest we all have networks of support we could reach out to if we have the need, and I imagine that most of us would be in a position to ensure our own immediate family members can also be safe and secure at this time in their basic needs.

We are very fortunate. We are not faced with the same intensity of personal challenge many Tasmanians are facing in what must be very uncertain and quite terrifying circumstances for many - those who face a risk, not just to perhaps their immediate health but also to their livelihoods, to their housing security, to their connections with family and the broader community. People in these circumstances are having to manage great anxiety and fear. I can only imagine and my heart goes out to them that they are placed in this situation.

I know there are also many other people who are bearing the responsibility for others who rely on them as we progress through this uncertain time. I am thinking here of people who run businesses and are employers of those whose jobs might be at risk right now and people who provide support and care to those who are vulnerable. Especially, I am thinking of our health workers who are going above and beyond to ensure people are provided with the right medical care.

In light of all this, I plan to be quite general and brief in my comments. I will look forward to next year when under different circumstances I can perhaps make a more usual State of the State response.

I will mention briefly, in the 10 months since I have had the privilege of being elected as a member for Nelson, one of the things that has struck me about this place is the value of having members who come from such varied backgrounds. I wanted to mention it today because I see our backgrounds and experiences have probably been quite a factor in what inspired us all to run for election and enter into the role of public service. I see those backgrounds and experiences are often what shapes the issues important to each of us - those things we are particularly focused on and for which we work passionately to achieve outcomes for our state. We have heard that echoed in the speeches given in response to the State of the State address and that is why I regard the variety of backgrounds and experiences present here amongst members as a real strength of our Chamber. I thank members for bringing that and sharing it. The Tasmanian community would hope to see itself reflected and represented in this place and we are doing better towards that end.

As the first woman elected to the seat of Nelson, I am part of what I regard as a much more appropriate gender balance in our Chamber with the majority of female members. However, we still have a great distance to go in achieving other aspects of appropriate inclusion and diversity here. In particular, I say this of a lack of cultural diversity and inclusion of people with a disability for instance, so may we continue to see progress on both those areas in coming years.

People are aware my background and experience my entire professional life, has been working towards achieving a fairer and more equitable Tasmania. My attention generally turns to bread and butter social issues the people of Nelson and those, in fact, across the whole of Tasmania face every day. That is, whether that is making sure Tasmanians have a roof over their heads or they have access to the right health and social services when they need them or speaking up on issues in which we can do much better, such as poker machine reform. It is a priority for me to use opportunities I have to provide a voice for those Tasmanians who need it most - homeless Tasmanians, young Tasmanians, unemployed Tasmanians, Tasmanians who are unwell or at risk, people who I would term broadly, vulnerable Tasmanians.

This has been a focus of my work before coming to politics and it continues to be a priority and why I was pleased to hear the Premier in his address emphasise his commitment to becoming a government of compassion. As the member for McIntyre and others have mentioned in their contributions today, this is a time at which compassion will not just be an aspiration for us but an essential reality in the way that way we treat each other and behave in our personal interactions and

the structural responses and measures we put in place across all levels of government. More than ever, compassion needs to sit at the heart of our public decisions made, the structural supports we provide and in fulfilling the responsibilities of government. I firmly believe we will best weather this storm together on the strength of our compassion.

I believe that acts of compassion build trust and a government that acts with genuine compassion in words and in behaviours and decisions will garner the trust of the community. There is almost nothing I would like to see more in Tasmania than trust in government to grow and for us to become a real national exemplar in this area. For years, we have witnessed serious erosion of the public's trust in us as politicians and elected representatives. It is an issue that is not confined to Tasmania. We have seen evidence of this sort of erosion of trust all over the world and nationally.

Trust in governments is eroded through the pursuit of simplistic solutions or the exploitation of fear in division, particularly toward political gain rather than community benefit. We have seen it play out internationally and we must acknowledge that a lack of trust in government is also a very Tasmanian issue. For too long, we have witnessed what I think is unedifying political bickering. For too long, we have witnessed how big money has compromised politicians, parties and elections and, for too long, we have witnessed cosy deals that have achieved far too little for Tasmanian people overall. It comes as little surprise that the public's confidence in us has deteriorated in recent times, but it is not to say that we cannot reverse this.

We, as elected members, can help and do our bit to start restoring the public's trust. I want to remind all members that restoring the public's trust in us is achievable. I am going to mention, briefly, two things available to us right now to do just that. We could reform electoral donation laws in the very near future, before our next election, so the public can have confidence that political and policy outcomes cannot be bought by those with the deepest pockets. Given Tasmania's nationally weakest donation laws and a clear recommendation made from an inquiry process, reform is necessary and urgent in this state. Reducing the influence of big money would be a major step forward in building public trust.

Another straightforward reform measure would be to provide genuinely proper funding and capacity to key transparency and accountability mechanisms. For example, increasing the capacity of the Ombudsman responsible for reviewing RTI requests. Some increase has occurred but not enough to make a tangible difference and delays of many years in processing these reviews is unacceptable. It presents a terrible lack of transparency and an inability for government to be truly held to account.

These are just two matters that have the potential to tangibly build some of the trust and faith in our political system, which we are lacking at the moment. Bringing back that trust is not something the government can do on its own. Individually, as elected members of parliament, we can play a part, we can begin by the way we act and present ourselves in parliament and in our communities. Politicians can lead from the front; we can be open, honest and truly accountable to our constituents in our decision-making.

Restoring public trust in parliament is important, so too is ensuring our government delivers on its promise of supporting all Tasmanians. I look forward, once we are through this very difficult time, to being involved in discussions and efforts from the government to see this truly play out. We know that indicators have been going in the wrong direction in many social issues over time. TasCOSS provided us with a recent report, *Measuring Progress in Tasmania (2014-2020)*, confirming this. It makes for poor reading and I would like to think that we can look ahead to the

next 60 years as an opportunity to move in the opposite direction and build from where we are now, in crisis and in extremity, build forward from that and improve.

I recognise that when things are in these uncertain and crisis situations, things become a bit wobblier when people are called upon to be compassionate. People are caught up in panicky actions during a crisis but I also see many, many people reaching out selflessly to help others. I hope as we stick together and manage as best we can over the next, say, six months we will all have our sense of community expanded and enriched through this. I hope that compassionate and people-centred emergency actions and support provided by the Government over this time will also lead to an expanded and enriched ongoing approach from the Government of key social policy areas. Once our emergency crisis situation is eventually resolved, I hope we will see a distinct trajectory of improvement over the years in our social indicators building on the connections and compassion we are drawing on right now.

While in other circumstances I might have focused on a whole range of specifics from the Premier's speech and on certain of my own priorities, today I am going to stick to these just general remarks.

I conclude by offering my sincere best wishes to the Premier, to the Health minister and to the Cabinet members, the many crucial teams of public servants currently working extremely hard to do the best for our state. They are all showing true leadership and determination in the face of uncertainty, fear and a future that holds enormous challenges for us all. I thank them for the work they are doing and I know we all stand ready to best support our community in coming days.

[4.41 p.m.]

Mr VALENTINE (Hobart) - Mr President, this is an appropriate time for us to adjourn debate on this. I will have my opportunity next Wednesday morning.

Mr President, I move -

That the debate stand adjourned.

Debate adjourned.

DUTIES AMENDMENT BILL 2019 (No. 56)

The House of Assembly advised that it agreed with the Council amendments.

CRIMINAL CODE AMENDMENT (SEXUAL ABUSE TERMINOLOGY) BILL 2020 (No. 5)

JUSTICE LEGISLATION AMENDMENTS (CRIMINAL RESPONSIBILITY) BILL 2020 (No. 3)

POLICE OFFENCES AMENDMENT (REPEAL OF BEGGING) BILL 2019 (No. 49)

First Reading

Bills received from the House of Assembly and read the first time.

ADJOURNMENT

[4.45 p.m.]

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

That the Council at its rising adjourn until 11 a.m. 24 March 2020.

Motion agreed to.

The Council adjourned at 4.45 p.m.