



PARLIAMENT OF TASMANIA

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

REPORT OF DEBATES

Tuesday 27 May 2025

REVISED EDITION

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Tuesday 27 May 2025

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

TABLED PAPERS

Parliamentary Standing Committee of Public Accounts - Report

[11.02 a.m.]

Ms FORREST (Murchison) - Mr President, I have the honour to present the report of the Parliamentary Standing Committee of Public Accounts No. 15 of 2025, Tasmanian Government's proposed Hobart Arts Entertainment Sports Precinct Planning Process Final Report.

Report received and printed.

Ms FORREST (Murchison) - Mr President, I move -

That the consideration of the report and its noting be made an order of the day.

Motion agreed to.

MESSAGE FROM GOVERNMENT HOUSE

Assent to Bills

Mr PRESIDENT - Honourable Members, I have a message from Government House from the Lieutenant-Governor:

A Bill for an Act to amend the *Electoral Act 2004*,

A Bill for an Act to amend certain acts and other legislation and provide for matters of a transitional nature consequent to the enactment of the *Disability Rights Inclusion and Safeguarding Act 2024*.

A Bill for an Act to amend multiple acts to enable the Tasmanian Civil and Administrative Tribunal to review and determine certain matters in accordance with the *Tasmanian Civil and Administrative Tribunal Act 2020*.

A Bill for an Act to amend the *Agricultural and Veterinary Chemicals (Tasmania) Act 1994*, the *Competition Policy Reform (Tasmania) Act 1996*, the *Corporations (Tasmania) Act 1990*, the *Federal Courts (State Jurisdiction) Act 1999*, the *Gene Technology (Tasmania) Act 2012*, the *Human Embryonic Research Regulation Act 2003*, the Legal Profession (Board of Legal Education) Rules 2021, the *Marine Safety (Domestic Commercial Vessel National Law Application) Act 2013*, the *New Tax System*

Price Exploitation Code (Tasmania) Act 1999, the Terrorism (Preventative Detention) Act 2005, the Therapeutic Goods Act 2001, and the Water Efficiency Labelling and Standards Act 2013,

having been presented to the Lieutenant-Governor for the Royal Assent, he has, in the name of His Majesty the King, assented to the said bills.

Signed His Excellency the Lieutenant-Governor Christopher Shanahan,
Government House, Hobart

16 May 2025.

SUSPENSION OF SITTING

Joint Sitting - Senate Vacancy

Ms PALMER (Rosevears - Deputy Leader of the Government in the Legislative Council) - Mr President, I move -

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

This is to enable members to attend the other place for a joint sitting regarding the federal Senate casual vacancy.

Motion agreed to.

Sitting suspended from 11.05 a.m to 11.26 a.m.

STATEMENT BY THE PRESIDENT

Joint Sitting - Senate Vacancy - Selection of Josh Dolega

[11.27 a.m.]

Mr PRESIDENT - Honourable members, for completeness of the official record, I wish to advise that the Council, following the joint sitting of the Parliament at 11.15 a.m. this day, Josh Dolega has been duly chosen to hold a place in the Senate of the Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia, rendered vacant by the resignation of Senator Anne Urquhart. A copy of the minutes of the proceedings of the joint sitting will be tabled by the Clerk of the Council when printed.

STATEMENT BY THE ACTING LEADER

Acting Leader - Ms Palmer

[11.27 a.m.]

Ms PALMER (Rosevears - Deputy Leader of the Government in the Legislative Council) - Mr President, I rise to advise the Council that I will be Acting Leader in the interim until the leader is appointed.

MOTIONS

Establishment of Estimates Committees

[11.28 a.m.]

Ms PALMER (Rosevears - Acting Leader of the Government in the Legislative Council) (by leave) - Mr President, I move -

That the Legislative Council establish two Estimates Committees and that Committee A shall consist of six members and Committee B shall consist of five members;

And that the member for Murchison, the member for Huon, the member for Rumney, the member for Hobart, the member for Elwick and the member for Montgomery be of Committee A,

And the member for Launceston, the member for Mersey, the member for McIntyre, the member for Nelson, and the member for Pembroke be of Committee B.

That the Estimates Committees report upon the proposed expenditures contained in the Appropriation Bills (Nos. 1 and 2) and Budget Papers by no later than 27 June 2025

And that the schedule emailed to members on 26 May 2025 be adopted as the Estimates Committees' timetable.

Motion agreed to.

MOTION

Leave for Ministers to Attend Estimates Committees

[11.29 a.m.]

Ms PALMER (Rosevears - Acting Leader of the Government in the Legislative Council) (by leave) - Mr President, I move -

That the Legislative Council, having appointed two Estimates Committees reflecting the distribution of government ministers' portfolio responsibilities,

requests that the House of Assembly give leave to all ministers to appear before and give evidence to the relevant Council Estimates Committee in relation to the budget Estimates and related documents.

Motion agreed to.

MOTION

Estimates Committees - Message to House of Assembly

Ms PALMER - Mr President, I move -

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

Motion agreed to.

SPECIAL INTEREST MATTERS

Aurora Disability Services

[11.30 a.m.]

Ms THOMAS (Elwick) - Mr President, I rise today to speak about Aurora Disability Services, which is located in Glenorchy, in the heartland of my electorate of Elwick. It gives me great pleasure to welcome the special guests from Aurora to the Chamber today. We have Aurora's founding and managing director of services, Mrs Joy Cairns OAM; executive officer Ms Angelique Payne; resource officer Mr Rob Bearman and Aurora staff and trainees. I know you will all join me in welcoming them to our Chamber.

Members - Hear, hear.

Ms THOMAS - Aurora is a registered charity that has been a cornerstone of inclusive support for people with disability in our community for over 37 years. It is programmed to provide critical, person-centred learning opportunities that empower people with disability to lead full, independent and dignified lives.

It is because of organisations like Aurora that society has come such a long way when it comes to the way we view disability. No longer confined to narrow stereotypes or defined solely by limitations, people with disability are increasingly asserting their rights, talents and voices, and making invaluable contributions to our community.

Aurora's day support program operates from four facilities:

- the industry and hospitality base in Mill Lane, where clients undertake Certificate I in Hospitality training.
- a catering enterprise and boutique cottage craft industry, The Old Chapel Tea Rooms in Chapel Street, where participants operate their own business venture and public tea rooms.

- the Car Yard Cafe in Derwent Park, right near my office, where trainees continue to showcase their hospitality to the public.
- the Aurora Learning Centre, where clients undertake education projects with personal tutoring.

Mr President, you may recall the wonderful catering that was provided at the recent opening of my electorate office in Derwent Park, and the amazing scones, homemade sausage rolls, beautiful sandwiches, platters and quiches. This was all made, prepared and delivered by the hospitality trainees of Aurora Disability Services, and we thank them very much for that.

Members - Hear, hear.

Ms THOMAS - Last month, Aurora conducted its annual Anzac Biscuit Bake fundraiser, where a staggering 43,910 Anzac biscuits were all made by hand, baked and beautifully wrapped in bundles for distribution to businesses in and around Hobart by Aurora's trainees, using 1.8 tonnes of ingredients. By Anzac Day eve, every one of these biscuits were sold. At one point, demand was so great that these biscuits were still warm as they went out the door. I am sure you will agree this is a phenomenal achievement, and I would like to congratulate the trainees, volunteers and Aurora team for such an outstanding effort.

I would now like to speak about the origins of Aurora Disability Services and how, from humble beginnings, the organisation has come to change the lives of thousands of people living with disability. I am very grateful to have Ms Joy Cairns OAM with us today, who is the founder of Aurora and managing director of services. Fifty-eight years ago Joy and her husband Graeme welcomed their first child into the world - a daughter, Angelique, who is also here with us today. Two more children followed, Virginia and Laurie, who joins us today, who were both born with intellectual disabilities. Dismayed by the lack of support services and determined to ensure Virginia and Laurie were given every opportunity, Joy led a delegation to government seeking an agreement to provide basic activities. She was offered funding on the condition that she coordinate these activities herself.

In 1977, Joy started establishing programs including vacation care for children and adults, after-school care, youth groups and evening social opportunities, as well as respite for parents.

In 1980, Joy founded Cosmos, now known as Mosaic, the first fully funded recreation service in Australia specifically designed to support people with disabilities. It is a pretty significant achievement.

Seven years later, Cosmos employed eight full-time and 26 part-time staff and more than 80 volunteers, providing support for over 650 people with disability.

A desire to see people with disability given more opportunities to learn and contribute to society saw Joy then establish Aurora Disability Services in 1988 to provide vocational training. Five years later, The Old Chapel Tea Rooms and cottage craft outlet opened, enabling trainees, supported by volunteer staff, to operate a business enterprise. This was followed in 2016 with the opening of the Car Yard Cafe to extend showcasing of abilities and skills learned to the public.

Aurora also strongly believes that every adult, including those living with disability, has a right to continuous learning. In the year 2000, Aurora created its award-winning Learning Centre. The Learning Centre recognises that education is a basic human right, and was established to ensure those living with disability have access to basic literacy and numeracy skills, and, ultimately, to promote inclusiveness. The Learning Centre has proudly provided this essential pathway to training and employment opportunities for the past 25 years.

More recently, Aurora has submitted a state budget application, seeking funding to employ a qualified teacher to strengthen and extend its literacy program. I have recently provided a letter of support for this request, and have 'everything crossed' that the bid will be successful.

On behalf of my community, I would like to thank Joy, who bravely stood up for Virginia and Laurie all those years ago and refused to accept their lives would be defined by disability. From humble beginnings, Aurora Disability Services has enriched and given purpose to thousands of people living with disability, and has provided invaluable support and respite to families, friends and carers. For that, we the people of Glenorchy, of Elwick, and I know all of us here in parliament, are truly grateful, so thank you for everything you do.

Members - Hear, hear.

Dragonfly Inn

[11.36 a.m.]

Ms PALMER (Rosevears - Minister for Disability Services) - Mr President, thank you very much. Can I also add my welcome to Aurora Disability Services and say that when I visited recently, I was gifted a packet of Anzac biscuits. They lasted about two minutes when I got back to my office and I got half of one. I will be back, because you know how to cook Anzac biscuits, let me tell you.

I rise today to talk about a wonderful tourism business in my electorate of Rosevears. Tourism has always been a major industry for our island, employing thousands of Tasmanians, and certainly for the electorate of Rosevears, encompassing the magnificent Tamar Valley, some of the most beautiful beaches on its northern coastline, and indeed the Cataract Gorge.

Recently at the Australian Tourism Awards in Adelaide, Tasmania certainly cleaned up. We came away with 14 medals of gold, silver and bronze. These awards are the benchmark for quality tourism, and it was a night of nights for our Tasmanian tourism owners and operators.

Among all the medal presentations, there was another very special achievement that evening. It is a privilege to share with the Council a little of the Dragonfly Inn story; a beautiful heritage accommodation bed and breakfast nestled in the heart of West Launceston. For the second year in a row, the Dragonfly Inn took out the gold medal for hosted accommodation. Its sister property, Alice's Cottages, took out the bronze medal for self-contained accommodation.

The Dragonfly Inn journey began in 2016, when a young couple, Tom Garven and Bec Richardson, purchased a house next to the historic pub on the River Tamar at Rosevears. The house came with a separate self-contained cottage that used to be the old Rosevears Post Office,

which they tried out as an Airbnb and hosted guests from around the world. They certainly learned a lot about dealing with guests and what works, and perhaps, more importantly, what does not. It has always been Tom's dream to own one of the grand Victorian homesteads he had seen around Tasmania; after a year of trial and error with Rosie's Cottage, in 2017 Tom stumbled across a 10-bedroom mansion in West Launceston.

Despite the balcony of their two-storey mansion literally falling down, and a very tight budget, Tom and Bec, along with their amazing families and a local builder, set about restoring, painting, gap-filling, cleaning and then decorating. The Dragonfly Inn is on almost an acre and a half of beautiful land in West Launceston, within walking distance from the city. If you walk in the other direction, you will end up at the Cataract Gorge. The house itself is tucked away from the street view up a narrow side street.

For some members of the Council, the name of the accommodation may sound familiar. If anyone here is a fan of the *Gilmore Girls* series, you will recall the fictional, quirky establishment, the Dragonfly Inn. Bec has admitted that was her inspiration.

I recently had the pleasure of visiting the Dragonfly Inn. You cannot help but feel like you have stepped back in time as you walk up through the gardens to the front door. There is a huge sense of pride as you not only stand in awe at the enormous amount of care that has been taken in these renovations, but also the story that sits behind it.

It is certainly a family affair, with Bec's sister, Sarah, now running the day-to-day management of the property. Emboldened by their national Tourism Award wins and through experience and learnings, they have also taken on the project of restoring another of Launceston's flagship heritage properties: the Arthouse Hostel in Invermay.

As I said at the beginning of my contribution, the Australian Tourism Awards had one extra special moment in store: when Tom and Bec took to the stage to accept their Dragonfly Inn gold medal, Tom decided that was the perfect moment to drop to one knee and propose. She said yes. I congratulate Tom and Bec for their drive and vision, for their love of Tasmania and for their award-winning accommodation. They have become part of northern Tasmania's thriving tourism industry. We wish them well for their future.

Members - Hear, hear.

George Town Junior Football Club

[11.42 a.m.]

Mr DUIGAN (Windermere - Minister for Sport and Events) - Mr President, it is a great pleasure to rise today. We often talk in this place about the power of sport and its critical role in bringing people together. It gives me great pleasure to rise and share a story that demonstrates that fact and more.

This is a story that centres around the committed team at the George Town Junior Football Club in the heart of the magnificent electorate of Windermere. If you are familiar with the club, you will know that it has access to one of the best, if not the best, Australian Rules playing surfaces in Tasmania, certainly rivalling UTAS, at Blue Gum Park. It is a great facility.

However, the club has not been immune to off-field challenges, something that is familiar to many of our community clubs that are heavily reliant on volunteers to make them run.

Fortunately, however, for the George Town community and the youngsters who want to play football there, there has been no giving up. There are individuals like new president Myles Baker, who has not been afraid to reach out to other clubs for support and to take that help and experience and channel it into his own community. Myles is a veteran of some 420 games of footy for the George Town club in various guises.

I was fortunate enough to catch up with Myles and the team last week. They have had a new sense of bringing life to the junior football scene at George Town, including hosting a massive gala day at the start of the season for the NTJFA (Northern Tasmanian Junior Football Association). It was no small feat to bring all the other clubs together to George Town. There were plenty of activities and Easter egg raffles and all that sort of stuff. It was a credit to the committee, the local community, the parents and the young players, who have rallied around and invested their time and energy into putting their best performances onto the field and off the field as well.

This year I am pleased to report the George Town Junior Football Club is fielding teams across the range of junior age groups, from Auskick on a Wednesday afternoon through to under 9s, under 10s, under 12s mixed, under 14s boys, and under 17s girls. If recent results are anything to go by, the under 14s mixed is a very good side.

I heard a story the other day. One of the other clubs in the league was struggling for numbers. It is East Launceston, which is a city club. The club put out a call to bolster its numbers. They did not have quite enough players to field a full team. I was really pleased that the George Town club was quick to put up their hand. We heard about Caleb and Seth, who did not hesitate and pulled on the East Launceston jersey, I am told. They even sent a video to their club members at George Town, saying that they would be very pleased to kick a couple of sausage rolls, a couple of snags -

Ms O'Connor - How did they go?

Mr DUIGAN - They did not get the chocolates on that occasion, but I think it goes to demonstrate the great community aspect of sport, particularly at those junior levels, understanding that fielding the team is the important part, and winning is not necessarily everything.

Ms Forrest - That is how it works on King Island.

Mr DUIGAN - Indeed, or Flinders Island. It needs to be about mateship and having a go, helping out and, when you can, doing your best regardless of the circumstances. They are important lessons. It is fair to say the George Town Football Club has this in spades. If the first few rounds of the 2025 season are anything to go by, the future of the club is in good hands. I wish them all the best for the future.

Tasmanian Symphony Orchestra

[11.46 a.m.]

Ms O'CONNOR (Hobart) - Mr President, I rise today to make a brief contribution about one of our most treasured cultural icons, the Tasmanian Symphony Orchestra. The TSO is without a doubt world class. It is small, but it is world class, and it is respected on the international stage.

Like a number of members here, I availed myself of the invitation to visit the TSO last week with my electorate adviser Suz. While through the course of your life as a Tasmanian you will have any number of reasons to go to that beautiful little building down there on the waterfront for orchestral performances, for the graduation of my kids from university, to have that opportunity to look behind the scenes of the TSO, I can highly recommend it to honourable colleagues. I want to thank Caroline Sharpen, the CEO, for the time that she gave us to show us how the TSO ticks. Of course, an element of that conversation was the risk to the TSO posed by the proposed Macquarie Point stadium.

First of all, just a little bit about this beautiful orchestra. It has a national and global impact. It is our number one cultural export. It is the number one most recorded, broadcast and streamed orchestra in Australia. It has three quarters of a million audience participants, on average, each month around the world. It is Australia's representative on global streaming service Symphony.live. The orchestra itself has 87 FTEs, including 47 full-time musicians, any number of whom are regarded as among the finest in their field. It directly employs 237 people, and its revenue is around \$14 million per annum.

Our wonderful TSO's ambition for education and outreach is that by 2030 every Tasmanian child will experience the orchestra by grade 3. In 2024, 14,000 Tasmanian students attended the TSO. What a wonderful, rich cultural and educational experience for those young people. It is also a key player on the national music stage. We have two national training programs run by the TSO out of Hobart. Both the Australian Conducting Academy, which is creating the next generation of world-class conductors, and the Australian Composers School, are based with the TSO, in the Federation Concert Hall in Hobart.

We had quite an amazing opportunity to go into the back of the TSO, into the sound-recording studio and listen to the sound of silence, which, at the TSO, is not silence. The venue has a very sophisticated audio-recording system that has microphones that pick up the ambient noise of the city constantly. The sound of silence, which we listened to, was the sound of - we could hear a log truck rumbling along, we could hear motorbikes, we could hear the hum and bustle of the city. It is because of the sophistication of the sound recording booth there and a particularly talented person that the sound of 'not silence' of the city is able to be mitigated out of the TSO's broadcasts and recordings.

We met Veronika Vincze, who is one of the most prestigious and skilled classical sound engineers anywhere in the world and she works here at the TSO. She was trained at the Chopin University of Music in Warsaw, another globally recognised and highly regarded institution. Veronika was able to explain to us all the elements that are within that ambient noise of the sound of silence.

To get to the crunchy bit, the proposed Macquarie Point stadium, as identified in the draft integrated assessment report, presents a significant risk to the TSO from ambient and

construction noise and vibration during construction but also during operation, an impact on our world-class orchestra. This has been identified by the Tasmanian Planning Commission and has been acknowledged today, in a lip-service response from the Tasmanian government. The Tasmanian Symphony Orchestra has spent a significant sum of its own money to have engineering and testing works done and has presented a plan for mitigation to the Tasmanian government should the stadium ever be built. Let us hope, it is not.

Every member of this place who will be voting on the proposed legislation, which I refer members to - it came out this morning - I highly recommend going down to the TSO because in the same way that, as the minister said, sport brings us together - and it should be bringing us together over the Devils - our iconic cultural institutions like the Tasmanian Symphony Orchestra can also bring us together. After 75 years of service to Tasmania, of taking us onto the national and international stage, the TSO deserves our respect as a cultural icon and a massive contributor to the society and economy of this state. It also deserves for us to protect it and make sure it has another 75 years of giving to this island and its people.

Tom Quilty Gold Cup 2025

[11.52 a.m.]

Mr GAFFNEY (Mersey) - Mr President, I rise today to bring to this parliament's attention the 2025 Tom Quilty Gold Cup, an annual national equine endurance ride. This year's event was held 9 to 11 May at Sassafras in my electorate of Mersey. I was pleased to be invited to officially open the 2025 Tom Quilty Gold Cup, in the lead-up to the ride.

The Quilty, as it is referred to by those in the endurance scene, is held in a different state every year to allow the opportunity for everyone to compete. It is the most famous of all Australian endurance rides. The last time it was held in Tasmania was in 2018 in Scottsdale, prior to that it was 2012 in St Helens, 2005 in Kentish and 1999 in Deloraine.

The Quilty started in 1966, when RM Williams gathered support for a 24-hour, 100-mile or 160-kilometre ride. The ride became known as the Tom Quilty Gold Cup, after Williams's friend, cattleman Tom Quilty, donated \$1000 for the first prize, a Gold Cup. The motto of endurance riding is 'to complete, is to win'. This belief certainly sets aside the sport from other equestrian disciplines, as everyone who completes in Quilty, is celebrated as much as the winner, and rightly so. I was genuinely impressed with the friendliness and support between all the competitors, their officials, family members and friends. It was quite a wonderful experience and occasion to be at.

It is generally acknowledged that Arabian horses are best suited for endurance events, although many other breeds can also be used, such as the thoroughbred, Anglo-Arab and quarter horse - depending on the individual horse's confirmation and temperament. Tasmania is well known for some great bloodlines.

The National Championships event begins at midnight and participants have 24 hours to complete the 160-kilometre course, which is held over five sections. The competitors return to the ride base after each section for a thorough vet-check of their horse before being allowed to continue. Each horse must then be judged fit to continue at the end of the 160-kilometre distance before they are able to earn the ride for the most coveted Quilty buckle. If they do not

pass that test, they are vetted out. There are a range of buckles on display, and one of the guest speakers spoke exceptionally well about the history of the buckle.

Indeed, it is widely recognised that the utmost importance is placed on the welfare of the horses competing in this sport. All decisions are made in the best interest of their four-hoofed friends. It was amazing listening to some of the riders speak about their love for their horse, they are so infatuated by that, and supporting one another. I would like to acknowledge, however, this year's event host Pat Lamprey, who has a longstanding affiliation with the sport and has spent over 25 years hosting events. Pat and her family are well known within the Latrobe municipality.

This year's Quilty was held in Pat's paddock at Smith and Others Rd, Sassafras, which is approximately eight kilometres east of the Sassafras Primary School. It was like a mini-village with horses, temporary paddocks, cars, trailers, caravans, motorhomes, food vans, marquees and stallholders everywhere. Indeed, I fondly remember riding the horse belonging to Pat's husband, Dickie, called Nabowla Nook Nite, over a 30-kilometre course a number of years ago at their property. Dickie sadly passed away some time ago. I recall being really pleased that he trained Nite so well that I do not think it was possible for me to fall off.

One hundred and thirty-five competitors, including five international riders, entered this year's event across four divisions. Of those entries, 78 completed the ride. I congratulate this year's winners, the competitors, the strappers, the entourage and especially the horses, on the countless hours of training, dedication, skill and horsemanship.

I would also like to acknowledge the additional landowners who kindly gave riders access to their properties for the Quilty. I know they were truly appreciated by all the competitors. Indeed, some of the riders said that it was one of the prettiest places they had ever been able to hold a Quilty through the forests and the reserves.

Indeed, the organising committee is grateful for each and every sponsorship and donation received, as events like the Quilty do not happen without this crucial support.

In closing, I congratulate the small but mighty organising committee on coordinating such a wonderful event on the national stage. I am sure that everyone involved in this year's Quilty and, indeed, in the sport are truly grateful for the dedication and the commitment of this year's committee members. They definitely did Tasmania proud.

I would be delighted to enter an 80-kilometre ride at some time in the future. Indeed, Mr President, I am hoping you might be able to even join me on that auspicious occasion. I hear those Shetland ponies can be really quite sturdy.

On a more serious note, I look forward to welcoming the Quilty when it is once again held in Tasmania in approximately six years.

Members - Hear, hear.

Recognition of Visitors

[11.57 a.m.]

Mr PRESIDENT - Honourable members, before I call on the honourable member for Murchison, I have the pleasure to welcome Willow Cummins, who is a work experience student undertaking a placement with the member for Murchison.

Willow is in Year 10 at Wynyard High School and I am informed that she is very keen to learn about the work of the members of the Legislative Council and the different roles of the parliamentary officers of the Parliament of Tasmania. I hope that Willow enjoys her week of work experience and learns more about the procedures of our parliamentary democracy. I know that all members of this place will make you very welcome and assist you in whatever way they can. Welcome to the Legislative Council.

Members - Hear, hear.

Willow Cummins - Parliament Work Experience Student from Wynyard High School

[11.58 a.m.]

Ms FORREST (Murchison) - Mr President, it my pleasure to welcome Willow Cummins to our Chamber. When she contacted me about work experience, opportunities in the world of politics and being a voice for the people, I was very happy to offer her this opportunity, albeit it has been a somewhat unusual week for us without a full contingent of members due to the delayed election and some different things going on this week.

I asked Willow to prepare the following for me as a special interest contribution today, so these are her words. I hope that one day maybe she will be in a position where she can speak for herself in this place. These are Willow's words and I will read them in the first person.

I am 15 years old. I live in Wynyard with my mum, dad, brother and sister. I'm currently in grade 10 at Wynyard High School and I am co-captain of the Student Executive Council. I attended Table Cape Primary School and was a student leader there as well. Through these roles I learnt many things about leadership, teamwork and problem-solving. I play a variety of sports both in and out of school. I have played hockey and have been involved in surf lifesaving for a long time and this year I have signed up for social netball and school football. I also enjoy athletics in throwing events such as shotput and discus.

I enjoy being creative with art, music, baking and reading. One of my favourite hobbies, however, is public speaking. I have enjoyed public speaking since primary school but only started competing in grade 7. I have participated in competitions such as Rostrum Voice of Youth, Legacy Speak public speaking competition and Lyons Youth of the Year.

Members may recall me speaking about Willow previously being the first Tasmanian winner of one of those competitions.

Through public speaking, I have had the privilege of meeting many amazing people from different backgrounds. I believe it's essential as a young person to be exposed to as many different people as possible and to hear their voices.

Hearing other competitors speak from all over the country has opened my mind to different ways of thinking. I have had the opportunity to converse with many important people and others with fascinating ideas. Lyons Youth of the Year was an interesting competition as most of it was not just about your public speaking ability, but assessing you as a person, your values, dedication to what you believe and how you model that in your community. It was assessing your presentation not just on your speech, but of yourself.

You can always find new ways to challenge yourself, which is why I encourage public speaking as a path for anybody, regardless of their age or capacity. In the future, I would like to pursue a career that allows me to use my voice to drive change. Public speaking has challenged me to think about potential career paths, so I would like to do something where I can give speeches or speak up on matters that are important to me.

I plan to attend Hellyer College for years 11 and 12, and then seek further education at university. Although I am not entirely sure what I would like to study, I am thinking about something related to political science, law or global sciences. I would like to volunteer all over the world as I have a passion for travel and assisting those in need.

Last year, I had the opportunity to participate in the student exchange to Kinmen Island in Taiwan. The trip was an invaluable experience and one I will not forget. It helped me to spark my love for travelling, which I intend to continue in the future. I do not wish to be a vacationer but a traveller, as doing so allows me to connect with both the people and culture of the countries I travel to. It has taught me many lessons I will use for the rest of my life. Whilst I love to travel, I also recognise the beauty of our own country and our state. Australia is an amazing place, and I hope to contribute to it one day through my work.

I chose to do work experience with Ruth Forrest because I have always been interested in politics. Whilst I am not the most educated person on what a role in the field entails, I hope this week will help me better understand what it is like working in parliament and being a voice for the people. I admire anyone who takes on a tough job, working in a place such as this, and I will have to do something similar one day. I am excited to learn from Ruth about not only her job, but also other positions as well. I am grateful for this opportunity and hope to use it to the best of my ability.

Later on in the year, I am participating in the Youth Parliament Week. Other participants and I have been drafting bills that we will be debating when we gather in July. After this week of work experience and participation in Youth

Parliament, I hope my knowledge of politics and different roles within this area of the workforce will grow, and that will help me to have a better understanding of what I would like to do. It can be difficult as a young person to know what you would like to do with your future, but I understand that by taking opportunities such as these, everything becomes much easier.

I have been told that it is okay to say no to things; but why would I want to, when saying yes has led me to where I am today? My parents, teachers and mentors have provided me with opportunities, without which I may not have been able to do half the things I am today. If I could, I would tell all young people that it is okay to say no, but do not say it because you were scared. Say yes to different things, things out of your comfort zone that will help you grow. I hope that by continuing to say yes, I will build a platform for myself I can use to reach as many people as I can. I would like to thank Ruth for affording me this opportunity to work towards that.

That is the end of Willow's words, who, I believe, is an incredible and amazing young woman in our Chamber with a huge future ahead of her. I am sure all members will join me in welcoming Willow to our parliament and our workplace. Please engage with Willow during the week. She is a sponge for information, and she has had some interesting experiences already and more to come. She is willing to start work early with me. I thank her mum Lisa also for being willing to travel to Hobart to make this possible, and Wynyard High School for their support. I wish Willow every success with whatever path her life takes, knowing she will make a difference in this world and in her community. Thank you.

MOTION

Tourism Tasmania Annual Report 2023-2024 - Consideration and Noting

Ms RATTRAY (McIntyre) - Mr President, I add my welcome to Willow, who I sat next to early this morning for the Auditor-General's presentation. I know she does not mind starting early, honourable member for Murchison. I appreciated that contribution that you put together for the honourable member for Murchison, who is hosting you this week. I wish you all the best for the future. It appears to be a very bright one. I think Tasmania's future is in very good hands when we see someone like Willow come, present, and be part of the parliament this week.

Regarding the noting of the Tourism Tasmania Annual Report for 2023-24, it is almost out of date. I apologise that it has taken this time to reach the top of the list in noting this report. That is because we have had a lot of other matters that seemed to have taken a front seat or got an earlier gig. Thank you very much to the Tourism Tasmania people for their patience. They probably have not known since November last year when we would be considering and noting the report; it will be fresh in people's minds when the next report is due in not too many months. It will be interesting to see what the figures look like for the next annual report when we talk about the figures that are presented in this.

It is a lovely, colourful report. There are some beautiful photos that have been provided through the report. I acknowledge Dearn Bond, whose parents are from my patch. Her dad still lives in the north-east and her mum was there for many years. I presume that there is only

one Dearnna Bond; congratulations to her for the beautiful photography, and there are some others as well, but I note that quite a lot of those photographs belong to Dearnna.

I almost felt like the honourable member for Rosevears had stolen my thunder a little bit by talking about a tourism venture in her contribution to the special interest segment this morning. I will leave that particular initiative out and just head straight to the report.

Obviously, most reports have some really good news stories; that is pretty much what annual reports do. They give us all the good news stories. I am not going to go over those. I think it is worth talking about some of the numbers that have been presented in that annual report year in review.

We often look at the amount of money that is put into tourism in our state, and we wonder, when we have such a beautiful state, why you would even need to be marketing it. People just come here in droves and once they have been here, they are hooked. They come back and they want to bring their family and friends. Some people even want to come here and live. When you know that there are 42,900 Tasmanian jobs supported by the tourism sector, you get a fairly big understanding of why there is so much funding into this sector to promote Tasmania, not only on-island but off-island.

The visitor spend for the year ending June 2024: \$3.48 billion, significant money into the state; visitors to Tasmania year ending June 2024: 1.3 million; about 410,000 leads to operators via Discover Tasmania, the website and the app. Through our GBE process we often talk about the value of websites and those types of things. It is a really important feature because people go onto the website, have a look and see what they can find. It is a really important part of people deciding whether they are going to visit our state. Followers on social media: 1.22 million; subscribers across consumer, trade, and industry e-newsletters: 116,000 people; another one here, TikTok and Instagram - not my forte - 40.2 million views of top-performing videos on TikTok and Instagram.

There are a lot of people out there who use that social media means. Downloads of the Discover Tasmania app: about 76,000; industry operators included in 105 for meals. I am interested in the 105 famils, and so the honourable Acting Leader, when she perhaps uses her opportunity to respond to the consideration and noting of this report, might give some indication of what \$105 famils actually is. I remember one of our local bus drivers, Mick Barrett, who was, and I understand still is, a Flinders Island resident - I have not heard any different. Mr Barrett used to talk about the famil tours he would take senior citizens on when he was a bus driver and had a bus company. I am interested in what that entails for the year in review.

Global cooperative marketing campaigns: 33. I expect that is where Tourism Tasmania sent representatives to trade opportunities or to various expos to again promote Tasmania. Again, some more detail around that would be useful for us to get a real understanding of what is incorporated in the global cooperative marketing campaigns.

The other interesting one is the one that says that over 5200 travel agents globally train via the Tassie Specialist and Aussie Specialist programs. Is that something that Tourism Tasmania provides some funding towards? That is a significant amount of travel agents. It would be interesting to know whether people still use travel agents to the same extent that they did in the past, given that that there is so much online activity now when you provide a booking

or make a booking. I have not travelled anywhere for some time, Mr President, so travel agents are not something I use very regularly.

Another key figure in the year in review is the 4.1 million passengers welcomed at Hobart and Launceston airports. It is a lot of people coming into the state for whatever reason that they have decided that Tasmania is where they are going to come to. There are a couple of pages on accessible tourism for people with all abilities, following on from the member for Elwick's contribution around those living with a disability and their opportunity to participate just like everyone else does in what is presented and what is offered, not only in our state but others. There are quite a few figures relating to that.

One other interesting fact is that it talks about key visitor insights at year ending, again, June 2024, that visitors continue to stay longer in the state, with total nights setting a new record high of 12.86 million, up 18 per cent on the year ending June 2019 and up 7 per cent on the same time in 2023. A couple of times, Mr President, I have needed to come to Hobart for various work commitments and, as most people know, I stay across the road at Customs House in Murray Street, and I have not been able to gather a room. When they say 'no' to the member for McIntyre, I know they are absolutely chockers because they usually would fit you somewhere somehow. That does not mean doubling up; that just means that they find a room. One day I had to drive down and drive home, which I have done on many occasions and will continue to do if I need to, but I found that interesting that that was March-April and they were still finding that visitor numbers were very high. I am a bit of a creature of habit, Mr President. I like to stay at the same place. I know what I am doing. I know where I am going, and I do not have to worry about trying to find my way around the city. I park in our car park, then walk across the road.

It is interesting that we are still seeing some really strong numbers and I gauge what is happening in the rest of the state by what is happening across the road. Although, it says the average spend per visitor was up 41 per cent on 2019 - 41 per cent. Not sure where the cost-of-living crisis is for some in our community. It is still reduced to \$2674. This is an 11 per cent drop in the year ending June 2023, bringing total expenditure for the year down. This reduction was a consequence of travellers spending their accumulated savings during post-pandemic trips in 2022-23, following a pent-up demand for travel. Everyone spent most of their money after COVID because they were sick of being locked down and not being able to go anywhere and they must have splurged at the time. It says this slowing down in spending was also evident as rising costs of living placed pressure on households' travel decisions and spend.

Then, the international visitation had almost fully recovered to pre-COVID levels in the year ending March 2024, seeing more visitors from the two markets, the USA and Germany. I have never been to the USA or Germany. That is interesting, is it not? Because, when I talk to people, Japan seems to be the go-to place at the moment. I see lots of postings of people heading to or being in Japan, so I thought that was the go-to place but apparently not. It is always interesting to read. It goes on to say that seeing more visitors than the same period in 2019, some international markets are slower to recover, including China. It is an interesting read.

Access to Tasmania: One of the nice highlights of the report is that during the past 12 months, domestic air carriers have focused on stabilising schedules. Hooray. Improving on-time performance and minimising cancellations. Now, I expect that everyone, perhaps even ones listening, would have had their flight cancelled into Tasmania - been bumped off to one

to five hours later, or the next day. Very, very frustrating. If part of Tourism Tasmania's mantra has been to engage with the airlines to provide a more reliable service into Tasmania, then I congratulate them on that because it is so annoying. We do not have the option of hiring a car and deciding to head north or west, like people from other states can if their flights are cancelled or delayed. We have to sit and wait; and not everyone has access to one of the nice lounge areas. It is very important that we continue to work with the airlines to have a reliable service and stop having all those cancellations because it appears to me that when there is a cancellation, when they are looking for a plane and they have not got one or they have an unexpected breakdown, who misses out? Tassie. We have no other option. We miss out. With the greatest respect to my southern-based colleagues and members of the community, it always seems to be the northern airport that seems to miss out. You can still get a flight into Hobart, but not -

Ms Forrest - You should come to Wynyard.

Ms RATTRAY - We could come to Wynyard, we could.

Ms Forrest - Come to Wynyard, they have put bigger planes on up there now.

Ms RATTRAY - I have experienced that myself, coming back from Samoa the last time. When we got to the Samoan airport, I decided to have a look at my itinerary for coming home - from memory, it was about 1 a.m., I am not sure why I was even awake, but I was - and it said my flight to Launceston had been cancelled. Here I am, sitting in the Samoan airport, cancelled flight. They get back to Australia and you have got no flight. Luckily I was travelling with the then Speaker, Mr Shelton, and his wife. I got a lift, flew into Hobart and got a lift up the highway. That was just one lucky time. My flight was just gone. It is really key that we continue to work with airlines to address the issues of reliability of getting into the state. If you were a visitor coming into the state and your flight was cancelled, you have potentially lost some accommodation, completely messed up your itinerary and you are thinking, 'Why would I bother?'

I might talk about the other way that we can get into the state, which is on the *Spirits of Tasmania*. I asked someone on the weekend, 'Are you heading north this year with your van?' I know they have started travelling, they are of a similar age to me, perhaps work-life balance is starting to kick in, and I said, 'Are you heading north this year?' and he said, 'We cannot get on the boat.'

Ms Forrest - You have got to book early.

Ms RATTRAY - They cannot get a booking.

Ms Forrest - There is a big one in Scotland.

Ms RATTRAY - That was a Tasmanian saying they are not going to bother, cannot get a booking. I certainly want to know when I can get back. Believe it or not, they were still working and so they only had a certain timeframe to be able to take the van across the water. We know that this is a work in progress and I am not going to go down that debacle path at the moment.

Until the new ships are on, we do not know how much better the whole arrangement is going to be. It certainly shows you that the *Spirits of Tasmania* are well utilised, when somebody cannot get their van on and get off on the other side, and back on and home, at their convenience. There is a lot more work to do in that respect.

It goes on to talk about international flights. We know that there are some direct flights, three times a week, between Hobart and Auckland. I have not heard of anyone going recently, that I know of, but I am sure they are being utilised, or we would not have three flights per week on.

Ms Forrest - It is usually only the summer time they do that, isn't it?

Ms RATTRAY - Thank you, that says between November and April. So thank you very much, honourable member, there was a little bit more to that. I expect that it is continuing and must be quite a successful opportunity for people to fly to NZ in that particular time period. Everyone loves a direct flight out of Tasmania, if you can get on a direct flight from Hobart or Launceston to one of our places elsewhere, whether it be Brisbane or Sydney. I know the honourable member for Launceston always appreciates the opportunity to have a direct flight to WA, given that her family are there and her little grandchildren.

Cruise ships generate an important economic contribution. In 2023-24, Tasmania welcomed 143 cruise ship visits, which resulted in about 240,000 passenger days and 115,000 crew days in Tasmania. It is still a really important opportunity. There was a survey for the cruise ships' passengers in Hobart, Burnie and Port Arthur during this season, and it found that cruise passengers and crew had direct spend of approximately \$31 million on tours, food, activity, transport and good old shopping, with a further \$38 million in cruise-line spend on port charges, shipping services, provisioning, Tasmanian travel agent commissions and other services. So, that is significant, and I expect that we will continue into the future.

The marketing program, and that is one area that Tourism Tasmania certainly puts its focus on. I have already talked a little bit about a couple of questions I have on its marketing spend on some of those initiatives. But I note that we are watching on the TV at the moment, the Come Down for Air and Off Season campaigns and the marketing activity that is being undertaken around that, and I expect that the cost of that will be shown in this year's annual report. It will be good to see the actual breakdown of those campaigns and to have some understanding of how they are measured; whether, having seen that advertisement on our local TV, to see how that generates people coming to Tasmania to experience that beautiful clear air and the freezing cold water that that gentleman jumps into. I am not sure how he comes up with a smile on his face, but he does. So yes, that is another area.

While I am talking about marketing, I will touch on the fact that there has been a recent announcement, and this is somewhat aside, but the \$10 million for the \$100 vouchers, 100,000 vouchers. It is interesting, the Eat Local, Stay Local program, is that only for Tasmanians? Is that just for Tasmanians to pick up on that? Yes, I thought that might be the case. What is the cost of actually implementing that program? I think that might be useful. How much of those funds allocated is taken up by the administration of that? Who does that? Is that an area of government, or is that an area of tourism? Just a couple of questions there regarding that.

Just last week I was speaking to somebody at a function about how the tourism industry and Tourism Tasmania are working closely with the Tasmanian hospitality industry. There seems to be quite a meeting of the two organisations. They are working together. We often encourage organisations who have the same type of interest to work together. It seems a very reasonable request, to work with each other to gain the best outcomes possible.

But when I had a look at the information around Tourism Tasmania educational opportunities, there are three educational opportunities for the tourism industry coming up in Hobart over the next few months. Then there is a Visitor Experience Guide course that is in conjunction with the Tasmanian Hospitality & Tourism Academy. That course is to be held in Hobart in June and September. Then it goes on to Tour Guiding Fundamentals, and that course is also being held in Hobart. I think you might be seeing a theme here. The AI hospitality workshops as well - it does not say where that is going to be held. That one again is in July. That is also a workshop in Hobart. I understand that that is the capital city of the state. I am interested to have some understanding because it is not always easy if you are a tourism operator or tourism venture outside the Hobart area and perhaps the southern area, why there aren't any opportunities in the northern part. There may well be, and they might not be listed on this advice that I received; but I think it is worth asking the question, when we talk about wanting to get our visitors to the state out into the regions, why those regional tourism operators would not have something a bit closer to home. By the time you send somebody down for a couple of days to Hobart, it might be very difficult. That might mean that the business lacks its full complement of staff for those couple of days; and then there is an expense, of course, that comes with that. I am interested in why those opportunities are not provided to the regions as well.

Another one, while I am going, is the announcement for the Chocolate Experience for Cadbury's at a cost of \$12 million to the state. It says here the Chocolate Experience at Cadbury's will begin construction next year and is expected to welcome its first guests in 2026. It gives some really significant numbers in the press release, but there is still quite a lot of scepticism that a government would put that much money - and I am not sure how this arrangement and announcement came about. Whoever did facilitate it would probably be patting themselves on the on the back; but to most people, to provide \$12 million to the Cadbury chocolate factory for a chocolate fountain, I am saying it does not necessarily pass the pub test around the place. The question is, what real benefit, if you like - and I am being respectful here because that is what I do. I need to be convinced that it is a good spend.

We have talked about international, we have talked about the marketing, Come Down for Air, we have talked about the digital experience. I will always be interested to hear about how Tourism Tasmania is supporting the regions, and I have just touched on that briefly, by asking the question about providing some of those training and program opportunities out in the regions. It is important to have a presence around the state. I do not get to go to every opening that is provided across the electorate, but again, to make sure - and have some commitment from Tourism Tasmania that the focus does extend to the regions and not just to the capital city; because that is the whole idea, get people here and get them around the state.

I read that people are staying longer; once they get here, they realise that they are not going to get around the state as quickly as they thought, because it looks quite tiny on the map, doesn't it? It looks quite tiny, but I know that you can spend about 4.5 hours getting from up in my corner, down through the east coast, and that is if you are probably only stopping for lunch and a coffee.

Ms O'Connor - Try half an hour to get from West Hobart to parliament some mornings, because from West Hobart, a trip that normally takes less than 10 minutes - obviously that is what is being neglected. Sorry, very frustrating.

Ms RATTRAY - Well, I am not sure that that has much to do with getting from the north to the south.

Ms O'Connor - But if we are talking about distances being impediments to productivity, sorry, it is very frustrating for people here, you just get clagged up. Thank you.

Ms Forrest - I could say you choose to live here, but I would not say that.

Ms RATTRAY - No. Mr President, you might have to call order.

Mr PRESIDENT - I was just about to.

Ms O'Connor - I try not to provoke a quarrel.

Mr PRESIDENT - No, it was a chat. I do not think there is a standing order.

Ms RATTRAY - I did not think they were allowed.

Ms O'Connor - Disorderly.

Ms RATTRAY - Interjections are allowed. No chatting.

I did note page 33 of the report talked about a one-off industry marketing support program. This assists operators with marketing their off-season offers and boosting their winter visitation period for 2024 and beyond, which obviously we are into now. Support was tailored to operators, including free expert help in creating 145 compelling offers, 119 professional photography offers and digital support to 67 operators to help convert interest to bookings. That is an interesting support program for industry. It would be good to have some understanding of what that actually looked like on the ground.

It goes on to talk about the beautiful King Island, and I am still looking for the part that focuses on Flinders Island, but for some reason it is missing on page 33 or 34. I would be interested to see what support is provided from Tourism Tasmania when it comes to the other beautiful island. I am not saying that it is any better than King Island, but it deserves the same attention as King Island.

Mr Duigan - It is substantially better than King Island.

Ms RATTRAY - I am mindful to be respectful here, honourable member, but I know that you can have that opinion as a landowner, yes. A question around the support for Flinders Island would be very well received.

Moving on to the actual nuts and bolts of the Tourism Tasmania board of directors, and there is quite a number there, I wrote down six board members, I believe that is right, that I have looked at. There are 66 employees, I could glean from this, who are permanent; then there are fixed-term numbers of 14; head of agency, one; senior executive, two; full time, 62;

part-time, 21; casual, eight; male, 18; and female, 65. Certainly, a bit of an imbalance there, but I always say, 'best person for the job, regardless of gender'. That is just a noting of that.

I appreciated the opportunity to have the contracts and tenders clearly articulated in the report, but I note that 42 were non-Tasmanian businesses and six were Tasmanian, including Qantas. I am not quite sure how you include Qantas as being a Tasmanian business, but somebody may well be able to clarify that. Qantas Airways Limited received around \$403,000 in support according to this. Rex Airlines also received not a lot of money: \$53,000. They are not a Tasmanian business. Also, my question mark was around Sharp Airlines. If we are going to be supporting non-Tasmanian businesses when it comes to travel and access, where is Sharp? Again, non-Tasmanian, but they are the main service provider other than Flinders Island Aviation to the Furneaux islands.

I also noticed that there was some significant funding to the Spirit of China Marketing Company Ltd. That had an initial term of 1 July 2024 to 30 June 2026, and then there is an extension from 1 July 2026 to 30 June 2029 - a fair way out - to the value of nearly \$838,000. Again, a non-Tasmanian business. I am interested in what we get for that, when it comes to contracts and quotes and tenders. There is another reasonable amount of money - in my view, others may not agree - to Travel Link Digital Company representation services, Hong Kong. Again, they have been provided with an initial term to 2026 with an extension from 2026 to 2029 of nearly \$450,000. Again, it would be good to have some understanding of what we get for the money for that type of contribution.

They were the ones that I picked out. They are there for everyone else to see. Again, I will be comparing fairly shortly, but I thought it was interesting that they were provided with such a significant extension from 2026 now, when it is not even 1 July 2025, let alone 2026. Let us have some indication of that. That would be useful.

Recognition Of Visitors

Mr PRESIDENT - While you pause to get your notes together, honourable member, and talking of noting the tourism report from 2023-24, we have some visitors in our Chamber that will tally up in the 2025 numbers, I imagine. We have the pleasure of Jonty Bush, Wendy Bourne, Marty Hunt and Nigel Hutton, who are members of the Queensland parliament, joining us in the Chamber. They are taking the opportunity to visit what we call an upper House. I believe it was some 100 years ago that Queensland decided that it was better served without one. We are hoping that you can enjoy your time here and, maybe, when you return to your parliament, make the suggestion that you reinstate your upper House. We are currently on private members' time today and the honourable member for McIntyre is noting a report.

Ms RATTRAY - An almost out-of-date report, Mr President, but it is important.

Mr PRESIDENT - It is important to note it. Welcome the Legislative Council and thank you for visiting us. I am sure all members will make you welcome here today and thank you for coming to our Chamber.

Members - Hear, hear.

Ms RATTRAY - Thank you. I add my welcome as well. I am not sure where the warm weather was that you brought down with you, but it is on its way. I think it will get here about November.

Moving on to the statement of income. I note revenue from operations; total revenue from continuing operations was \$38.664 million. Not an extraordinarily high amount of funds, but obviously that is the way this works. I mean, when you are talking about the likes of TasPorts, which has revenue of about \$180 million, it is certainly down at the lower end. That is just an observation.

There is not a lot more to add to the Tourism Tasmania annual report. As I already indicated, it will be interesting to compare when the 2024-25 annual report is presented to the parliament. I will do my best to put that on the Notice Paper for consideration and noting at a later time because we do rely heavily on promoting our state and the way that visitors come and have that Tasmanian experience. We would also like more Tasmanians to explore their own state, as I feel sure that our Queensland cousins also take the opportunity to invite Queenslanders to explore their state. We do, however, need to welcome our visitors as well. It generates a significant part of our economy.

I look forward to welcoming anyone who I meet - because you can usually tell when they are a visitor as they are looking for a good coffee shop or for a recommendation for somewhere to eat, or they may well be lost. They may even be looking for Travacalm tablets because they just drove over the Tasman Highway on the Sideling and are feeling a bit squirmy. From working in pharmacy many years ago, we used to have a lot of visitors come in. I would tell them that when they are heading to St Helens, there is a bit more of that to come, but the view is worth it.

Again, I thank the Chamber for the opportunity for the noting of the Tourism Tasmania annual report 2023-24. I look forward to any contributions that might come forward. Thank you.

[12.46 p.m.]

Ms PALMER (Rosevears - Acting Leader of the Government in the Legislative Council) - Mr President, you cut my work out for me, honourable member, but we have lots of answers to questions for you.

Tourism is one of Tasmania's oldest and most important industries, supporting our economy, businesses and jobs, local services, infrastructure, trade, innovation, recreation and lifestyle, for well over a century. The sector is the backbone of Tasmania's brand, and it helps to promote and protect what makes Tasmania special: our environment, heritage, wildlife, arts and culture. It also drives innovation and extends opportunities for Tasmanian businesses and entrepreneurs. The most recent Australian Bureau of Statistics data confirms the criticality of Tasmania's visitor economy to the state. It shows tourism growth is outpacing the state average in jobs, contribution to gross state product and gross value added. There are 50,800 Tasmanian jobs, or one in six, around the state, that are supported by the visitor economy. That is from the National Tourism Satellite Account, 2022-23.

The impact of the expenditure visitors make is felt widely, with tourism contributing \$4.55 billion to Tasmania's gross state product, both directly and indirectly. This is a 10.8 per cent share, the highest in Australia. In fact, for every tourism dollar spent in

Tasmania, 83 cents of additional benefit is generated elsewhere in the state's economy. Tasmania has also experienced its strongest summer for tourism, with record numbers of visitors and visitor nights. In the three-month summer season from December 2024 to February 2025, visitors injected a total of \$1.37 billion into our local economy, with \$60 million more spent this summer compared to last summer. They also stayed longer, with a record 4.43 million nights spent in Tasmania. Annually, visitors contribute around \$3.5 billion to the state economy, spending money in cafes, bakeries and restaurants, petrol stations and supermarkets, and on accommodation, transport, tours and attractions.

The tourism and hospitality sector is Tasmania's only industry that benefits most, if not all, regions through jobs and flow-on contribution to the economy. It is the reason Tourism Tasmania's role in developing our brand, providing visitor economy leadership and generating demand for holiday visitation is so vital to the state.

Attracting holiday visitors is big business, and Tasmania must compete in an Australian tourism landscape dominated by larger states with bigger budgets. Tasmania's marketing messages must stand out to be delivered in interesting ways to generate cut-through, so that people think of Tasmania when they are considering their next holiday. Tourism Tasmania's marketing strategy is focused on both creating future demand for visitation and converting current interest into bookings with airlines, travel agents and directly to our industry operators.

Research also shows that dull advertising, or brands that behave similarly, do not stand out and have to spend more money on paid media advertising to be noticed. Creative, distinctive and memorable activity enables the Tasmanian brand to receive strong results against higher overall investment from other states or destinations.

Since the agency's successful Come Down for Air campaign, first launched in October 2019, awareness of Tasmania as a holiday destination has risen by 12 percentage points and has the second-highest awareness behind Queensland.

Tasmania is also ranked as the most unique out of all Australian destinations, despite these states having larger tourism marketing budgets. This brand awareness is a testament to Tourism Tasmania's Come Down for Air and Off Season campaigns, which build strong and lasting connections with Australians, inspiring year-round visitation across all Tasmanian regions.

We are incredibly proud of the work undertaken by Tourism Tasmania, which has created a strong brand for our state, which is growing our visitor economy.

In the 2023-2024 financial year, Tourism Tasmania's Come Down for Air campaign showcased Tasmania to an estimated 15.3 million people across Australia and in New Zealand, to support the return of direct flights to Hobart from Auckland.

The agency's 2024 Off Season campaign, its biggest-ever investment in a winter campaign, encouraged travellers and locals to change their perception of a winter holiday, and visit the state during the cooler months.

Its 'Odd Jobs' campaign encouraged Australians to take a break from their day jobs for a uniquely Tasmanian winter 'odd jobs', and it was extremely successful. The activity drove

domestic and international interest and awareness of Tasmania, generating 1200 pieces of coverage across 21 countries, reaching a global audience of almost 1.3 billion.

The agency also invests in cooperative marketing activity with Virgin, Qantas, Jetstar and Rex to build frequency and capacity on core domestic routes, which enables visitors and Tasmanians access to affordable and convenient air access. Driving holiday demand for Tasmania underpins the access routes we all enjoy, with air seat capacity in 2023-24 reaching more than 110 per cent capacity of the previous year, and 105 per cent of 2019 capacity.

The agency's digital content reached nearly seven million people on social media. Its app was downloaded more than 63,000 times in 2023-24. The Discover Tasmania website and app generated 410,500 leads to tourism operators during 2023-24. Tourism Tasmania also leads collaboration with T21 government partners, providing insights and leadership to support key directions in the 2030 Visitor Economy Strategy, which aims to ensure the visitor economy continues to create a positive impact for Tasmania into the future.

Under our 2030 Strong Plan for Tasmania's Future, we are backing our industry, ensuring that Tasmania continues to build on its reputation as a world-leading tourism destination.

The honourable member for McIntyre had a number of questions in her contribution. One of them was around famils.

Ms Rattray - A hundred and five, actually.

Ms PALMER - Yes, 105 famils - it refers to familiarisation. That includes media and visiting journalists, travel track training visits. The goal of the program is to drive earned media; that is articles in papers and online that you do not necessarily have to pay for, or we might call them editorials.

Then you mentioned the flights, direct flights between Hobart and New Zealand. These are going very well. It has been a great success for our state. We have had the strongest-ever summer for that route, which is fantastic. We are working with Air New Zealand to extend the time frame because it is a seasonal route, and we certainly hope to be adding more frequency there.

You talked about the voucher scheme. That is for Tasmanian residents only, and it is the responsibility of State Growth; it does not sit with Tourism Tasmania.

Ms Rattray - Right. The actual funding to implement that will come from State Growth?

Ms PALMER - That is what I am advised, yes.

You asked how a marketing campaign's success is measured. Tourism Tasmania tracks every element of its marketing program, and it sets KPIs that need to be achieved before launch. It also tracks a long-term brand metric, which is known as Brand Power Score, which shows Australian travellers' intent and connection in Tasmania. This shows overall performance of campaigns. This is shared and reviewed quarterly as part of the Tourism Information Monitor, so heavily looking at the outcomes of the campaigns and really measuring their success.

You asked about tenders. Qantas has a call centre in Hobart that employs Tasmanians. I think you were also talking about the Travel Link Digital Company in Hong Kong, and a connection to a business in China. I am advised that they are consultants in China and in Hong Kong - Tourism Tasmania representatives based in China and Hong Kong. They train travel agents, run PR programs, local social media and local marketing. Local language is needed and best practice for all states, and Tourism Australia and Tourism Tasmania follow a stringent request for -

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

QUESTIONS

North Eastern Soldiers Memorial Hospital - James Scott Wing - Future Use

**Ms RATTRAY question to ACTING LEADER of the GOVERNMENT in the
LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL, Ms PALMER**

[2.30 p.m.]

Before I ask my question, I will preface it by saying I am normally a fairly patient person, but I have lost my patience on this one.

My question is regarding the future use of the James Scott Wing at the North Eastern Soldiers Memorial Hospital, affectionately known as the NESM. My questions follow the then-Minister for Health's indication in April 2023 that there would be a hospital master plan specific to the site; and a further follow up question, in June 2024, where advice was KP Health had been engaged to undertake extensive data analysis.

Now, in May 2025, an email has been received from the project manager for the District Hospital Masterplan project - not to me, I might add - indicating current planning works includes a review of the range of services. The District Hospital Masterplan will respond to and build off the findings of the statewide Rural Health Services Optimisation Plan, which is in draft document at this stage, and advise that it is anticipated the future use of the James Scott facility will be determined once this is completed - wait for it - mid-2026. This will be at least four years since the facility has been vacated.

- (1) How many more master plans, analysis data work and assessments is it going to take before a decision is made on the future use of this facility, which I might add is ideal for health service needs in the north-east?
- (2) Why has it taken so long to make a decision and subsequently repurpose an ideal building to deliver a range of local healthcare services? My final question, but possibly not my final question, just for now:
- (3) How much longer does Infrastructure Services, programming and delivery Department of Health expect the community to wait to see the building repurposed? Apologies for the length.

ANSWER

Mr President, any future use of the James Scott Wing will be informed by evidence-based health planning, including through service planning undertaken for our rural areas, and the District Hospital Masterplan. The District Hospital Masterplan is being developed on a region-by-region basis, initially focusing on northern Tasmania, including Scottsdale and the James Scott Wing.

This master plan will provide the Department of Health with a long-term strategy for the use, and potential refurbishment or development of, the department's rural health facilities across the state.

Inspections of the James Scott Wing have shown that while the building is vacant and largely structurally sound, its internal fit-out is not contemporary and is in poor condition. It is likely that capital investment would be required to make the building fit for the delivery of modern health services.

A draft of the master plan for northern Tasmania is expected to be available for comment in late 2025 and completed in the first quarter of 2026.

North West Regional Hospital - Oncology Staffing

Ms FORREST question to ACTING LEADER of the GOVERNMENT in the LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL, Ms PALMER

[2.34 p.m.]

This is restating the question I asked before because the answer did not answer the question. With regard to the cancer service at North West Regional Hospital, 'North West Regional Hospital' being the key words:

- (1) How many specialist medical staff positions are filled in the areas of:
 - (a) cancer haematology
 - (b) cancer medical oncology
 - (c) cancer radiation oncology?
- (1) How many specialist medical staff positions are currently vacant in:
 - (a) cancer haematology
 - (b) cancer medical oncology
 - (c) cancer radiation oncology?
- (2) What process has been undertaken to date by the department to fill any vacant positions?

- (3) What actions have been taken by the director of the Northern Cancer Service based in Launceston to fill the vacant positions?
- (4) What are the current waiting times for patients to see specialists in:
 - (a) cancer haematology
 - (b) cancer medical oncology
 - (c) radiation oncology?

ANSWER

Thank you, Mr President, and I thank the member for the question. The Northern Cancer Service provides care and treatment across the north and north-west, and its staff work across Tasmanian Health Service facilities as required. Regarding cancer services at the North West Regional Hospital, there are no haematology medical staff positions currently based on site, but outreach services are provided by the Northern Cancer Service site in Launceston to the North West Regional Hospital.

There are 1.4 full-time equivalent (FTE) positions filled on site within medical oncology, with no vacancies, and additional outreach services provided from Launceston.

There is one FTE radiation oncology position filled, with a further one FTE vacant. Locum coverage is being sought and radiation oncologists in Launceston are providing support to the patients in the north-west. Ongoing recruitment campaigns supported by medical recruitment are in place to fill the vacant position in radiation oncology. Locum coverage is also being sought while recruitment is in progress.

Regarding wait times for treatment at the North West Cancer Centre, the current waiting time for treatment for haematology and medical oncology is less than seven days.

The average waiting time for radiation oncology in March 2025 was 27 days. The average is within the maximum acceptable waiting time of 28 days, as set out in the Radiation Oncology Practice Standards developed by the Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Radiologists Faculty on Radiation Oncology, the Australian Society of Medical Imaging and Radiation Therapy, and the Australasian College of Physical Scientists and Engineers in Medicine. The standards are publicly available and can be found at www.ranzcr.com.

New Town Bay Community Sporting Facility - Funding Commitment

Ms THOMAS question to MINISTER for SPORT AND EVENTS, Mr DUIGAN

[2.38 p.m.]

Minister, your government has recently announced you would increase its contribution to the Devils' high-performance training centre by \$45 million to \$105 million. At the same time, basketball has a critical shortage of 16 courts in the Greater Hobart area and there is not one indoor community court facility in the Hobart local government area.

To make things worse, Swisherr will be closing its doors in less than 12 months, leaving the many local kids who use this facility, recreationally and for the club training and competition, on the streets.

Minister, it is simply not fair our local kids miss out on the opportunity to become future sporting superstars because they have no place to play, whilst at the same time government pours endless resources into elite facilities.

It is also unfathomable to think that our NBL1 team, the Hobart Chargers, which has performed on the national stage in the NBL1 competition for nearly 30 years, has never had a stadium to call home.

There is a shovel-ready project at New Town Bay with evidence-based need and significant community support. Minister, will you address this critical issue by making a commitment to fund 50 per cent of a new \$25 million shovel-ready, four-court, multipurpose facility at New Town Bay so the project is eligible for 50:50 Australian Government grants?

ANSWER

Mr President, I thank the member for the question. Of course, the government recognises the significant role sport and active recreation can play in improving physical and mental health and building community connectedness and social skills. As we know, a facility like the one the member speaks of would help to promote healthy, active, connected and engaged communities and promote good mental health and wellbeing.

Basketball Tasmania, in partnership with the Hobart City Council and Hobart Phoenix Basketball Association, is advancing plans for a new \$25 million four-court multipurpose indoor sports facility in Hobart. The proposed venue would also serve as the new home courts for the Hobart Chargers, as mentioned, supporting both elite and community basketball and other community sporting organisations.

While I think it is an important aspiration, the Tasmanian government is investing already significant funding to increase the number and quality of indoor courts statewide. This includes building new sports facilities and improving, as well as increasing access to, existing facilities, and we are getting on with the job of doing exactly that.

When combined with the Glenorchy sports centre four courts, this new facility would halve the current court shortfall. I should say the state government has already committed \$80,000 towards design and planning, with Hobart City Council also committing some level of support.

I understand that a letter was sent to the federal Labor Party requesting 80 per cent funding for the project, and that if it was forthcoming, our state government would fund the remaining 20 per cent. I am aware of a letter recently sent to my office from the member. I will not be making large-scale funding commitments here in Question Time, but I would make the point that the state government is, as we speak, investing \$104 million in basketball infrastructure across the state. We recognise that delivering critical sporting infrastructure is very important, and yes, we have continued to invest in the AFL high-performance centre. I believe it is very important that we set our AFL team up for success, and the training and administration centre is a key part of that. Likewise, the JackJumpers high-performance centre.

This government is leaning in like no other in terms of sporting infrastructure, and we will continue to have those conversations.

***Spirits of Tasmania* - New Vessels Update**

Ms O'CONNOR question to MINISTER for INFRASTRUCTURE, Mr VINCENT

[2.43 p.m.]

Tasmanians are pretty keen to hear what is happening with the two new *Spirits*. We read some dialogue over the weekend about options for them, whether it is leasing them, storing them overseas, storing them, for example, with either Malaysia or Hobart or Scotland. Do you have any information to update the Council on where the ships are right now, and the progress of negotiations over their fate until the wharf is fixed?

ANSWER

Mr President, I have very limited knowledge on that, mainly because they come under Mr Abetz with Transport. With the wharf, the discussions are going on with the minister on the best way to handle those when they come out. You would be aware from the notes in the paper that the ship has been delayed because of bad weather. I have seen the sailing routine trip to come out with its regular stops and amount of fuel it has to take on, which was quite interesting. Further details on that I have not been involved with at this time.

Devonport Wharf - Update

Ms O'CONNOR question to MINISTER for INFRASTRUCTURE, Mr VINCENT

[2.44 p.m.]

Has TasPorts provided any further advice to you on works at the proposed Devonport wharf, and are you able to provide the Council with an update on the latest advice you have received from TasPorts?

ANSWER

Mr President, a very similar start-off to the previous question. Because of TT-Line leasing all that from TasPorts, that information comes under Mr Abetz's portfolios. TasPorts are there for part of our sub-cabinet meeting to do with that, to discuss the points where they cut across. At this point in time, as far as I am aware as minister of TasPorts, they do not have a direct involvement in anything that is going on at the wharf at this point in time.

Devonport Wharf - TasPorts Role

Ms O'CONNOR question to MINISTER for INFRASTRUCTURE, Mr VINCENT

[2.45 p.m.]

Can we have some clarity on that statement? Are you advising the Council that TasPorts is essentially taking a hands-off position in relation to the Devonport wharf because the wharf

is leased to TT-Line? It is somewhat concerning if that is the case, given the scale of this infrastructure and its importance to the state - if you, as the minister, are not kept up to date.

ANSWER

Mr President, as I explained, they do attend the meetings, and they talk between them all the time.

Ms O'Connor - Do they talk to you?

Mr VINCENT - Yes, they do. I am in those meetings as well, but on a day-to-day basis - is the simplest way to describe it - TasPorts does not have any involvement with the structure there at this point in time. They do have involvement in what was set up originally at Berth 3 and there are still jobs that TasPorts has to do as the structure is put in place over the coming 12 months. The timing of those parts of the job are scheduled between TasPorts and TT-Line.

Devonport Wharf - TasPorts - Advice on Berth 3

Ms O'CONNOR question to MINISTER for INFRASTRUCTURE, Mr VINCENT

[2.46 p.m.]

Earlier, I asked you about the latest advice that you had received from TasPorts and clearly, as Minister for Infrastructure, you have received some advice from TasPorts about Berth 3 because there are discussions happening inside Cabinet. I understand Cabinet confidentiality but, as minister, you would have regular weekly meetings or fortnightly meetings with your GBE, and what I asked you for was the latest advice you have had from TasPorts, if there is any, on Berth 3.

ANSWER

Mr President, I will clarify that there has been no change in recent months on what is happening, other than the regular meetings and communication. There is no further advancement of TasPorts' involvement, other than the timelines over the next 12 months as different parts of the project trigger TasPorts involvement. There is no technical aspect to it or anything that has changed in recent times.

Ms O'Connor - Okay, thank you.

Northern Suburbs Transit Corridor - Timelines

Ms THOMAS question to ACTING LEADER of the GOVERNMENT in the LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL, Ms PALMER

[2.48 p.m.]

I, along with many in my community, have become increasingly frustrated with the amount of time and money spent on countless studies regarding the activation of the Northern Suburbs Transit Corridor, with no action or timelines for action in sight.

Last October, in budget Estimates, I asked a number of questions of the Minister for Transport regarding the Northern Suburbs Transit Corridor, referring to it as one of the most 'overstudied pieces of infrastructure in the history of transport projects'.

The response was that the strategic business case approval is required to obtain the necessary funding from the Australian Government and this business case will be delivered to government in early 2025.

Honourable Acting Leader, my questions are:

- (1) Has the strategic business case been delivered? If not, when will it be delivered, and why the delay?
- (2) What other work is underway or planned to activate the Northern Suburbs Transit Corridor as a transport solution and a medium-density housing urban-growth solution?
- (3) Noting I asked this question in the April sitting prior to the federal election and was not advised there was an answer ready until recently, did the government include advocacy for the activation of the Northern Suburbs Transit Corridor for transport, housing, or both, as a priority in its federal election advocacy?
- (4) Can you provide assurance that the \$52 million of state and federal funding for the Northern Suburbs Transit Corridor remains secure and will be allocated only to the Northern Suburbs Transit Corridor and not frittered away on further studies and reports?

ANSWER

- (1) The Department of State Growth is currently finalising the Strategic Business Case for a Greater Hobart Rapid Bus Network. It provides an economic appraisal of a rapid bus network compared to other options to improve public transport across Greater Hobart. Extra work has been undertaken to assess the variables that impact the transport benefits and ensure that wider economic benefits have been considered. The strategic business case is expected to be completed by mid-2025.
- (2) Concept design for a two-way busway and stations between Glenorchy and Cornelian Bay has started and will be completed by early 2026. This work has included recent site investigations including borehole drilling, baseline noise monitoring, and surveying along the corridor. More detailed cost estimates will be developed at the end of the concept design process.

Following the release of the Northern Suburbs Transit Corridor Growth Strategy in 2024, planning work for urban growth will continue in 2025 with the development of a corridor plan to be managed by Glenorchy City Council. The corridor plan will provide a framework for land use and development within the corridor's walkable catchments, ensuring

coordinated planning for housing, employment, and public spaces is aligned with the transport investment.

- (3) The Australian Government has requested that a detailed business case be prepared for the activation of the Northern Suburbs Transit Corridor before funding for construction will be provided.
- (4) The Australian Government has committed \$40.5 million of funding in its budget for Hobart public transport infrastructure planning, which, until 2024, they had previously identified as funding for the Northern Suburbs Transit Corridor. The Tasmanian government was not advised or consulted on the Australian Government name change. Combined with \$13.5 million of state funding, a total of \$54 million has been committed.

The Australian Government has specified that the Hobart public transport infrastructure planning funds are to be used to:

- plan upgrades to Hobart's public, active and marine transport networks, including the Hobart Rapid Bus Network between major centres along key corridors, enabling public transport infrastructure, bus stations and ferry terminals, and to
- undertake further public transport planning on the Northern Suburbs Transit Corridor.

This overall funding amount is sufficient for planning and design of the Northern Suburbs Transit Corridor transport solution. Additional funding, however, would be required for construction, including additional Australian Government funding.

Statewide Musculoskeletal Services

Ms RATTRAY question to ACTING LEADER of the GOVERNMENT in the LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL, Ms PALMER

[2.53 p.m.]

The lack of rheumatology services in the north of the state means people are required to travel to Hobart to access treatment, even though \$6 million was allocated in the 2023 Budget to establish Statewide Musculoskeletal (MSK) Services, including the development of northern-based pain and rheumatology services.

My questions are:

- (1) Why is the government now indicating it is 'considering' a statewide model of care when the funds were previously committed in the 2023 Budget?
- (2) Is the \$6 million budget allocation still available to progress the statewide MSK services to include north and north-west locations?

ANSWER

Thank you, Mr President, and I thank the member for her question. In answer, we recognise and understand the importance of specialist services for people living with arthritis and related musculoskeletal conditions, including persistent pain, and we are committed to providing equitable access for Tasmanians right across the state.

In the 2023-24 Budget, \$6 million was allocated to provide outpatient musculoskeletal and pain services, including increasing access to evidence-based musculoskeletal care pathways and implementing multidisciplinary pain and rheumatology services.

Outreach clinics have been delivered in the north and north-west and a statewide model of care for rheumatology has been delivered with extensive clinical consultation.

The Department of Health is now implementing the statewide model of care, and I am advised this includes the establishment of permanent rheumatology and persistent pain services in the north and north-west by the end of this year.

MOTION

Tourism Tasmania Annual Report 2023-2024 - Consideration and Noting

Resumed from above (page 25).

[2.55 p.m.]

Ms PALMER (Rosevears - Acting Leader of the Government in the Legislative Council) - Mr President, in my previous contribution I was answering questions from the honourable member for McIntyre, and I was addressing some questions she had about consultants in China and Hong Kong.

Tourism Tasmania follows a stringent request-for-tender process to recruit and contract the best in market representation for Tasmania. The honourable member also asked about the global cooperation campaign. Tourism Tasmania's Access and Travel Trade Partnership Program for the domestic and international markets, aims to build stronger awareness of the state and drive conversion and bookings to Tasmania through partner channels and networks. In 2023-24, this program included targeted partnership activity with key travel distribution companies and airlines, training, travel trade representatives, familiarisation visits to Tasmania, and participation in Tourism Australia events and programs. Key markets for the program included Australia, New Zealand, Hong Kong, China, Singapore, the USA and the UK.

Tourism Australia is also an important partner for Tourism Tasmania, delivering content-focused partnerships internationally, co-funded media visits from top-tier journalists, training and travel agents globally through their Aussie Specialist Program, and attending events including the Australian Tourism Exchange and in-region, marketplace and roadshow events. Tourism Tasmania has trained 5200 travel agents globally via webinars or by completing online training modules, facilitating almost 200 direct connections between Tasmanian tourism businesses and travel trade partners.

The honourable member also asked about global expo participation. Attending trade events in partnership with Tourism Australia has certainly led to some significant outcomes in the tourism space, driving key markets.

I believe I have touched on all the questions. With that, Mr President, I note the report.

[2.58 p.m.]

Ms ARMITAGE (Launceston) - Mr President, I thank the member for McIntyre for bringing forward the motion. I will make a few comments on the Tourism Tasmania annual report.

We know how integral tourism is to our state, not just economically, but for Tasmania's reputation as a pristine, unique environment unlike anywhere else in the world. We boast heritage architecture, archaeological significance of the presence of human beings in the state for tens of thousands of years, and ecology and climate that people travel from all over the world to see. Truly, we are so fortunate to be able to live and work in such a beautiful, unique place replete with beauty, that is truly ours and truly Tasmanian.

Therefore, making sure that our tourism sector is receiving the best support and flourishing as best as possible is vital. We want to make sure that people know that Tasmania is open to tourists and that we welcome them with open arms. We want people to have the Tasmanian experience and to leave our island state a little richer for the experience. Of course, with this annual report, we are looking back in time somewhat. In 2023, our tourism sector and our state were still in the midst of the effects of COVID. Of course, COVID has not entirely gone away and we live with it somewhat. We have adapted to it and continue to take it seriously, as it affects tourism, our communities and the businesses and services that support our visitor economy.

The Tourism Tasmania annual report for 2023-24 notes that the Tasmanian 2030 Visitor Economy Strategy was released in August 2023 and put in place a three-year action plan for implementation. Now in 2025, we are certainly expecting to see some of these plans come to fruition, but for now I will just focus on the annual report itself. The visitor economy strategy mandates collaboration between the government and the tourism and hospitality industry, to ensure that our state's tourism sector and experience has room to grow, is supported, and is done in a manner which is sustainable and has a positive effect on Tasmania's culture, environment and way of life.

Tourism Tasmania led the implementation of the plan with key partners, including the Premier's Visitor Economy Advisory Council. This council is comprised of representatives from the Tourism Industry Council of Tasmania, Tourism Tasmania, the Tasmanian Hospitality Association, the Department of State Growth, the Tasmanian Heritage Council and Brand Tasmania. Each of these stakeholders has an important part to play in boosting and supporting the Tasmanian visitor economy.

One of the initiatives that the annual report highlights is the development of a business case testing the viability of enabling visitors to opt in to a net-zero visit to Tasmania, prioritising local carbon offsets. The report states:

The business case was informed by consumer qualitative and quantitative market research, which found that consumers question the credibility of

carbon offsets and have a high degree of scepticism towards carbon calculators, but that Tasmania's net zero emissions and renewable energy credentials are a unique proposition for Tasmania in the travel market.

Clearly, this presents a unique opportunity for our state to market itself, promote its own credentials as an ecologically focused place to visit, and to ensure that growth in the visitor economy is managed sustainably. I look forward to the conclusions of this business case and how it fits in with the overall 2030 Visitor Economy Strategy.

Another important initiative that the annual report highlights is the improvement of accessible tourism in Tasmania. Providing meaningful, actual changes to help people of all abilities to enjoy, experience and visit Tasmania is an extremely important step forward to ensuring that people are included, and know that when they come to Tasmania, they will be welcomed and accommodated.

The annual report notes that 50 audio guides have been produced to assist visually impaired visitors with planning and enjoying the Tasmanian holiday. These audio guides highlight different visitor experiences, and include information about wheelchair access, assistance dogs, braille and other onsite accessibility features.

Very importantly, the annual report tracks the visitor economy through the Tasmanian Visitor Survey, which in 2023-24 celebrated its first 12 months of being a 100 per cent online experience for visitors. Not only does this expand and ease accessibility for the survey respondents, it is estimated to save more than 80,000 pages annually and reduce carbon emissions by an estimated 1.41 tonnes per year.

In the year ending June 2024, 1,301,400 visitors came to Tasmania, an increase of 1.7 per cent from the year before; 1,036,900 of these visitors came for leisure. An amount of \$3.48 million was spent, an average of \$2674 per visitor. I would encourage everyone to take a look at the statistics in the annual report on page 15 as they are very enlightening. As the report notes:

Although average spend per visitor was up 41 per cent on 2019, it still reduced to \$2674. This is an 11 per cent drop from the year ending June 2023, bringing total expenditure for the year down. This reduction was a consequence of travellers spending their accumulated savings during post-pandemic trips in 2022-23 following pent up demand for travel.

The report also notes that international visitation had almost fully recovered to pre-COVID levels in the year ending March 2024, with visitors from the United States of America and Germany being standouts. It notes that visitors from other markets are slower to recover, including those from China.

Marketing is a significant area of activity for our tourism sector, and we have all seen many of the advertising initiatives which highlight Tasmania's charm and promote it as an outstanding place to visit. The 'Come Down for Air' campaign seems to be one of the most highly promoted advertising campaigns for Tasmania's visitor economy in recent years. The report notes that this campaign showcased Tasmania to an estimated 15.3 million people aged 25-plus across Australia. It reached 5.3 million people on Meta and 1.5 million on TikTok.

This is in addition to more traditional forms of advertising, such as through partnerships with news outlets and advertising in papers and on television.

Invariably, people's interaction with Tasmania as a brand will typically start with a search online. I went to Google and typed in 'Tasmania', and the first thing that came up was the Tourism Tasmania website. What it shows people is therefore extremely important. To this end, I note that the annual report states that significant improvements were made to the Discover Tasmania, Tourism Tasmania website, including updates to the 'Trip Planner' feature, new utility tools and refinements to account creation and use, and upgraded search and navigation capabilities to help people see more content and connect people with what they are searching for. Clearly their search engine optimisation is working well and this has helped people connect with services in Tasmania. The Discover Tasmania website generated more than 305,000 leads to operators, a metric which is measured by the number of times users have clicked on operator contact details on the Australian Tourism Data Warehouse listing.

The development of the Discover Tasmania app has further enabled visitors to Tasmania to get the information they need quite literally in the palm of their hands very quickly. Moreover, partnerships Tourism Tasmania has fostered with our airports and with Events Tasmania and related industries has helped to promote the download and the use of this app while visiting the state. The app was downloaded 63,041 times during the year, with 105,000 leads to operators.

As many are aware, I am very enthusiastic about Tasmanian boards having Tasmanian board members. While Tourism Tasmania is a statutory authority, it is still a skills-based board, appointed by the Governor on the recommendation of the Minister for Tourism. I note that we have some excellent skills on the Tourism Tasmania board and that we have representation for Tasmania, including from the north and north-western regions.

The Tasmanian tourism sector is a vital pillar of our economy, our pride and our identity as Australia's island state. People visit us from all around the world because they know they can experience things here that they cannot anywhere else. This just does not happen on its own. It takes a lot of people working very hard to ensure that we are being best promoted and that we are doing that with care, sensitivity and sustainability. Tourism Tasmania spearheads this and is supported by many businesses, organisations, individuals, employees and stakeholders who work in the tourism sector or in sectors adjacent to it. It takes everyone to make this work and reading through the 2023-24 annual report, there is quite a lot to be enthusiastic about.

Having just returned from Western Australia at the weekend, I noted at the airport, I was talking to a lady and her husband who were coming back from Perth, Western Australia. They had visited here in the past and they were here in Tasmania, having visited to actually find a home. Sad to say they had been to Launceston and did not consider it was where they wanted to live and they were actually looking for the Huon Valley but, you know, it was great to see the people -

Ms Forrest - They were a bit lost then.

Ms ARMITAGE - A little lost. I did try to convince them that Launceston was probably a better option for them; however, they did say that they were looking for the Huon Valley,

they were going down to the Huon Valley to see if they could find somewhere that they could purchase to live.

I think that is part of the overall experience of coming to Tasmania. Many people visit and really want to come back and live here. I think that was really important and something that I took away from the discussion with them.

I thank the honourable member for bringing this forward and I note the report.

[3.09 p.m.]

Ms RATTRAY (McIntyre) - I appreciate the honourable member for Launceston making a contribution. I thank the Acting Leader for the response and also providing some responses to some questions that were posed during my contribution. I do not believe that there was a real focus on the 42 non-Tasmanian businesses that were under the detailed information for contracts over \$50,000. There were, as I said, 42 non-Tasmanians and only six Tasmanians, which included Qantas Tasmania, Qantas Airways Ltd. It says they are a Tasmanian business, but I understand the response to having a call centre in the state with Tasmanian employees.

Thank you for that. Again, I think it would be useful to have some sort of measure in the annual report of how Tourism Tasmania is measuring the value for money for the contracts that have been awarded, particularly given that there are 42 non-Tasmanian companies over the value of \$50,000. As we listened, in my contribution, some of them were up to almost half-a-million dollars, with contract extensions right through to 2029 - significant funds. It is always a really useful exercise to have a look at annual reports and to be able to put them on the Notice Paper for consideration and noting. It certainly enhances my knowledge and understanding of how these entities work.

I note the honourable member for Launceston talked about the board numbers. My reference - I do not think I explained it well enough in my original contribution - was that TasPorts have five members on their board for their significant increase in revenue that they administer. Tourism Tasmania has six members. That was really the point that I perhaps did not make well enough. I note they maybe have six because there is a good spread across the state representing north, north-west and south.

Thank you very much to not only those who contributed, but listened.

Report considered and noted.

MOTION

Tasmanian Planning Commission's Draft Integrated Assessment Report - Macquarie Point Multipurpose Stadium Project of State Significance - Consideration and Noting

[3.12 p.m.]

Ms O'CONNOR (Hobart) - Mr President, I move -

That the Tasmanian Planning Commission Draft Integrated Assessment Report (DIAR) on the proposed Macquarie Point Multipurpose Stadium Project of State Significance be considered and noted.

The Tasmanian Planning Commission's Draft Integrated Assessment Report into the Macquarie Point Multipurpose Stadium Project of State Significance came out late in the afternoon of 31 March this year. Nearly two months down the track, an enormous amount has happened in relation to this unpopular, divisive and unaffordable project.

Only today, members will have seen that the government has released the draft of the enabling legislation. This enabling legislation would require 50 people, duly elected by their communities in trust, to make a decision about, arguably, given the site, the most complex construction project in Tasmania's history.

Although we are three members down, I thought it was an opportunity today to at least talk about some of the issues that have been raised in the Draft Integrated Assessment Report, because this work is the result of a comprehensive analysis of the issues to date. Yet, within 48 hours of the government receiving the draft report from the planning commission, they decided the path through here was to slur independent economist Dr Nicholas Gruen, who was commissioned by the government to do an independent body of work on the stadium, and then to slur the Tasmanians who put themselves forward to be members of the expert panel. For the record again, those people are Paul Turner SC, Chair and former assistant solicitor-general; Gary Prattley; the wonderful Tasmanian Lynn Mason, Order of Australia, former Flinders Mayor, Chair of the Tasmanian Community Fund; Shelley Penn AM; and Martin Wallace, the former Treasury secretary. Heading up the panel is John Ramsay, a long-time and dedicated planning bureaucrat.

What the draft integrated report found in summary is that the stadium would cost at least twice what Tasmanians were told it would cost, and an objective analysis of the stated benefits is that they would be around half of what the government claimed. There are significant concerns raised in the draft report about the suitability of that site for that project. Alarm bells are raised in the report about emergency evacuation procedures and traffic management. There are very significant, and arguably unresolvable, issues relating to the impact on historic cultural heritage on the site, including the sacred ground of the Cenotaph. Enormous question marks are raised over the environmental risks of putting in a stadium and digging out a three-storey car park on an area of land which is recognised by the Environment Protection Authority as a contaminated site, which has a history of having waste dumped on that site, some of which will be highly toxic.

In essence, the draft report turns around and says to Macquarie Point Development Corporation and therefore the government, which is the proponent, 'You have not provided enough information on these key questions. We ask that you do.'

What was the government's response? Well, as I said earlier, it was to bag out the planning commission panel; to make threats - and the threat of enabling legislation has been realised today with the issuing of the draft report - to continue to mislead over the true costs of the stadium; and to attempt to blackmail members in this place by saying, 'If you do not back our bill, the team is gone and that is on you.' What a shockingly rude and stupid thing to say to 15 members of this place.

Today we find out what we have known all along, and that is that there is no way you could build a stadium like this on that site for about three quarters of a billion dollars. The Greens said it over and over again. Independent members in the other place and in this place have said that.

What do we get today, Mr President? Confirmation that the stadium will cost at least \$945 million. We only got that confirmation today despite the fact the government has known it for some time. I refer honourable members to the Macquarie Point Multipurpose Stadium Enabling Legislation Report, which at page 49 says this:

The 2025-26 Budget assumes an estimated cost for the stadium of \$945 million. The Government has stated that when the committed equity funding is fully utilised, MPDC will source the remaining funding required to complete the project through borrowings.

Again, what we were told on day one of the election campaign by the Premier - and when I say 'we', I mean the people of Tasmania - is that the people of Tasmania will pay \$375 million for this project 'and not one red cent more'. We have been back through the record of the Premier's statements and the minister, Mr Abetz's, statements both inside and outside parliament, and borrowings did not enter the conversation until quite recently.

Tasmanians were told there would be a pitch for a public-private partnership, for private partners to contribute towards the stadium and that ultimately the decision on any public-private partnership would go to Cabinet. Well, it turns out no-one who is smart with money wants to invest in a money-losing project like this proposed Macquarie Point stadium. The government has walked away from the public-private partnership pitch.

Now it has been confirmed, in the past fortnight only, a year after the state election, that actually, Tasmanians will be on hook for the lot - not \$375 million - we will have to make up whatever the cost of the stadium is outside the money that we are getting from the Commonwealth - which, remember, is tied to urban renewal - and the money that is coming in from the AFL. These are very significant borrowings.

Back to that \$945 million figure: seasoned hands in here will know that in order for this to be stated in a document like this, it has been known for weeks that the stadium will cost at least \$945 million. It is quoted as saying that it has been known for long enough to have been in the Budget, which has gone to the printers. It is only today that we are told something approaching the truth about the true costs because today was the day that the government released its draft enabling legislation bill.

We are about to be put into quite a dangerous situation. This enabling legislation is extraordinary. How it responds or does not respond to the matters raised in the Draft Integrated Assessment Report is very telling. Can you believe - I mean, these are sort of crude comparisons, but the draft report is a weighty document. It is at least a centimetre thick. We have a piece of legislation here to approve the stadium and a permit attached, both of which, honestly, are skanky. They are thin.

Do you know what? This legislation - which will come before the parliament after two weeks of consultation which will be completely ignored - gives extraordinary powers to the minister for State Growth. It is an approval bill with a draft and very half-cocked permit attached, and the reason it is so half-cocked is that hardly any of the necessary foundational work for this permit and the conditions that go with it have been done, which was identified by the planning commission in their draft report. It identified deficiencies in their traffic management modelling and emergency evacuation planning. It identified major deficiencies in Macquarie Point Development Corporation's capacity to deal with the environmental risks at that site, including toxins that blow off the site, contaminated groundwater and contaminated fill.

We find out today from Macquarie Point Development Corporation in that legislation report that the contaminated fill has now been upscaled from the draft integrated report, which said that Macquarie Point Development Corporation thought there would be around 120,000 tonnes of contaminated fill. I better get that right, because it could be cubic metres. Today we find out it is in fact 190,000 cubic metres of historical fill that will be excavated to accommodate the stadium and underground car parking. Macquarie Point Development Corporation did not even talk about the underground car park in the information that they provided to the planning commission. Back to this legislation, and we are not pre-empting an order of the day, of course, because it has not been tabled. I very strongly encourage honourable members to look at this draft bill because the fate of this project sits with us. The responsibility sits with this small group of people. Now, we know how the government is going to vote, and we have got a depressingly clear picture of how Labor will vote on this piece of legislation.

If the government brings this legislation forward, with this skanky little permit attached to it, what this legislation allows is for the minister to change the conditions of the permit. The permit that we would approve under this legislation has no weight, none at all; because this legislation allows the minister, that is, Mr Abetz, to alter permits, and at various points, too.

We are being asked to approve a draft permit. We are being told that everything will be alright because the minister will control the project. We have got a clause in here, for example, that is basically a Project of State Significance clause, or *State Policies and Projects Act* clause, but without the independent integrated assessment process. It allows this permit approval to override the *Conveyancing Act*, the *Land Acquisition Act*, the *Land Titles Act*, the *Land Use Planning and Approvals Act 1993*, the *Local Government (Building and Miscellaneous Provisions) Act*, the *Macquarie Point Development Corporation Act* and the *Railway Infrastructure Act*. It says:

The provisions of this Act prevail over, and to the extent of any inconsistency with, the provisions of ... any other Act, ... any planning scheme, special planning order or other instrument under the *Land Use Planning and Approvals Act 1993*; and ... any other order or instrument.

Ms RATTRAY - Point of order, Mr President. With the greatest respect to the honourable member, are we on the same notice of motion?

Ms O'CONNOR - Mr President, I am not going to put up with this, this time. I have the greatest of respect for the member for McIntyre, but this is totally relevant to the Draft Integrated Assessment Report. It is the government's answer to the report.

Ms Rattray - I am just asking the question, honourable member.

Mr PRESIDENT - I will just get some advice.

Ms O'CONNOR - It is not tabled. It is a public document. I do not even understand why there is a question about this.

Mr PRESIDENT - Thank you. If I can have a moment just to clarify. The advice that we have is: because this is a public draft document that has been released today, and the Macquarie Point Planning Permit Bill 2025 is, at present, a draft bill that is the subject of public consultation, it is not an Order of the Day, as you have stated, in either House, and it is not yet known what form the bill will take when, or if, it is introduced to the parliament. In releasing the draft bill for consultation, the government stated:

The government has reviewed and acknowledged the concerns and challenges raised within the Draft Integrated Assessment Report by the Tasmanian Planning Commission.

This draft bill and subsequent planning conditions address these points and demonstrate the effort by the government to ensure that the legislation is comprehensive. The enabling legislation and supporting materials are hundreds of pages long, carefully addressing concerns, permits and conditions.

Having regard to these factors, the debate relating to the draft bill is relevant to the question before the Council, namely that the report be considered and noted, and both are in order.

I have been listening, and you have related this new document back to the Draft Integrated Assessment Report. My advice is: I agree that you are within your rights. It is a broad topic. I thank the honourable member for drawing that to the attention of the Council because others might have been wondering. We will continue.

Ms O'CONNOR - Thank you for your very wise ruling, Mr President. Again, I am surprised it has even come up as a question. I am not reflecting on your ruling, but the connection between all of this is oxygen clear. In fact, we should be nimble enough in here to be able to have debates on issues of the day, even though they have not explicitly been outlined in any subject that comes before any order of the day, if you like. We need to be nimble enough to do that, and particularly on an issue of this significance to the people of Tasmania, but also to the people of my electorate of Hobart, who will be most significantly impacted by this project. I am very surprised that there would be any issue with discussing a draft bill that has been put out for public consultation today.

Back to this draft bill and how it responds to the issues raised in the planning commission's Draft Integrated Assessment Report: what it does is it says a big, fat 'She'll be right, mate. What we are going to do is ask you to approve this permit, and then we will go away and prepare things like a construction environmental management plan, which will have to be delivered 30 days before construction is planned to start.' Who signs off on the construction environmental management permit under this arrangement? That would be the Secretary of State Growth: a uniquely qualified person to oversee the complexities of a construction environmental management permit.

The site environmental management permit? Well, that will be signed off by the minister, Mr Abetz. That should be fine too, because I heard that Mr Abetz is indeed an environmental management expert - not - but it is okay because if Mr Abetz is unhappy with any aspects of the planning permit that this Council is being asked to approve, he can just change it.

There is one area in this draft bill that allows for a disallowable instrument: that is in clauses 9 and 10, that the minister may issue subsequent project permits and that those subsequent project permits are subject to disallowance, but the minister can issue permits in respect of the access network that are not disallowable. The minister can amend relevant permits: not disallowable. The minister can make a minor amendment of a relevant permit. We would never even know. The minister can direct the Tasmanian Planning Commission to amend a planning scheme. The minister is responsible for compliance with permits. Just let that settle into your mind: Mr Abetz is responsible for compliance with these permits, but it is okay because if a mistake is made, in this unseemly haste to build a new stadium we cannot afford, if a bad decision is made, this bill takes away your appeal rights, all of them; unlike the *State Policies and Projects Act*, which restricts appeal rights to matters of process - still too restricted - this bill removes all appeal rights. All of them. That fundamental principle of judicial review under the Constitution, this bill flicks it. Draft clause 34, Limitation of rights of appeal, is an example of what is called a privative or ouster clause. It is really important that we understand that to remove or restrict judicial oversight allows government power without restriction and is at odds with Australia's Constitution and Westminster traditions. The right of judicial review is entrenched in the Constitution and embodies the broader notion that review of government decisions by independent courts is a valuable protection to citizens and an important form of oversight of administrative decision-making. It promotes the rule of law by ensuring government power cannot operate without restriction.

Draft clause 25, relating to the subdivision plans, allows for the minister to pretend he is a council. Do not worry, though, you will never see this project in the Public Works Committee - none of it - because this draft bill makes sure that the project is not assessed by that committee.

Now, I turn to the response to the Draft Integrated Assessment Report prepared last October by the newly quite independent - certainly in relation to this submission - Environment Protection Authority. They had a look at the documentation that the Macquarie Point Development Corporation provided to the Tasmanian Planning Commission, and I will just read you a few snippets from the 24 October 2024 Environment Protection Authority's submission to the TPC.

I note the EPA's particular concerns regarding assessment and management of potentially contaminated material, water and groundwater, in summary:

- The apparent lack of a development-specific Environmental (Contaminated Land) Auditor's Site Suitability Statement.
- Whether the supporting technical and management reports sufficiently reflect the current development design.
- Whether the reports adequately address all aspects of the project interacting with the environment and the associated potential environmental risks and impacts, in particular the project's interaction with groundwater.

- groundwater across a contaminated site.

We talk about air quality. 'The proponent will submit a Construction Environmental Management Plan for approval.' 'Dust management is an issue for construction.' It talks about the contamination of the land. It says the EPA 'notes that increased vehicle movements will lead to more emissions from vehicles, and a large amount of sewage entering the pump station within a short time period could potentially lead to odour issues.' On noise, it is 'noted that a detailed construction noise and vibration assessment has not been performed as a part of this assessment.' So, Macquarie Point Development Corporation, the proponent - that is, the Tasmanian government - has apparently not done any sort of assessment of construction noise and vibration, which, as we know, would have a significant impact on our wonderful little cultural icon, the Tasmanian Symphony Orchestra. The question we should be asking is, has there been a detailed construction noise and vibration report since then? Will there be one before we are asked to debate this bill?

Ms Forrest - Did you ask them about that when you visited the TSO?

Ms O'CONNOR - No, I did not ask them because they have not - they have spent quite a lot of money trying to assess the noise, but they are not the proponents, so I did not ask them about Macquarie Point not doing it. They have a fair understanding of the noise impacts, but they cannot assess the construction noise and vibration because they are the TSO -

Ms Forrest - If you listen to the Public Accounts Committee transcripts or read them, there are some suggestions from Macquarie Point that they have addressed some of this stuff.

Ms O'CONNOR - Sure, thank you for the interjection, honourable member for Murchison. Just back to this document, the Macquarie Point Multipurpose Stadium Enabling Legislation Report by Mac Point Development Corporation - which is prepared by the Department of Premier and Cabinet - what it tells us is that everything is going to be fine. Every issue that has been raised by the planning commission, according to the Department of Premier and Cabinet, will be fine. Everything is going to be okay. Just pass the bill and 'she'll be right, mate'. Just on the environmental consequences, the Draft Integrated Assessment Report noted:

Where excavation is close to and/or within contaminated groundwater, development costs and construction timelines have the potential to substantially increase if the groundwater characteristics are not well understood and considered.

Ms Forrest - Which is clearly the case underneath the Goods Shed.

Ms O'CONNOR - Yes. As noted in MPDC's submission to the POSS process, 'groundwater monitoring has been conducted and while some contaminated groundwater may remain, direct contact or incidental ingestion is considered unlikely, considering the planned future uses of the site.' That is not particularly reassuring - that it is 'considered unlikely'.

Ms Forrest - Just do not face plant on the field.

Ms O'CONNOR - Yes. So it does not sink into the contaminated groundwater - is that what you are saying?

Ms Forrest - Do not eat the dirt.

Ms O'CONNOR - Do not eat the dirt, as we used to tell our children. Actually, mine ate a fair bit.

Back to the EPA's report, the specific comments they make is that there has been a lack of a development-specific environmental contaminated land auditors site suitability statement. In fact, this has not been dealt with. A lot of the information the Mac Point Development Corporation provided to the planning commission, especially around environmental issues, was from reports that had been procured under the previous precinct plan for Mac Point Development Corporation. Remember that vision, which was widely consulted, that allowed for mixed-use, social and affordable housing, some high-end housing, transport links, science, small businesses? When MPDC was working on that project, they had some of those works done. The planning commission says, 'That is not good enough, you will have to do them again because it is a completely different proposed use.' The EPA has also identified that as a problem.

I do not know if MPDC is overworked or underfunded, which they are not, or being lazy, but it is not good enough to put old reports into a planning process and expect to be taken seriously on that. It is also not good enough to do that and expect us to pass an enabling bill on the basis of outdated information, when the consequences of making a mistake here are so serious on a contaminated site.

The EPA says a significant data gap relates to the lack of assessment regarding the project's interaction with groundwater. The EPA recommends a groundwater impact assessment be undertaken for the proposal. Again, has it been? Will it be? Will it be presented before parliament is asked to support or not this legislation?

When we are talking about other environmental issues, the assessment of site suitability for the proposed use, a critical step in an infrastructure project on a contaminated site, has not been completed.

The EPA goes on to say there are contaminated land hazard issues relating to vapour accumulation in basement compartments, contaminated groundwater contacts by construction workers or operational staff, exposure to metals, cyanide, hydrocarbons or volatile organic compounds, all of which have been identified as contaminants of concern on the site; uncontrolled discharge of contaminated groundwater from the site resulting in adverse environmental public health outcomes; contaminated soil exposure to construction workers and site users resulting in adverse health outcomes.

In the Macquarie Point Multipurpose Stadium Summary Report - MPDC - 2024, under section 7.5 - Water Quality and Management, Stormwater Discharge Objectives, on page 159, the text states:

Generally, the achievement of operational stage discharge criteria is taken as being sufficient to demonstrate compliance with receiving water body Water Quality Objectives.

That is big if true, but it is not true, according to the Environment Protection Authority. The EPA contends that this is not correct.

The reference table in the technical report is for the exclusion of the stadium roof. It is just another indication of what a dog's breakfast we are dealing with here - an absolute dog's breakfast which this government wants to impose on our city.

When the EPA puts out a table of specific comments relating to contaminated land, water and groundwater, on every metric the EPA assesses the proponent's information as insufficient. They make the observation - and I will just paraphrase them: it is very difficult to assess or understand the full potential impacts on human health of this project, because of the lack of information provided by the proponent, the lack of foundational work done by the proponent.

I thought it was really important that members have an opportunity to hear about the EPA submission because it has been lost a bit in the white noise of this disgraceful development.

You have to love an independent planning system. We have been told numerous times that the process is over. We are not participating, the government said. In fact, the Secretary of Premier and Cabinet wrote to the Chair of the Panel, Mr Ramsay, on 21 May, basically to say, 'We are taking our bat and ball and going home. We are going to ask 50 everyday Tasmanians elected in trust to approve this stadium, and we just want to let you know that, as far as we are concerned, the POSS process is done.'

John Ramsay has written back, thanks Ms Morgan-Wicks for her correspondence and says:

The Commission appreciates receiving formal advice of the Government's intentions. The Commission delegated Panel met on 22 May, and I have passed a copy of your letter to the Panel members.

It goes without stating that the Commission acknowledges the Parliament's authority to deal with the matter. Similarly the Commission acknowledges that in undertaking the integrated assessment of the stadium project, it is participating in a statutory process commenced with the authority of the Parliament.

Notwithstanding the intention of the Government, the Commission is obliged to continue with the established statutory processes.

To that end, the Panel meeting on 22 May, reviewed the representations received on the draft Integrated Assessment Report to determine which of those representations should be the subject of a public hearing. The Panel

also gave consideration to the indicative timetable for hearings that it had previously advised. That timetable is being reviewed in relation to the number of days allocated for hearings and whether earlier dates for hearings can be considered.

I note your advice that the Crown will cease to actively engage with the integrated assessment process and will prioritise its resources to support Parliament's consideration of the proposed legislation. The extent to which a project proponent participates in an integrated assessment process is a matter for the proponent.

However the Commission is obliged to continue with its assessment until it provides its report to the Premier as required by s26(1) of the *State Policies and Projects Act 1993*, or Parliament revokes the Commission's authority to undertake the assessment. To that end, the Commission will continue with its assessment in light of all the information that is provided to it by the proponent, either voluntarily or at the request of the Commission.

In accordance with usual Commission practice, your letter and this response will be published on the Commission website.

I refer honourable colleagues to that exchange of letters.

Mr President, the POSS process - as we understand it, we have had those statements from the Premier and the minister about the POSS process. We were told that there is a question mark over whether or not failing to pass the enabling legislation will 'kill the POSS process and therefore the stadium', which were basically the veiled threats, or not-so-veiled threats, that were made to independent members of this place.

There are two existing ways through which a POSS can end: a revocation order passed by both Houses of the parliament or a 'no reasonable prospect' recommendation by the Tasmanian Planning Commission. There is no way for the government itself, without the authority of parliament, to end the Project of State Significance assessment. There is none.

There are no mechanisms in the act which allow the government to unilaterally withdraw from the POSS process. The Premier's ultimatum to members in this place to 'pass the enabling legislation or there will be no ongoing POSS' is hollow. The government cannot decide to end the POSS process. It can only be ended by a resolution of both Houses or the Tasmanian Planning Commission issuing a 'no reasonable prospect' recommendation.

The Greens' position is really clear. We do not support the stadium. We want it just to go away, but it is not going to just go away. We are passionate about keeping the team, but we will always stand up for an independent planning process, and our planning system is something of which Tasmanians should be proud. However, we have seen a disturbing, undemocratic trend in the past year, since this government was re-elected, where it is just shoving aside the independent planning system, public participation rights, from Development Assessment Panels (DAPs) to Stony Rise to the youth detention facility at Pontville, and now the stadium.

Do you know what that is a sign of? It is a sign of an incompetent government. To me, that is what it is a sign of. You cannot get your projects through the planning system so you manipulate the processes of this place, and manipulate our emotions - for example, with the Pontville facility - by bringing in special enabling legislation that overrides everything. It just smashes everything out of the way.

The problem that the government has is this: if you do not allow for a comprehensive and integrated assessment process for a project of this size, you are begging for trouble. It is not the government that would pay the price for these mistakes, because they are on the way out anyway. On the politics, this is their last term. They are terminal, mostly because of the stadium. It will not be the government that pays the price for the mistakes of not allowing an integrated assessment to take place. It will be Tasmanians. It will be football patrons. It will be the Devils.

It is infuriating to have the Premier imply that anyone who does not support this multibillion-dollar stadium does not support the team. The Greens have been fighting for this team since before the Hawthorn deal was inked - when Nick McKim, now Senator for Tasmania, was our spokesperson for Sport and Rec. Even before he was the leader, we have been fighting for Tasmania to have our own team.

We had a fantastic meeting yesterday with Brendon Gale and Kath McCann to talk about progress for the team and how it is going. They are terrific people. It was really inspiring, the enthusiasm for this team, the possibilities for this team. I asked them how things are going with the entry to the VFL. I kind of said to them, 'We do not really need to talk about the stadium, do we? You know our position', and I just did not feel like kind of beating them up because our position is so clear on this and I really wanted to hear about the team. I asked how our entry to the VFL is going. It is going gangbusters. We should be in the VFL by next year. Where is the team based right now? At Bellerive, a perfectly adequate stadium.

There are now more than 210,000 signed-up members for the Devils, more than 100,000 of them from Tasmania. It is kind of like one in five or six Tasmanians has signed up to be a founding member of the Devils, because we know we have earned it; we know we deserve it.

As my colleague and friend Dr Rosalie Woodruff said about this question, 'The train has left the station'. It has left the station. Let the AFL try, now, to take this team away from us. We have earned it. We have fed some of our best talent into the national league. The sense of pride in that football team already, which does not even really exist, is tangible.

We need to think about how we are going to collectively respond if the stadium enabling legislation does not pass. It would not be good enough - it would be a complete betrayal of the people of this island to go, 'I told you - no stadium, no team. I told you.'

It would be a betrayal. It would also be a sign of weak leadership and poor strategic thinking. If you are passionate about us being part of the national league and you are the premier of Tasmania and you have a fairly good sense of the politics around this issue and the massive uncertainties with this enabling bill, if you want your legacy to be the team, you will start renegotiating that deal.

Will you at least be having exploratory conversations now? We heard minister Abetz on ABC radio the other afternoon, when he was asked about renegotiating the contract, he said, 'Ah, well, you never say never.' That was the first time: cat out of bag. The fact is that any contract can be renegotiated. I am sure that in other contracts with the AFL, different teams have had negotiations subsequent to their original signing.

I will just say this: if the new stadium at Macquarie Point is not approved by parliament, then two things need to happen, in my view. The POSS process needs to be allowed to reach its conclusion, and there needs to be a multi-partisan, both Houses, wherever-you-come-from-on-this-island stand together to fight for our team.

Going back to the Tasmanian Symphony Orchestra, in the same way that the TSO has added a cultural richness and a pride in our identity, in the same way that MONA changed the way we think about ourselves and made us walk taller, the Tasmania Devils will do the same thing. I am absolutely certain that it will unite us. I am absolutely certain that it will lead to greater participation in all manner of sport. We have seen Auskick, in the last two years -

Sitting suspended from 4.00 p.m. to 4.30 p.m.

MOTION

Tasmanian Planning Commission's Draft Integrated Assessment Report - Macquarie Point Multipurpose Stadium Project of State Significance - Consideration and Noting

Resumed from above.

[4.31 p.m.]

Ms O'CONNOR - I will not speak for much longer. Before the afternoon tea break, I was noting with pleasure the increase in Auskick participation since the team was first announced. It is up by 40 per cent. That is a direct and tangible positive consequence of Tasmania having a team in the national league, and it is something we should all be proud of. It does show some signs of being able to take on what has been happening in kids' sports, particularly over the last 20 years, and that is the rise of soccer and a move away from AFL. It will be really interesting to see. What we do know about team sports is that they teach people about something bigger than themselves. They teach people the importance of looking after each other and working together. That is what team sports is all about.

The last two things I want to raise with members are two of the submissions that were made in response to the draft integrated assessment report. More than 800 submissions were received by the TPC, overwhelmingly opposed to a new stadium at Macquarie Point. The first notable submission that I want to point members to is from the Federal Group, which owns and operates a number of businesses on the waterfront in and around where the proposed stadium would be. I will pull out a couple of key quotes. The Federal Group's submission says:

The stadium presents a plethora of unresolved and foreseeable impacts on our capacity to maintain access, protect heritage values, and support commercial activity within such an imposed environment.

Despite sustained engagement over a significant period, both through formal correspondence and informal avenues, there has been no attempt by the proponent to address, resolve, or acknowledge the issues Federal Group have raised. This is not a shortfall in consultation etiquette. It is a failure of precinct-scale planning logic. A project of this magnitude and intensity, located within an already active urban waterfront, cannot function as a self-contained asset. Its footprint, construction phase, and ongoing event operations will necessarily disrupt the functioning of adjacent uses.

...

The lack of consultation raises questions about process integrity. The Draft Integrated Assessment Report ... acknowledges a range of material impacts, yet those most directly experienced by adjacent operators remain undocumented, untested, and unmitigated. In this context, to proceed without engagement is not a neutral oversight. It represents a decision to prioritise internal project delivery over external compatibility. It treats proximate economic uses not as co-located obligations, but as collateral.

The submission talks about the requirements on Macquarie Point Development Corporation through the POSS order and it says:

Despite these requirements, the DIAR [Draft Integrated Assessment Report] acknowledged that the proponent has not supplied sufficient information to enable a full assessment of the stadium's impacts, particularly in relation to:

- Traffic management and planning, and road closure impacts on Evans and Hunter Streets;
- Construction staging methodologies and timelines;
- Noise impacts from both construction and operational phases;
- Visual disamenity, overshadowing, and loss of heritage legibility;
- Pedestrian movement conflicts, including unresolved access arrangements during events;
- Clarification on permitted vehicle access under proposed event-day restrictions.

It draws the conclusion - and I think this is at the heart of it all - that it is the stadium's location that is the root of all major issues.

The submission says:

The shortcomings of the stadium proposal are not just the result of minor design flaws or missing detail, they stem directly from the location itself. Macquarie Point is not simply a challenging site; it is a fundamentally unsuitable one for a stadium of this scale and intensity.

I will pause there for a minute. This point has been made in numerous submissions to the planning commission. It has been made by people with design and architectural experience, and it is also just common sense. If you look at other stadia around the country, the aprons on which they sit are much larger than Macquarie Point.

But mitigation is not the same as resolution. It is relied upon when impacts are too significant, too embedded, or too inherent to the site to be designed out. In this case, the volume and scale of proposed mitigations indicate a project that is being forced onto a site that does not support it. The planning response shifts from integration to accommodation, accumulating mitigation measures rather than delivering place-based solutions.

More concerningly, the vast majority of these strategies [to mitigate the effects] are incomplete, uncertain, or not within the control of the project. Some remain unfunded or untested, and nearly all have not been presented for stakeholder review...

A proposal that relies so heavily on uncertain and incomplete mitigation strategies to function is not well-integrated. It is an imposed development, not a responsive one. And in planning terms, that is a clear sign that the project does not belong on the site.

They then talk about the heritage impacts, which cannot be mitigated. The submission says:

This is not simply a case of poor design execution. It is a matter of land use misalignment. The primary issue is not how the stadium is expressed architecturally, but whether it should exist in this location at all. The structure's presence permanently alters the spatial hierarchy and historic character of the precinct. To describe this as an *impact to be mitigated* is to understate what is, in effect, a complete redefinition of the urban and cultural landscape.

I hope members read the Federal Group's submission. They raised concerns about the changes to a recent version of the ministerial statement of expectations that removes the requirements on responsible commercial conduct for Macquarie Point Development Corporation. The ministerial statement of expectations was rewritten to remove a requirement or an expectation on the minister's part that Macquarie Point Development Corporation operates on a commercially responsible basis.

It says, on the money:

The economic case is not simply unprofitable... It is net harmful. It represents a form of economic regression for the area.

When the full economic burden of the stadium is accounted for, even long-term non-development presents a stronger economic case. The opportunity cost lies not in underutilisation of the site, but in the disruption of a precinct that already delivers more.

It is very concerned about impacts on heritage-driven tourism, parking, traffic, on and on it goes. I will point honourable members to the polling. Federal Group commissioned EMRS polling to ask Tasmanians what they thought on a number of questions. I will talk to the high points:

Do you support the Tasmanian government's proposed stadium at Macquarie Point in Hobart? Yes, 35 per cent; No, 56 per cent.

Of the following sites, given a choice, what would be your preferred site for a stadium? The highest percentage, 34 per cent, said redevelop existing facilities at York Park, Launceston; and 24 per cent supported a stadium on Macquarie Point.

Question 3: Do you agree or disagree that the Tasmanian government should spend more than its announced \$375 million? The total 'disagree' between 'somewhat disagree' and 'strongly disagree', was 70 per cent.

Question 4: In your opinion, if the Tasmanian government proposed to go beyond the spending cap of \$375 million, should the opposition and independents oppose the special stadium legislation being introduced into parliament? I will pause for a moment here to note that EMRS is pretending that the Greens do not exist, but whatever, they are owned by Font PR. Yes, to parliament rejecting the enabling bill, is at 62 per cent of the almost 900 people who were surveyed statewide.

Question 5: To what extent do you agree or disagree that a decision by the Tasmanian government on the stadium should be made after the full financial impact to government is known and independently verified? Total 'agree' was 69 per cent.

Question 6 asked about the government withdrawing from the planning commission process; 50 per cent disagreed with that.

Question 7: Which approach do you believe the Tasmanian government should take to make its final decision about the proposed stadium? A total of 16 per cent supported dedicated legislation for a stadium - 16 per cent. Those who want the planning commission to complete the process was 33 per cent, and 38 per cent want the deal with the AFL to be renegotiated.

Question 8 is pretty damning of the AFL: Do you believe the AFL has treated Tasmania fairly or unfairly during this process? A total of 9 per cent of people thought 'very fairly'; 12 per cent thought 'somewhat fairly'; but the total who thought we have been treated 'very unfairly' - which we absolutely have - is 59 per cent, which is why the Greens last week wrote to the AFL asking them to participate in a renegotiation process.

I will end my contribution today with a blistering submission made by former honourable members of this place, Greg Hall and Ivan Dean. It is not a particularly long submission and members may have read it or heard of its flavour either directly from the writers or through media reports. They point out in their submission:

We have long experience of assessment of public finances...

Our orderly planning system has been designed by Parliament to give everyone, from investors to developers to other interested parties and the

Tasmanian public, confidence that ground rules apply and that development will be in accordance with the rules. In this case, the Government with Opposition support is proposing to corrupt its own process in favour of returning to the bad old days of unrestrained political patronage where approval for prestige projects is available at any price, regardless of cost and regardless of the rules applying to everyone else.

It is crystal clear from the financial detail and the draft assessment that the joke - and the bills - if the parliamentary bypass surgery succeeds, will be on the taxpayers of Tasmania.

...

Almost the entire case for the stadium is that it is a non-negotiable requirement for Tasmania to obtain an AFL licence. Both the Government and the Labor Party have sought to justify their pro-stadium position by endlessly repeating the mantra: No Stadium No Team. But with four of the 11 home games already agreed to be played in Launceston, that leaves just seven matches a season in Hobart.

In the independent Eslake report, the submission says it showed that our public finances are in the worst shape of any of the states, including the previous basket case of Victoria, and warned that we couldn't afford to run Australia's largest infrastructure program relative to the size of our economy.

The independent Gruen report highlighted major shortcomings in the business case. Gruen warned that costs have been underestimated and benefits overestimated, and they point to the 2019 Stadium Taskforce report, which said that within Australia, it is not commercially feasible to operate major sports facilities to recover the cost of capital and to generate a return on investment.

From my recall, the taskforce's determination, ultimately, was that something like a new stadium would be nice, but it is not necessary to obtain a team and it is something you could plan for down the track.

About half the third page is spent giving Labor a mighty touch-up, which they deserve, talking about the strong statements Labor had made; former Labor leader Rebecca White, who said:

It is clear the stadium will end up costing Tasmanians more than \$1 billion - and with annual interest payments of \$50 million. That's money that could be used to pay for 500 nurses to help our neglected health system - every year. Or 500 teachers to give our children the best start in life - every year. It's completely the wrong priority and Tasmanian Labor will continue to stand up for our state and to stand against the stadium.

Then, Dean Winter at the time said Robin Gray has backed everything the Labor Party has been saying about this reckless project. That is former premier Robin Gray, who is vehemently opposed to this new stadium.

Mr Winter said:

Robin Gray has backed in everything the Labor Party has been saying about this reckless project ... during a health, housing and cost of living crisis, Premier Rockliff has decided that building another stadium in Hobart is his top priority. He wouldn't be more out of touch if he was living on the moon.

Well, that was then and as Mr Hall and Mr Dean point out, 'Labor has now joined the Government on the far side of the moon', and they said they are imploring us.

We are confident the crossbench and minor parties will stand strong for proper process to protect the public interest and that in the Legislative Council this stand will be decisive. That will mean that the statutory responsibility of the Tasmanian Planning Commission and the conclusions of the Macquarie Point assessment panel will be vital in informing the final decision by Parliament on the stadium.

To the Tasmanian Planning Commission, they say:

We have great respect for your Draft Integrated Assessment Report, and full confidence you will continue to act with independence and integrity in the interests of the Tasmanian community.

I thank honourable members for listening today to my contribution. I could not allow an opportunity to go by for members to have this debate before the bill comes to us. It is our responsibility to pay attention to the documentation that is on the public record now, so that when the debate happens, we are all participating in a way where we know exactly what we are dealing with to the greatest extent we possibly can - when we have a government that is not doing a large body of the foundational work for this, has misled Tasmanians about what it will cost, and has promised Tasmanians a process then ripped that away. It is our responsibility and in July it will be our responsibility to deal with this. I hope members will have a look at some of the documents that I have read parts of into *Hansard* today, before we are subject to this bill.

[4.49 p.m.]

Ms ARMITAGE (Launceston) - Mr President, I have a reasonably short contribution.

What I am most disappointed about is how divisive this issue has become in our state. Something that should be celebrated and unite people - the thought of getting a team has become so divisive and that is such a terrible shame.

I am really surprised that instead of taking on board the comments from the Tasmanian Planning Commission, the body put in place by the parliament, that identified challenges to the build, it was found necessary to seek advice from high-powered Sydney lawyers MinterEllison. I accept that they won the \$449,000 contract for legal advice, public money, to, in their words, 'point out errors and the fact that the report lacked balance'.

Obviously, there are considerable challenges with such a site and one would have thought the government and the Macquarie Point Development Corporation would have been pleased to find out what was necessary to ensure, if possible, a safe build at that site with good access

and egress, and to do their best to meet the challenges, rather than denigrate the work of the esteemed panel of the TPC.

I know it has been mentioned, but I am going to list again who they are and their backgrounds. I think it is really important. Gary Prattley, who has experience in planning and urban and regional development across New Zealand and Australia, including senior positions in planning in Tasmania in the 1980s and 1990s. Paul Turner SC, a former assistant solicitor-general in Tasmania and litigation lawyer since 1981. Lynn Mason AM, a former Local Government Association of Tasmania president with more than 30 years' experience in local government. Shelley Penn AM an architect, urbanist and non-executive director with more than 35 years of experience in architecture and strategic advisory roles. And, Martin Wallace, a former secretary of the Tasmanian Department of Treasury and Finance with experience in public finance and economic analysis. Not to forget, John Ramsay AM, the commissioner. An esteemed panel. But no, it appears a considerable amount of money has been spent on lawyers, and we are now faced with enabling legislation to proceed forthwith regardless of the challenges identified.

I make no secret that I have serious concerns with this site, and I do not believe that Macquarie Point is suitable, but that is a debate for the enabling legislation. I would like to know from the AFL why the site was chosen and how the site was chosen. They should be asked, and they should be able to identify how they came up with Macquarie Point and why they think it is the right place for a stadium.

From my point of view, I was impressed with the report, which was easy to read, clear and concise. I am going to mention a couple of the areas that I think are important.

Health and wellbeing:

- (d) The Proponent has identified in its Social Cultural Analysis report positive impacts -

I am trying to be balanced.

- on social wellbeing via two primary mechanisms: 1) improved certainty of events and attendance, and 2) increased social connection and community building.

- (e) The Proponent claims most strongly in its Social Cultural Analysis report that there would be positive impacts on subjective wellbeing via association with watching team sport and sports fandom.
- (f) The Panel considers there is little to no empirical evidence that a stadium and the events it hosts lead to increases in sport participation or associated physical and mental health benefits.
- (g) The Panel considers there is some evidence of a potential positive impact on the sense of community and associated sense of well-being due to the establishment of Tasmanian AFL teams...

On Sullivans Cove:

- (a) The Panel considers that the proposed stadium form contradicts several key strategic planning principles and strategies for Sullivans Cove and central Hobart. The Panel notes that the strategic urban design principles for Sullivans Cove are well-established and specific, and remain relevant as guidance to the continued development of the area.

...

- (e) The Panel considers that the stadium's form does not respect the natural layered landform of Hobart between Kunanyi/Mount Wellington and Tintumili Minanya/River Derwent, with the Cove as the centre of the amphitheatre.

To do with scale, they say:

- (h) Key relevant principles of the Planning Review relating to scale are:
- to control building bulk such that no single building dominates the street to the detriment of its neighbours or the street space, by virtue of its mass and repetition of its facades;

From my memory, having been on council, one of the things that we always tried to do in planning was to ensure that whatever you built was not to the detriment of someone else. That is a really important thing to remember when you are looking at planning. Of course, we also have the relocation of the Goods Shed.

- (d) The Panel considers the proposed relocation of the Goods Shed to an area remote from Evans Street, where its frontage currently gives it prominence and ease of access, means that it would be less visually and physically accessible except to people using it during events or functions. Its proposed location is in a part of the site which would be inactive outside event/function mode, and is relatively hidden and inaccessible due to its distance from more active areas to the south, and due to the movement barrier created by the cricket wickets.

The Port of Hobart is an interesting one:

The Panel considers the current traffic and parking arrangements for coaches and other vehicles to pick up and drop off cruise ship passengers adjacent to or nearby the cruise terminal is likely to be either limited or not practicable during peak pedestrian movement periods associated with events at the stadium. This would affect both businesses providing coach and touring services and visitors to Tasmania.

... The Panel notes that the Summary Report provided by the Proponent ... considers that:

- there is likely to be overlap between major events and the departure of cruise ships

- based on forecast schedules, cruise ship departures may coincide with local road closures and very high pedestrian activity
- the overlap between events and cruise ships appears to be manageable; and
- there is a need for future traffic management plans to address the needs of cruise ships, TasPorts' tenants and the stadium.

As proposed, the operation of the stadium would limit, and may at times remove, the existing vehicular access to, and parking at, the wharf and terminal for a range of vehicles serving the needs of cruise ship passengers. While both TasPorts and the Proponent have identified this as a challenge that would need to be managed, there is no basis for the Panel to assess whether suitable access can be provided, based on the information provided.

The TSO: I, together with the honourable members for McIntyre and Huon, met today with a member of the TSO to actually have a look. They have come up with a certain strategy that needs to be legislated to improve the conditions there but, of course, it is still quite an unknown.

Pedestrian movement:

The Panel considers that the Project creates problematic pedestrian movement issues for event patrons and the broader community. These include a range of issues, with particular concerns relating to the safety, capacity and convenience of pedestrian movement pathways and options following high-capacity events.

The Panel generally considers that pathways adjacent to roads and signalised street crossings in the area have not been designed for, and lack sufficient space to enable changes, to accommodate pedestrian flows associated with a stadium.

...

The Panel considers it is essential that plans for the development of pedestrian infrastructure and management of pedestrian movement enable the Davey Street/Franklin Wharf routes towards Salamanca and the city to be used in a safe and convenient manner for peak post-event movements.

...

The Panel acknowledges there are a number of non-infrastructure management actions that may be taken to help mitigate pedestrian related risks and issues. These may include:

- providing post-event activities that encourage or direct people to exit the stadium over a longer period, and

- temporary measures such as clearly designated pathways, signs, physical barriers and enforcing attendants and information technology.

The Panel considers, however, that in general, pedestrians would tend to take the most direct and convenient route to their chosen destination, even when that route is compromised in terms of capacity. A lack of suitable infrastructure or adequate space for safe pedestrian movement pathways is extremely unlikely to prevent a large proportion of people continuing to choose what they perceive or know to be the most direct route.

Contamination and environmental effects:

Overall, the Panel finds that the limited understanding of the current contamination conditions of the site, and the consequent uncertainty on contamination and disposal requirements are likely to affect the cost and timeframes of construction.

...

Stormwater released from the site would not achieve water quality targets, and the effect of this release on marine ecology remains unknown.

...

Legacy contamination is a feature of the broader Macquarie Point development site due to a sustained history of industrial use including rail, gasworks and bulk fuel storage and handling, as well as the reclamation of large areas from the estuary using uncontrolled fill. Consequently, areas of contamination are a feature of the development site, albeit patchy in extent.

...

The Panel notes contamination characteristics of excavated material to be removed from site during bulk earth work (site preparation) are also key to determining disposal costs.

There is a lot more in the report to read, but just from the few areas outlined, I cannot understand at all how the government could allow the AFL to come up with Macquarie Point as the site for the stadium. It totally blows my mind. The Tasmanian Planning Commission - I have read who they are, they are an esteemed panel. They are now being sidelined, which I find quite disturbing. They are simply seeking answers to key questions to enable a safe build, if possible.

I would have believed that the AFL, if it wants to grow the game, would want to encourage Tasmanians to actually be part of it. Many Tasmanians have been part of the AFL's other teams. I am sure if they were asked how they can determine, after reading the Tasmanian Planning Commission findings - I do accept that MinterEllison has found its own reasoning, which I find quite disturbing, that they could denigrate the esteemed panel in such a manner,

and it be allowed to happen in such a manner when all the panel is trying to do is to make sure that anything built at that site is safe and appropriate.

I note the report. I thank the member for bringing it forward. I hope that our government takes the time to ask the AFL to meet with them and ask them whether they genuinely believe that the Macquarie Point site is appropriate to build a stadium.

[3.30 pm]

Ms PALMER (Rosevears - Acting Leader of the Government in the Legislative Council) - Mr President, we are committed to delivering transformative infrastructure at Macquarie Point. At the core will be a multipurpose stadium capable of hosting AFL and international cricket, conventions, major concerts and events. Macquarie Point was strategically chosen as the preferred location due to its location adjacent to the CBD.

This will enliven the city, surrounding businesses and experience. It is an enabling piece of infrastructure that will bring the waterfront to life.

Hobart City Council's own analysis found that the stadium would bring over \$143 million per year in benefits to the city during construction and \$179 million per year when operational, and that the stadium would undeniably have a transformative economic impact on the CBD and the broader LGA. We know when the stadium gets the green light it will unlock a flurry of surrounding private-sector activity, and all of that adds social and economic value to our state.

The government notes the Tasmanian Planning Commission's Draft Integrated Assessment Report into the Macquarie Point Multipurpose Stadium. As many in this place would be aware, the government embarked on the Project of State Significance (POSS) assessment process for the stadium as a condition of support from two former members of parliament. The POSS process did not have universal support, and some of the members in this place voted against it. Nevertheless, the government, through the Macquarie Point Development Corporation, has engaged closely with the Tasmanian Planning Commission through the process.

The POSS process commenced in September last year, when MPDC submitted a 260-page summary report accompanied by nearly 4000 pages of expert advice and reports, with all this information also made publicly available.

MPDC also provided additional follow-up information and reports at the request of the TPC. The government notes the Draft Integrated Assessment Report produced by the TPC on 31 March 2025.

Concurrent with the TPC process, an independent review of the stadium by Dr Gruen was commissioned at the request of the Jacqui Lambie Network, with Dr Gruen being the consultant selected by the JLN to undertake the work.

As has now become apparent, courtesy of the ABC's reporting, concerns regarding an apprehension of bias have been raised with Dr Gruen's report on the grounds he was meeting with anti-stadium advocates before his appointment. The Tasmanian Planning Commission's Draft Integrated Assessment Report on the Macquarie Point Multipurpose Stadium Project of State Significance relies heavily on Dr Gruen's report and therefore is tainted with the same apprehension of bias.

As has been noted by the Macquarie Point Development Corporation and its legal and planning experts, the Tasmanian Planning Commission's report contains errors of law, is argumentative, lacks balance and relies on untested material. As a result of these issues, it has become clear that the current POSS process is undermining certainty and confidence in the future of the Macquarie Point precinct and the Tasmania Devils AFL Club, impacting construction, recruitment and economic prospects.

The government made the decision that, on this basis, it was no longer appropriate to proceed with the POSS process. We are getting on with the delivery of the stadium. We have decided to prioritise delivery through a design and construct pathway that provides certainty and confidence to the Macquarie Point precinct and the Tasmania Devils AFL Club. This is why the government will be introducing enabling legislation to provide planning approval for the project.

Representations received by the Tasmanian Planning Commission during the public representation period for its Draft Integrated Assessment Report, which closed on 8 May 2025, have been used to inform the development of the enabling legislation. In developing the enabling legislation, the government is responding substantively to all 141 issues raised in the TPC's report, and we thank the TPC for its work and its report. Let me be clear: no stadium means no team. That is the reality. We have bipartisan support for the project. State Labor supports it; federal Labor supports it.

There has been some revisionist history and myths perpetuated regarding the origin of the requirement for a roofed stadium in Hobart to support our AFL team. The recommendation for a roofed stadium in Hobart was included in Tasmania's AFL Licence Taskforce Business Plan 2019 that was prepared on behalf of the Tasmanian government by a taskforce of eminent experts in sport and business. The AFL taskforce, chaired by Brett Godfrey, found that the existing Tasmanian AFL stadia capacities are incapable of hosting the forecasted average attendance or member demand required in the business plan. The taskforce recommended a roofed, CBD-based, Adelaide Oval multipurpose facility be developed for Hobart, to share all AFL content and opportunities with Launceston. Further, the taskforce noted a clean stadium changes the game.

Redeveloping UTAS Stadium as the initial primary football venue, but seeking a longer-term, Hobart CBD-based, roofed stadium in an appropriate entertainment precinct would mitigate much of the financial risk for government. The idea for a roofed CBD stadium came from our own AFL taskforce report in 2019. It predates the deal with the AFL and it predates the development of the Macquarie Point Multipurpose Stadium.

As has been confirmed by the CEO of the Tasmania Devils Football Club, Brendon Gale, the stadium is essential to setting up the team for long-term success in the AFL, both on and off field. Analysis by the club shows that without a new stadium at Macquarie Point, they would be worse off to the tune of \$5.4 million to \$5.9 million per year, and would face a perpetual competitive disadvantage that no amount of management excellence could overcome. Attempts to rewrite history by those who suggest you can have a team without a stadium are simply wrong and fly in the face of all the expert opinion that has been provided over many years. No stadium at Macquarie Point means no AFL team.

Our stadium will be uniquely Tasmanian. It will mean we can compete for cultural events, major concerts, conferences, exhibitions and sporting fixtures on a scale not possible

before. It will create a destination which will attract visitors to our state and showcase the best of our hospitality and tourism sectors. It will enable competitive AFL and AFLW teams for Tasmania. Tasmanians have wanted an AFL team for well over 20 years, and we have seen over 200,000 people sign up for a foundation club membership with the Tasmania Devils. The stadium is one part of a broader mixed-use precinct that will transform Hobart, creating jobs and economic activity. This is an area that has been an industrial wasteland for far too long. Its transformation will be an intergenerational, aesthetic, cultural and economic fillip for Hobart.

But it is not all about Hobart. We want to create more economic opportunities for Tasmanians in every corner of our state. During construction, the project is expected to add \$269 million to the Tasmanian economy over five years and create at least 1500 direct and indirect jobs. Once operational, the stadium is expected to add around \$30 million each year to the Tasmanian economy and support approximately 200 jobs on an ongoing basis.

Other CBD stadium developments in other Australian cities have had similar transformative impacts. For example, the Adelaide Oval redevelopment was a catalyst for the Adelaide Riverbank precinct. An Adelaide City Council business survey found \$138 million in new revenue was generated in the CBD in the first year after the Adelaide Oval was redeveloped.

Similarly, Townsville Enterprises, the peak economic development organisation for the Townsville region, reported in September 2024 that in just the last two years Townsville's newly constructed stadium had generated over \$200 million in economic benefit for the city and broader region, and had been a catalyst in driving investment in new hotels, community infrastructure and world-class entertainment events.

We believe that the stadium can be a similar catalyst for growth for Hobart and for Tasmania more broadly. The wider activation of the Macquarie Point precinct will take shape as the multipurpose stadium progresses through construction. Activation will occur through the staged release of commercial development opportunities, to attract the right investments at the right time, and to maximise the potential returns for Tasmanians. The transformation of Macquarie Point will shape Tasmania for generations as a transformative project that will deliver jobs and opportunities that Tasmanians have never had access to before. Investing in infrastructure such as the stadium creates jobs and adds to our economy, helping to keep more young Tasmanians and families here and setting our state up for success.

We are excited about this opportunity for Tasmania and Tasmanians. We note the TPC report, and we thank them for their work which has been used to inform the development of the enabling legislation. Now, we must get on with delivering this once-in-a-generation project so we can finally achieve Tasmania's AFL dream.

I note the motion.

[5.13 p.m.]

Ms O'CONNOR (Hobart) - Mr President, what a lot of pap. What a lot of rubbish. Selective reference to the Hobart City Council's submission and concerns relating to this project - obviously, if you are building a stadium in the middle or on the edge of the CBD, there will be a lot more money sloshing around. That is a no-brainer, which the Hobart City Council acknowledged, but in its briefing to members, which I was disappointed not to see a number of

members attend the other day, Hobart City Council laid out in more detail its concerns and why it is fundamentally not supportive of this project:

Lack of engagement with the Aboriginal community -

It notes through its own economic modelling:

While significant local economy benefits may be experienced through the realisation of the project, the cost to the state and opportunity costs from the loss of realising alternative development outcomes for the site outweigh these localised economic benefits.

The council:

- Broadly agrees with the Panel's assessment that the size of the stadium is disproportionate to Hobart's small scale and established built form.
- ...
- Agrees with the Panel regarding the significant risks of large crowd events impacting public and road user journeys...
- ...
- Shares the Panel's concerns regarding site contamination, groundwater, stormwater management, and the disposal of excavated material and assets, and the need for detailed approval conditions and management plans to mitigate these concerns.

The hide of the government to come in here and rattle off some numbers to us: 'It will generate this much money, it will create this many jobs.' This government cannot lie straight in bed on the finances of this project, and yet they expect us to believe these numbers. We cannot believe a single number that drops out of their mouth. We have gone from '\$375 million and not one red cent more' to nearly a billion dollars - \$945 million.

This whole project is built on a foundation of lies. That is part of what makes it so maddening, not just for the Greens or the member for Hobart. I encourage members who are doing a big spruik on this project to go out there and talk to people around the state a little more. Go and knock on some doors. During the last federal election campaign, the most recent one we just had, I had the pleasure of doorknocking - and it is a pleasure, because you are invited into people's lives a little. You get to hear what their hopes and dreams are. The single biggest, unprovoked issue that came up - because when I am doorknocking, I say to people, 'When you go in the ballot booth, what are you going to be thinking about?' The single biggest issue is the stadium, and it is not that they love it.

What is happening here is we have a government and a craven opposition that are trying to impose it on us. They tell us this is the way it is going to be, just like Gil McLachlan did that day when he swanned into town in his suit and told the provincials down here that they needed a stadium. The AFL has never asked any other club in the league to build a new stadium for

the right to be in the national league, but you know what? They did not really want us in the league. That is a fact. That is how we got here. They thought they would set the bar so high we would fail. We have a premier who is apparently prepared to fail at the first hurdle if the stadium does not get up through his poxy bill.

On the Adelaide Oval, we hear this touted a bit. Any member who has been to the Adelaide Oval knows that the apron of that development is much larger than Macquarie Point. It sits on parklands. It was a redevelopment of an existing stadium, not a new development. It had a \$450 million cap initially, which was extended to \$535 million, and the project ended up costing \$610 million in total for a redevelopment - not a new stadium.

Prior to the development, South Australia was home to two existing AFL teams, Adelaide and Port Adelaide. They were an established AFL state, for which Adelaide Oval would be both those teams' home ground. When I was 20 years old, I went down to watch Port Adelaide play AFL at some fantastic stadium. I cannot remember what it was; presumably it was the old Adelaide Oval - perfectly adequate for those two teams in the national league for all those decades until they had enough money to redevelop Adelaide Oval.

At Adelaide Oval, they play 22 rounds of AFL and AFLW each year. We have seven proposed for Mac Point. It also hosts approximately 30 cricket matches a year. We want to put a roof on this stadium that makes playing cricket here basically impossible, but it is like the permit. Today we are told everything will be fine because they will fix it with lighting.

South Australia has a population of 1.8 million people - more than three times the size of our population - 1.8 million people. They get a redeveloped oval that was affordable, apparently, and it was part of a community conversation. In fact, it was taken to an election. This stadium was also taken to an election on a massive fib, when the Premier said to the people of Tasmania on the day after the election was called, '\$375 million, not one red cent more'. He came back into this House (the other place) reduced in number, smacked about by the Tasmanian people, who gave them another dust-up at the last federal election, then, just for good measure, another dust-up at the Legislative Council elections.

This project is on the nose with the Tasmanian people. That rubbish we just heard that was written by someone, in some office, somewhere - it was not written by the Acting Leader of Government Business, we can be 100 per cent sure of that - is the same garbage we have been subjected to since this began. We are being fibbed to and we are having something imposed on us that nobody asked for, except the Premier and a few of his ministers when the AFL rocked into town and told them exactly how it was going to be.

Well, the Tasmanian people are bigger than the AFL. They are bigger than this government. They have made their view plain. Overwhelmingly, on the numbers, whether it is anecdotal or on hard data, the Tasmanian people by a significant majority do not support a new stadium at Macquarie Point. They do not want parliament to approve it through a corrupted piece of legislation that seeks to bypass our independent and proper planning system.

The last thing, which I cannot leave this lectern without saying - what a disgraceful thing to come in here again and slur Dr Nicholas Gruen, a former member of the Business Council of Australia, former productivity commissioner, a member of the prestigious King's College of Economics in London. Dr Gruen spoke to a whole range of people as part of his investigation into this stadium. This cooked-up excuse about an apprehension of bias is just that, because the

government needed a reason to rip this stadium out of the planning commission. They looked back to Gruen - one of the most respected economists in the world - and they said, 'What you did was biased.' I tell you what - not one of them stepped out the front of this place and said that because it is not true. They do not have the guts to slur and defame him outside the protection of parliamentary privilege. The same goes for the panel members on the Tasmanian Planning Commission. It is nauseating to hear the Leader of Government Business thank the panel after we have had long periods in that place, and this place, of government undermining that panel's work. Do not thank a group of people you have denigrated and shafted. It does not come across as particularly sincere.

Report considered and noted.

ORDER OF BUSINESS

Postponement of Intervening Business

Motion agreed to.

[5.24 p.m.]

Ms FORREST (Murchison) (by leave) - I move -

That the intervening business be postponed until consideration of Order of the Day No. 4 is complete.

MOTION

Public Accounts Committee - University of Tasmania Financial Position - Consideration and Noting

Continued from 8 April (page 152).

[5.24 p.m.]

Ms FORREST (Murchison) - Mr President, I appreciate members' forbearance bringing this motion first because it has already started, and depending on how long it takes, we may not get the other one started.

The Public Accounts Committee inquiry was a targeted and short, focused inquiry into the financial performance of UTAS. As members would be aware, the PAC has had quite a bit on lately; there is plenty to look into in the management of public sector finances. This was an important piece of work that was predominantly driven by public interest, and the fact that UTAS's financial performance, other than its annual audit of accounts by the Auditor-General, had not been scrutinised in any detail.

We know there has been another committee inquiry that has reported and looked into some of the government's arrangements under the act, but that was quite narrow too. What is critical to PAC is that the money that the state put in - acknowledging that the vast majority of money that goes to UTAS is not state money, it is federal - but as it is a state act UTAS operates under, both the minister and Treasurer do have some responsibilities in that - not that they have

a great deal of say of how the university does their work, and neither should they. You must have academic freedom, and we want universities to operate in a way that is not limited by the government of the day.

However, it is important that their financial performance was monitored. This was particularly important because everyone would be well aware of the impacts of COVID on all universities; not just the one in Tasmania, not just in Australia, but around the world. COVID has had significant impacts on the movement of people, but also the reliance that all universities had developed on international students, and the - some might say - over-capitalisation of the requirement to have a large number of international students to prop up their financial models.

The reason we did not go out for broader consultation is that we wanted to keep it narrow and focused on the financial performance, to understand from UTAS, particularly, what the key reasons for their diminishing financial performance have been. It has been pretty clear that that has been the case. The Auditor-General also, in his most recent audit of their financial performance, made similar observations. I will note that UTAS reports on a calendar year, which makes sense because it is a school year. I would hope that we will see the most recent annual report sooner rather than later; here we are now at the end of May. I know there were requirements, and the act does not require it to be tabled anytime soon, but surely when it has been audited there are processes it has to go through.

There is such pressure on UTAS, their financial position, and we see very recently in the media, restructuring, further cost-minimisation measures. The distrust that can cause in the community is concerning. I hope that the minister can, in any way, expedite the tabling of their 2024 annual report. That would be a very valuable thing to at least help us to see how they are tracking, acknowledging that it is unlikely to be good.

The committee determined not to go out for public consultation due to the specific nature of the inquiry, and also the recent Legislative Council inquiry into various other aspects of UTAS's operations and governance. Whilst this drew some criticism from some, the reason it was done this way was to undertake scrutiny similar to a GBE - that sort of approach. We would call them in and will hopefully develop a measurable benchmark through this report for further and more regular scrutiny of UTAS's financial performance. I note that it has not really been done at all before, other than the tabling of their annual report, which has been picked up from time to time for debate, but not the opportunity to call UTAS in and ask them to account for the decisions they are taking and the financial performance of that entity.

What is clear is that UTAS continues to navigate a challenging financial landscape, and those challenges are absolutely ongoing. These challenges, or similar challenges, have been experienced by many universities, big and small alike. I know there are many other universities around the nation that are in a world of pain as well.

Many of the challenges were driven by external economic pressures: government policy changes, predominantly federal government policy changes, not state; and shifting student demographics. To elaborate on these, UTAS faced ongoing financial strain due to inflation, which has only recently started to ease, I am sure to the great relief of many people, but also the strain was contributed to by a decline in international student enrolments and rising capital and operating costs.

We know what impact COVID had on capital and other operating costs. I will come to some of those other things UTAS did to try to mitigate some of this. These are problems facing every university; but not every university was undertaking a major capital build at the time, and we saw the impact on the cost of construction with COVID, and obviously a lot of this has happened during that period.

Some will say that some of the capital costs could have been avoided and, yes, different decisions could have been made; however, capital expenditure was needed to manage high student numbers pre-COVID and to manage the older buildings. A lot of these decisions were made well before COVID, and COVID had the impact on many organisations that were doing any form of construction.

UTAS representatives informed the committee that whilst it has implemented some financial adjustments, such as selling off unneeded property or at least preparing it for sale in the City of Hobart, implementing some strategic projects to ensure long-term sustainability, it remains highly reliant on external funding and government policy reforms, predominantly at the federal government level. We saw a lot of the argy-bargy at the end of the last federal government's term, where there were promises of legislation being passed to deal with some of the international student visa matters. Immigration became a very political hot potato. Prior to the election, the federal government did not deliver all that was needed, not just by UTAS but by some of the other universities.

Also, UTAS is a regional university, our only university in the state, and members are probably aware of the 'big eight' universities. They are the ones with big money, big debts, big properties and bigger numbers of students. They were putting up quite a fight to see some of the federal government's proposals that would have potentially - and can still - benefit regional universities. The big universities around the country do not want to have the pie that they have secured for themselves diminished in any way by some of our regional universities.

Figures provided by UTAS show that international student revenue, previously a key growth driver between 2014 and 2019, pre-COVID, had declined post-2019. This decline was a result of both the COVID-19 pandemic and migration policy changes in Australia and China. There were migration policy changes in China that meant fewer Chinese students would come to Australia, and obviously into Tasmania. We as a state, the country, or certainly UTAS have no ability to influence Chinese policy in relation to that.

These changes resulted in an estimated \$189 million negative impact on UTAS's operations. The impact of COVID and the migration policy changes had a very significant impact. These things were outside the control of UTAS, or any other university, and it cannot be underestimated, that was a huge task for UTAS to actually address.

UTAS informed the committee that it is targeting a return to profitability through cost reductions and financial restructuring. As I mentioned at the outset, we have seen some more recent announcements from UTAS about the need to try to cut their costs and reduce their costs whilst also seeking to attract not just domestic or interstate students, but international students as well. That is very challenging when you have somewhat politicised immigration matters going on during the lead-up to a federal election.

This challenge is exacerbated as the university relies on international student revenue to cross-subsidise research and capital investment. A model that may become unsustainable due

to the Australian Government's policy reform on student visas and enrolment caps. It was clearly a huge issue, which is why I am really keen to see their most recent annual report to find out if they are able to turn this ship around because the pathway they are on is not good.

Whilst UTAS has maintained an approved borrowing limit of \$400 million, it faces debt management challenges amid rising construction costs and shifting project scopes. We know that with the Forestry building, for example, that started off as that one particular building. They bought the Freedom building next door and are incorporating that as well. It will create a much bigger learning space, but that comes with an upfront cost. You cannot get the money from students until you can put them in the building.

These challenges continue with UTAS executing major real estate and infrastructure projects, including the transition of its southern campus to the Hobart CBD and the new STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) facility at Sandy Bay campus, which they assure us cannot go ahead without \$500 million of federal funding - I do not believe there was any commitment in the recent federal election to provide that - and the planned sale of selected properties in the Hobart CBD.

The new STEM facilities are needed to deliver contemporary teaching, learning and research. I have had a look around the old facilities. I used my time over the last little while to visit a number of areas of UTAS's operations to understand what is going on, including the northern campus and the Cradle Coast campus, and it is apparent that whilst those buildings are still functional above Churchill Avenue for the STEM facilities, they do need new state-of-the-art STEM facilities - ideally in a more contained location in terms of accessibility and a whole range of things. Yes, I know that the glasshouses and the whole range of other things are up above Churchill Avenue, but you can build new ones. They do need money for that though. We are on a bit of a rotational sad record at the moment. They need these new facilities to attract and retain staff and students to STEM, which is an important economic driver for Tasmania. It will become even more so, depending on what happens with the energy transition and a whole range of other things that are going to require really advanced-level skills in STEM.

Mr Gaffney - Did they give any indication of what they thought was the land value above Churchill Avenue?

Ms FORREST - No, we did not talk about that. When we took this evidence, that was not on the table, from memory. I am pretty sure. The member for Elwick may be able to remind me about that. We did it before that. This has taken a while to get to this one as well because we had a couple of other inquiries that took precedence, like the two big red boats without a berth in your area - that one.

Mr Gaffney - No, that is fine. I just wanted to know.

Ms FORREST - For members who have been out and had a look at the current STEM facilities, both above and below Churchill Avenue at the Sandy Bay campus, they are extremely aged and not in line with high-quality, best-practice teaching labs that many other Australian universities have and students will vote with their feet. Clearly, new facilities, including labs and greenhouses, would need to be built prior to any relocation from above Churchill Avenue.

UTAS claims approximately \$500 million will be required to construct new buildings or to retrofit existing ones at the Sandy Bay campus below Churchill Avenue. Some of those buildings can be repurposed, but not all of them, as I understand it. I am not the architect or the engineer or anybody else who can make informed comment on that, but I can look around and see that there are pretty cramped conditions.

When you look at the beautiful facilities we have in the north and north-west for UTAS, it is worlds apart. UTAS states this cost will be very similar to consolidate below Churchill Avenue for either a new build or a partial new build and a retrofit of existing buildings below Churchill, so the costs of consolidating in Sandy Bay below Churchill Avenue were pretty similar to building a purpose-built new facility in the city. That is the evidence they provided to us.

As is the case with most other Australian universities, UTAS lacks internal funding capability to support such important and needed investments. Federal, state and possibly local governments will be required to make financial contributions to enable new and updated STEM facilities to be built.

The committee also heard more detail regarding the online courses offered by UTAS and this was a good news story. UTAS has significantly grown its online presence and is now the fourth biggest online operator of university courses in Australia. When COVID first hit, they decided to make a significant change to the delivery of content, particularly online. They have been able to keep student numbers relatively high through a lot of those online offerings. Some people do not like online learning, for other people it makes it very accessible. We need to find that balance. People in my region and the north-east may have a two- to three-hour drive to even get to Burnie campus. They deserve to be able to access the course they want wherever they are, as much as possible. There are some courses that are hands-on and you cannot do them that way, but where you can provide online content, we should at least make it accessible to students around our state.

UTAS also claimed the provision of online courses is not cheaper to provide than on-campus teaching. That was a bit of a myth that they blew out of the water. They said this is due to the initial content development, the updating that is required and the licences to maintain software costing approximately \$25 million versus \$10 million to maintain campuses, so it is actually more expensive to update and maintain and pay your software licences for online delivery than to maintain a campus in reasonable condition. That is an interesting point to contemplate because it is not a set and forget. You do not develop a course, put it online, then deliver the same thing every time and never revisit it. That is not how it works.

Ms O'Connor - That is how it works at UTAS. Professor Tim McCormack's videos on international human rights law are six years old and they are still being played and used.

Ms FORREST - Well, some of them maybe, because there may be historical content there, but you cannot just set and forget and not ever go back to it. This is what they said, the initial content updating required is where the costs are and the licensing.

Ms O'Connor - There is a fair bit of stale content in the UTAS offerings.

Ms FORREST - It depends on what you are studying, too. International law and things like that, or history - well, we can rewrite history at times.

Ms O'Connor - They are targeting history for redundancies.

Ms FORREST - I am just saying, I am just reporting the evidence we got, that there is a significant cost to deliver online courses; it is not cheaper and easier and without any additional burden, which was something that I have repeatedly heard from members of the public at times that they are only doing it online because it is cheaper, okay? That is the point; it is not cheaper.

Of course, it is logical to note that online courses are much more scalable and readily scalable, so you can certainly get a lot more students on an online course than you can in a classroom, particularly if they cannot travel to get there.

Once you have developed the content for a particular course and it is contemporary, you could almost have unlimited numbers. If you have a huge amount of students, the lecturers still have to assess assignments, exams, all those sorts of things. It is not like you just set and forget and do not need to do any more. They have still got that work to do.

It can also assist in increasing accessibility across Tasmania, nationally and internationally. That can also have an added benefit of reducing costs for students. Where travel is prohibitive - and we all know in the last few years how terribly difficult it has been to get accommodation in Hobart. For university students who are living on a shoestring or have wealthy parents, then housing can be a real barrier getting somewhere to live. Even living in a residential college, for those students it is costly to the family, it is not easy. We need to acknowledge that, that if a student does not have full-time accommodation in the capital city or even in Launceston and can travel and access some content online, you can actually make it cheaper and more accessible that way for students. It is about making sure we have a balanced approach.

I am very conscious of the number of students from my area for whom having the Cradle Coast campus open has changed their lives. When the Cradle Coast campus first opened, it took a little while for the numbers to build, which you would expect, because there was not a culture of going to university in my electorate. It was only those who really had wealthy families who could really afford to. Most students there who should clearly have been on the pathway to university chose to go out and work and try, and maybe became mature age students later on, if they could afford it. They would look for apprenticeships. There is nothing wrong with that. However, it meant that some of the students who should have had the opportunity to do professional careers that they had the capacity to do could not because their families could not afford to send them.

When the Cradle Coast campus first opened, in more recent years we have had a large number of mature-age students, a lot of people retraining, particularly with changes in the forestry sector and other things like that. We had a high number of people with disability, which was above the average, and a higher percentage of students with Aboriginal backgrounds. We had a lot more part-time students as well because they could work or they could care for a family. Some of the women returning to work after having a family could manage it because they could work around the needs of their family. It has been a massive and important change; these campuses are cross-subsidised from here.

Mr Gaffney - The rural medical school was a big change too; it was huge for the psyche of them.

Ms FORREST - That is right, absolutely. Now UTAS is delivering the whole medical degree at the Cradle Coast campus for the first time. I think I have spoken about this in this place already. We have the most amazing and excellent medical nursing lab, fully functioning mannequins that can do all manner of human functions, in fact, there is nothing they cannot do.

Ms O'Connor - Do they do wees and stuff?

Ms FORREST - Yes, they vomit on you, they sweat, they can talk, they pass urine, they poo. They do everything. They have heart attacks while you are watching them. If you do not know what to do, they will die. They are resuscitated. If you have not ever visited it, you really should. The room it is in is probably not quite as big as the Chamber here. At the end of it is a 10-bed ward, I think; it has been a while since I have been in there. At the end there is a massive window that looks out over Bass Strait. It is a terrible working environment for those students - said with tongue in cheek. It is amazing.

They have the full medical degree there. They have nursing students, paramedic students, and they are starting some of the other allied health professions as well. It has been an absolute godsend, and a lot of the student nurses who train there work in Burnie or Devonport, or the Mersey. They get work and stay in their communities. I am sure this will be the case with our graduating doctors who do their whole degree there.

Ms O'Connor - My son did pretty much his whole degree at the North West. He is a great doctor. They gave him a really great education.

Ms FORREST - Up until this year, they used to have years four and five from the Rural Clinical School. My son did it that way. Every year they have a welcome for the students there. It is a bit like speed dating, where community members and the students are moved around to different tables to talk. I always ask the students where they are from. There are quite a number of mainland students, and there are a lot from here, from Hobart.

I always ask them, why did you come here? What brought you here? It is because they know about the system that is provided up there. They know about the reach into the community that UTAS does. They know that they are really well looked after, and have a really broad range of experience. Some of these young people are on a pathway to rural medicine, and it is a perfect place for them to do that. The number of students who choose to come from Hobart to Burnie for that experience is really interesting.

Mr Gaffney - Early on, when that was being set up, a lot of the councils actually provided scholarships and studentships to help it get some gravitas.

Ms FORREST - They still do. I believe that pretty much every council on the north-west coast gives a bursary to assist a student. There are some bigger bursaries for those students who may not be able to afford to go otherwise. I noted in a previous debate two of the Hellyer College high achievers - there are three of them, actually - but two of the highest ATAR scorers are doing medicine in Burnie. That is a great success story. That is subsidised from here.

When people criticise UTAS mercilessly - I am not here to be their apologist - but they forget that if they force them to reduce services, what does that mean for the campus in the

north-west? What does it mean for the northern campus, which provides really important opportunities for students outside Hobart?

When I went to school, uni was an elite thing that could not be contemplated. It was elite.

Ms O'Connor - It was free, to be fair.

Ms FORREST - Not that long ago.

Ms O'Connor - It was free when I went.

Ms FORREST - It was not free because you had to pay to get down here; you had to pay for accommodation.

Ms O'Connor - Sure. You still do, but you did not have to pay a HECS debt.

Ms FORREST - No, HECS debt was not a thing, but you could not afford it. Families could not afford it. We did not have that culture, whereas now we have a culture in the north-west - and I am sure in Launceston too - where it is now possible. University is an option, and the world is your oyster from there. We also have, and we need to have, a really well-functioning TasTAFE as well, to ensure that the skills and the trades can be equally facilitated because they are crucial to so many of the industries on the north-west coast.

I became distracted there, I apologise. UTAS's ability to navigate policy uncertainty, manage capital investments, and secure diversified funding sources will determine its long-term financial sustainability. Again, another reason I am keen to see their most recent annual report. Ongoing policy uncertainty in this area does add to the challenge.

Continued scrutiny is required on government policy impacts - not just state government policy, if there is any change there, but federal, which is not entirely our job, but it is our university. Debt management strategies - we need to keep an eye on how they are managing their debt, the capital investment priorities. This inquiry has been an important first step in that.

Yes, the Treasurer does have some responsibilities under the act in terms of the borrowings of UTAS. The education minister has the responsibilities for tabling the report and also appointing members to the council. Other than that, their role is limited and we do not want governments of the day, of whatever colour, interfering in universities unnecessarily, but we want our universities to function financially, sustainably.

The committee made 38 findings and two recommendations. It is a large report, but a lot of it is information provided by UTAS, which we thought was best to attach as is, rather than trying to replicate it all, because it is fairly comprehensive and self-explanatory.

I have pretty much summarised the findings. The committee did recommend that regular parliamentary scrutiny of UTAS's financial performance by a relevant parliamentary committee be undertaken. Whether that is the Public Accounts Committee (PAC) or another committee, like GAA or GAB, depending on where it sits, is not the issue; it simply does need to happen, particularly in the current situation that UTAS faces.

As there is no formal scrutiny process under the current governing legislation, this will require the commitment of the parliament or a committee to do this important work.

I do not know whether it is something that should be put in the act at some stage, but whilst there are challenges, and these financial challenges are not going away anytime soon, the parliament does have a responsibility to keep an eye on the financial performance, the risks, and things like their debt management and how they are dealing with all of that.

Ms Rattray - Is the honourable member indicating that there needs to be a legislative change for scrutiny to happen?

Ms FORREST - Not necessarily. You do not need legislation to do it. We did not need legislation to look into it. I am just saying that, particularly until its financial position improves - obviously that it is audited by the Auditor-General and PAC has a close relationship with the Audit Office and we keep in touch over our concerns about UTAS's financial performance. PAC could do another follow-up after that, or another committee could make a decision too, but it is really important that we keep a close watch on this.

Ms Rattray - Interestingly, a number of years ago now, and it is possibly four years, I inquired about noting the university's annual report and was told that that was not an opportunity in this House at the time.

Ms FORREST - When we are putting some public funds in there, that is the hook for PAC. That is why we stuck to the financial performance. The rest of it is not our business. Well, it is our business since it is the University of Tasmania, but we were focused on the financial performance.

Ms Rattray - I recall, at the time, considering it was our business, but I was told it was not our business, so there you go.

Ms FORREST - As I said, UTAS reports in the calendar year, so I look forward to seeing the most recent one very soon. The committee's second recommendation related to recognising the need of regional universities, including UTAS, for stable and reasonable international student numbers and access. Whilst that is a process, that is governed by the Australian Government and is very much a federal issue - and I am sure it is aware of it, but when you have the big eight universities loudly in your ear as the minister, I am sure, and you have the much smaller regional universities trying to get their voices heard and be sure that they are not done over in any legislative reform or policy change, we have an obligation to stand up for our Tasmanian university and encourage the government to advocate. This is what the committee recommends, that the Tasmanian government advocates on behalf of UTAS, the state's only university, to the Australian Government to ensure it can provide stable, equitable per-student funding and influence international student policy settings for quotas and migration policy settings to provide the financial sustainability of UTAS.

I am sure the Minister for Education will have some response, or the Acting Leader, whatever capacity she is speaking in - every capacity, probably.

It is clearly a challenge and something that is very likely to be politicised, and it is very easy to politicise immigration, and not only was it the immigration numbers, it was also to do with the visa processing. The students who were more likely to get their visas approved,

particularly in a timely manner, were those who were headed for the 'big eight' universities. This is covered in the report. The ones who were more likely, perhaps, to take longer to get their visas approved, or have them refused, were the ones who had filtered down to the regional universities. You think you might have a large cohort of students that come in; a lot of their visas would not be approved, or would be significantly delayed, thus adding to the financial burden.

I thank the work of our Public Accounts Committee. It was probably one of the first ones the member for Elwick joined us on. It is probably the first report from PAC in some time that only has six names on the front. That is quite an achievement because we had such a turnover for a period, but now with the return of the member for Pembroke - and I hope he wants to come back on the PAC - we will continue to have some stability. I note the report. I will be taking a particular interest going forward.

[6.01 p.m.]

Ms O'CONNOR (Hobart) - Mr President, I have just a brief contribution. I thank the member for Murchison for bringing forward debate on this report.

UTAS, as an institution, has long held a very special place in the hearts of Tasmanians as our only university. It historically has transformed lives and contributed so much to our community, society, culture, economy and national reputation.

We just heard from the member for Murchison that UTAS is in significant financial difficulty, and the member laid out a number of reasons for UTAS being in the situation that it is in. As the parent of two - coming up on three now - young people extremely well served by UTAS, heading into careers of their choices, I want to express my gratitude to UTAS for its commitment to young people and furthering their education. That said, UTAS itself has some problems that are arguably of its own making.

It is not necessarily the responsibility or fault of the current management of UTAS; some of these problems go back a long way. The enthusiasm for the city move unfortunately came before any kind of meaningful conversation with the people who will be most impacted - a bit like the stadium really - and we have seen now an erosion of UTAS's standing in the community. That should alarm us all.

We have now seen the information that came through from the University of Tasmania itself on 15 May that a change proposal has been circulated to staff. This brings into question the future of the schools of Humanities, Social Sciences, and Creative Arts and Media. UTAS is proposing to merge humanities and social sciences into one. It is moving social work into the School of Paramedicine - interesting combination there.

It is proposing to separate the schools of creative arts into creative and performing arts and the Conservatorium of Music.

UTAS has informed staff that it is looking at targeted redundancies in the areas where they have seen student enrolments decline, and that is in policing, tourism, global cultures and languages, and in philosophy and gender studies. As I understand it, for example, the proposal is that UTAS would no longer provide language studies in Indonesian or German and in philosophy. I felt really sad to hear UTAS will not be offering that full philosophy degree, just in the same way it will not be having the focus on humanities that it has in the past. Asian

philosophy studies is lined up for cuts; at the moment the department has no philosophy professor and is unlikely to have one. We are seeing a significant loss of staff and units.

This is happening nationally to some extent, where there has been an official decision made, if you like, that the humanities should be deprioritised and the focus should be on STEM. It is hard not to be cynical about that because conservative governments, particularly, do not like the humanities. A humanities degree is all about critical thinking and we obviously cannot have too much of that in our society. We are seeing the impacts of cuts at UTAS impacting primarily on the humanities. UTAS is also talking about voluntary redundancies in art, theatre, history, politics and international relations.

I recognise that a number of the challenges that UTAS is facing have been created by external events: changes to immigration policy, as the honourable member for Murchison said, and the arrival of a devastating pandemic definitely had an effect on UTAS's viability.

There has been another story here too, which I am not sure is particularly well understood. There was a time when UTAS would go into community settings, rural and regional areas, urban fringe areas, and really promote all their offerings: 'Here we have a Bachelor of Arts in Social Work; are you interested in social work? We have one of the best medical schools in the country on the north-west coast.' We know that, and that is a popular and well-attended school, but UTAS has not been going out, for example, and saying, 'Do you want a history major? Are you interested in philosophy?' UTAS itself has stopped marketing those humanities-related courses and degrees. That is unarguable.

I do not think it is a badge of honour for UTAS to be the fourth-highest offerer of online degrees of any university in the country. Why would a young person in Hobart, for example, choose to study uni online unless there was a personal -

Ms Palmer - Yes, a disability or anxiety -

Ms O'CONNOR - No. I understand that. Hang on a minute. Just wait a second. Unless there was a particular personal challenge or issue, remembering that online courses are a relatively modern phenomenon, but young people today in my youngest child's cohort, early 20s, they see an online offering and they want to go to Melbourne. Maybe they always wanted to go to Melbourne; but there is something a bit stale about what is being offered.

I interjected before on the honourable member's contribution about an old video that is part of the tutoring curriculum of the wonderful Professor Tim McCormack, who is talking about international law, international human rights and international criminal law. When I saw that video a couple of years ago, it had been floating around for three or four years. I have not checked lately, but I do not buy that it is just as expensive to operate online degrees as it is to pay for lecturers and tutors and the spaces that are required for these teachings.

It is much cheaper to offer online courses. Of course, you still have to do all the marking and there is a level of engagement that is required, but it is much cheaper.

The current state of UTAS should concern us all and I look forward to reading the rest of that report. I am worried about the School of Humanities, apparently the business school enrolments have crashed because students do not want to go to tutorials or lectures in the new facility.

The recommendation in the report that UTAS's finances be subject to more parliamentary scrutiny is something that must be adopted, but I do not think it should just be of UTAS's finances. This is our university. It is a public institution. It would be good to understand with more clarity what UTAS's plan for the future is because, like many other universities around the country and the world, what is happening to UTAS is that it is being corporatised. So, if an offering does not make money or if it costs, and that has been the case historically for any number of courses, it is cut.

If you want an example of how harsh and petty and counterproductive this can be, the Tasmanian-Tibetan Exchange Program has been axed. Now, that is sad. That is something unique that we offered here that gave young people from Tibet an opportunity to come here, study and make connections, and likewise for Tasmanian students. Something has happened to UTAS that is not good. It has become all about the money. It has become highly corporatised. There is a sense that it is disconnected from the community, which has always been proud of UTAS, and it is not just about the money.

I know the world changes. The way UTAS used to operate was much more collective. Staff had much more of a role and a say in decision-making and now, as I understand it, and that is talking to any number of people over the journey when we are looking at the UTAS land sale bill, staff are given lip service. It is a very top-down management structure. There is a lot of dissatisfaction there at UTAS, and a university that Peter Rathjen, the former vice-chancellor, used to proudly say was drawing the best from all over the world, is now losing some of the best to the rest of the world.

It is not just about the money; it is about what is happening inside UTAS. It is something we need to address and take seriously. I hope the recommendation to have it come before a committee more regularly is adopted.

[6.13 p.m.]

Ms PALMER - (Acting Leader of the Government in the Legislative Council) - Mr President, I am pleased to have an opportunity to provide a brief response to this report as the acting Leader and as the Minister for Education. I want to start by acknowledging the work of the Parliamentary Standing Committee of Public Accounts in undertaking this inquiry: the honourable Ruth Forrest MLC, Chair; Mr Josh Willie MP, deputy chair; Mr Simon Behrakis MP; Mr Mark Shelton MP; the honourable Bec Thomas MLC; and the honourable Luke Edmunds MLC.

As I noted in this place last month, as the only university in our state, the University of Tasmania has such an important role to play in the economic, social and cultural development of Tasmania. The Tasmanian Liberal government is committed to ensuring that the university delivers positive outcomes for students, staff and for the broader Tasmanian community.

In relation to scrutiny of the university's financial performance, as noted in the report, in accordance with the *University of Tasmania Act 1992*, one of my roles as the Minister for Education is to ensure a copy of the university's annual report is tabled in both Houses of parliament each year and this process provides an avenue for parliamentary scrutiny. I certainly note the comments made by the member for Murchison about the timing of the tabling of the annual report for 2024 and her subsequent request to see it tabled as soon as possible.

As I noted during the hearing for this inquiry in September last year, as well as in this place last month, my other responsibility under the act is to appoint two members to the University Council. Current ministerial appointees to the University Council are Ms Sheree Vertigan AM and Ms Tara Howell, with both their current terms set to expire in April of 2027. I recently met with Ms Vertigan and Ms Howell, and we had a very productive discussion about their role on the council, as well as their priorities and their particular focus areas. I am grateful to have two highly skilled and passionate women as my representatives on that council.

I also note that the current Senate inquiry into the quality of governance at Australian higher education providers is considering the standard and accuracy of providers' financial reporting, and the effectiveness of financial safeguards and controls. I certainly look forward to seeing the recommendations from that federal inquiry.

Looking at recommendation 2, the Tasmanian government advocating on behalf of the university to the Australian Government: our government is a strong supporter of the university. We will always advocate for outcomes that will benefit Tasmania, where we can. As an example, in September of 2024, our Premier wrote to the federal Minister for Home Affairs advocating on behalf of the university in relation to the Australian Government's migration strategy and its impact on international student numbers in Tasmania. Following on from this correspondence, I understand that there was further engagement between the Australian Government and our university, and that special consideration was given to the university to support ongoing recruitment efforts for semester 1 this year.

As another example, in December last year, I supported a federal amendment to the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF), which will result in undergraduate certificates being permanently recognised as a qualification under the AQF. This is a great result for our university, as I understand there is strong demand for undergraduate certificates in Tasmania.

I have also recently been in touch with our reappointed federal Education minister, Jason Clare. As part of that correspondence, I made sure to raise higher education matters, which included advocating for the Australian Needs-based Higher Education Funding Model to take into account some of the unique circumstances that we have here in Tasmania. I also urged the federal government to take our unique context into consideration when making any further policy decisions around international student visas.

In closing, I once again thank the committee for its work. I note the report of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Accounts inquiry into the University of Tasmania's Financial Position.

Mr PRESIDENT - As the honourable member is not here to sum up, we will just put the motion that the report be considered and noted.

Report considered and noted.

MESSAGE FROM THE HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

Request for Leave for Ministers to Appear Before Council Estimates Committees

[6.19 p.m.]

Mr PRESIDENT - I have a message from the House of Assembly:

Mr President, the House of Assembly doth agree to the following resolution communicated to it by the Legislative Council on 27 May 2025 -

Resolved that the Legislative Council having appointed two Estimates Committees reflecting the distribution of government ministers' portfolio responsibilities, requests that the House of Assembly give leave to all Ministers to appear before, and give evidence to the relevant Council Estimates Committee in relation to the budget estimates and related documents.

Michelle O'Byrne, Speaker
House of Assembly
27 May 2025.

ADJOURNMENT

Ms PALMER - (Acting Leader of the Government in the Legislative Council) - Mr President, I move that at its rising

That the Council at its rising adjourn until 11.00 a.m. on Wednesday 28 May 2025.

Motion agreed to.

Ms PALMER - (Acting Leader of the Government in the Legislative Council) - Mr President, before moving the adjournment, can I remind members of briefings tomorrow morning starting at 8.45 a.m. We have Sophie Underwood and Peter McGlone, and then at 9.15, the Federal Group - Mr William Manning and Mr Daniel Hanna.

Mr President, I move -

That the Council do now adjourn.

The Council adjourned at 6.20 p.m.