



PARLIAMENT OF TASMANIA

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

REPORT OF DEBATES

Tuesday 6 September 2022

REVISED EDITION

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Tuesday 6 September 2022

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

LEAVE OF ABSENCE

Member for Prosser - Ms Howlett

Member for McIntyre - Ms Rattray

[11.02 a.m.]

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

That the member for Prosser, Ms Howlett, and the member for McIntyre, Ms Rattray, be granted leave of absence from the service of the Council for this day's sitting.

Leave granted.

STATEMENT BY PRESIDENT

Welcome to New Staff of the Parliament of Tasmania - Simon Munn

[11.03 a.m.]

Mr PRESIDENT - Honourable members, I welcome Mr Simon Munn, who has been recently appointed to a new role, Facilities and Services Manager for the Parliament of Tasmania. Simon commenced his duties on the 22 August 2022. Prior to starting at parliament, Simon held the position of project manager with the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery and has previously been employed by the Glenorchy and Hobart city councils as a capital works manager. He has also worked as the heritage project officer with The Rocks Place Management in Sydney.

Simon has a passion for and knowledge of heritage buildings and I am sure he will be an asset to the parliament. I am sure all members will join me in welcoming him to his new position and to the Parliament of Tasmania.

Members - Hear, hear.

STATEMENT BY PRESIDENT

*Motion for Respect: Report into Workplace Culture in the
Tasmanian Ministerial and Parliamentary Services*

[11.04 a.m.]

Mr PRESIDENT - Honourable members, before we proceed to the business of the day, I wish to make some remarks about the Report into Workplace Culture in the Tasmanian

Ministerial and Parliamentary Services which was publicly released on Monday 29 August 2022.

Firstly, I thank the Anti-Discrimination Commissioner and her team for their work in undertaking the review. I would also like to thank participants in the review, who came forward and shared their stories and experiences. I acknowledge their courage and openness. Sharing their personal experiences and insights would not have been easy for some but that bravery has informed this report and its recommendations.

As President of the Legislative Council I am the employing authority for officers and employees of the Legislative Council and I share joint responsibilities as employer with Mr Speaker for employees of the Legislature-General, our shared services. As Presiding Officer I also have authority over the Legislative Council and share this authority with Mr Speaker in respect to the precinct generally. As an employer I have duties and obligations to the officers and employees who work to serve this Chamber, its committees and the parliament.

The President of the Legislative Council is the representative of the Council itself in its powers and proceedings. My official functions fall into two categories. On the one hand, I am the representative of the Council in its relations with the Crown and other persons outside parliament. On the other, I preside over debates in the Council and enforce the observance of order in its proceedings. However, I recognise that members have a unique status as elected representatives and are bound by a code of conduct and at present I also have a role in ensuring that appropriate standards of conduct and behaviour are met.

The characteristics attaching to my office are authority and impartiality. Confidence in the impartiality of the President and the officers who support me is an indispensable condition to the successful working of this place.

In addition to duties in the House, I am responsible under the Parliamentary Privilege Act for recommending to the Governor the employment of permanent parliamentary staff and I have the authority to appoint such temporary and sessional employees as I consider necessary. Therefore, at law, I am the employer of many of the people who may have participated in this review or have been affected by the actions of others. I am responsible together with the Clerk for policy and directions relating to the Legislative Council employees, and jointly with the Speaker for the successful operation of the joint services area.

The Clerk of the Council assists me in the discharge of these duties. The Clerk is the most senior permanent official in the Council and the principal adviser on parliamentary law, procedure and practice and has responsibility for the administrative and financial operations of the Legislative Council.

All people who work here do so to support us, as members, to undertake our parliamentary and representative duties.

It is important to recognise that the officers and employees employed by me separately and jointly work to serve members and our institution, not the ministers or the government of the day and this distinction is important when considering the reforms recommended in this report.

I am particularly saddened to see in reading the Motion for Respect report that many people who came forward have had dreadful experiences and have been subject to disrespect. I am sorry that our Legislative Council staff and Legislature-General staff have experienced bullying, discrimination, sexual harassment and they have not felt supported or heard. I commit where I can to work with our leaders in this place to do better.

I am pleased to see that the report notes that there was evidence of an overwhelming appetite for culture change. How we give effect to the call for change and implement many of the recommendations of this report will need to be carefully and collaboratively thought through and planned giving due reference to all legal and constitutional precedents that we operate under.

While I cannot, as President, influence everything and I note that not every finding was reflective of the Legislative Council, I can promise you that I will lead and champion change in the areas I have power over and responsibility for.

I appreciate that transforming the way we work and change will be hard for some but it is a journey that we must embark upon to address not only the disrespectful actions and deeds described in this report, but the structural and cultural issues that underpin these types of behaviours.

Being Tuesday, it is Special Interest Day and the first member to speak to us this morning is the honourable member for Windermere.

SPECIAL INTEREST MATTERS

New Horizons Tasmania - Disability Service

[11.10 a.m.]

Mr DUIGAN (Windermere) - Mr President, today I will speak about an amazing not-for-profit organisation which has been a beacon in my community and beyond for the best part of 40 years. New Horizons Tasmania (NHT) provides sport, recreation and social opportunities for Tasmanians with disabilities. It is the sport and recreation club where everyone is welcome and I extend my welcome to the New Horizons CEO, Belinda Kitto, plus Bailey Menzies and Callum Ring who are recent graduates of the Champion program, which I will speak about today.

New Horizons goes back some years, starting in Launceston in 1986 through the work of volunteers and community grants. It expanded to Scottsdale in the late nineties, and to Hobart on a part-time basis in 2018.

I am pleased to say, through some well-placed NDIS funding in 2022, NHT now has program coordinators working in Launceston, Hobart and the north-west coast. There is also a volunteer branch operating in Scottsdale, running a weekly activity. It is a team of nine full-time equivalent staff and is supported by fantastic volunteers.

Right at this moment, more than 200 Tasmanians with disability are involved in NHT's programs. Depending on the season, it could be AFL, cricket, basketball, futsal, tennis, taekwondo, gym fitness, bowls, netball, multi-sport, swimming, bocce, bushwalking, song and

dance, choir, craft and more. There are also opportunities for state representative teams which go on to participate in their field in national competitions which are truly life-changing experiences - experiences which bring with them increased physical and mental wellbeing, the development of new skills, building friendships and confidence.

Beyond its traditional sport and recreation brief, NHT recently launched their Champion program which I mentioned. It is a leadership course which gives participants an opportunity to develop the skills to be a champion for themselves and a champion for others.

A collaboration between NHT and WA-based not-for-profit, Town Team Movement, the Champion program focuses on helping participants to challenge themselves and, over the period of the eight-week course, to push outside their comfort zone and develop the confidence and skills to create authentic leaders in the disability community. Sessions were essentially directed and owned by the participants and included inspiring guest speakers from throughout the community.

This year, 23 people of all ages with disability around the state took part in the Champion program and recently it was my pleasure, along with the Minister for Disability Services - my colleague, Jo Palmer - to attend the NHT Champion program graduation event. Among lots of singing and hat-throwing and other things, participants had the opportunity to reflect on their experience of the program. Without wishing to embarrass one of my guests - Bailey - I will share a little of what they had to say. There is also a great video that NHT has put together that goes into the graduation and the program in a little more depth. For Bailey Menzies, the program is about learning how to be a leader and what a leader is, and making new friends.

Emily was another of the participants and I spoke to her on the day about her contribution. I thought it was quite profound. She said:

I think what we get out of it is to really understand that a disability is not necessarily a disability but more a diffability - a different ability,

which I think is a nice idea. Emily went on to say that she has learnt that she can be a better leader and a better person.

The Champion program is just the beginning of the leadership journey for NHT graduates, who now have the opportunity to assist in designing and delivering inclusive sport and recreation workshops for Tasmanian schools. This will be an invaluable chance to use their developing skills, but also to be powerful role models to students with disability and, of course, those without as well.

The feedback on, and the outcomes so far of, the Champion program have surpassed all expectation and NHT tell me they believe at a national level it may become a trailblazing program for people with intellectual disability.

I offer my congratulations to the 23 graduates and look forward to the 2023 iteration of the program and the stories it will generate. NHT is always looking for prominent community members to speak and share their experience with Champion participants, so if members want to be involved, I am sure Belinda would love to speak to you.

Recognition of Visitors

Mr PRESIDENT - I also reflect on the member's contribution and welcome to the President's Reserve Belinda Kitto, the CEO and Bailey Menzies and Callum Ring who are graduates of the Champions program. Congratulations on that and I am sure all members will join me in welcoming you to the Legislative Council this morning.

Members - Hear, hear.

Burnie Arts

[11.16 a.m.]

Ms FORREST (Murchison) - After a time of heightened anxiety for the arts in and around Burnie, exciting things are now happening at the arts and cultural space in Burnie. As we know, along with the rest of Tasmania, as we re-emerge from the pandemic restrictions - a situation which had such a dramatic impact on our artistic and cultural experiences, including local events - things are starting to change.

The Burnie Arts brand has been established to encompass and promote a reinvigorated art scene through a new multi-arts platform, burniearts.net, which is described on its home page as a cultural hub serving Burnie and north-west Tasmania promoting the performing and visual arts as well as the Burnie Regional Museum and events and functions.

Despite over two years of disruption, it is exciting to know that the arts appear to be thriving. Burnie City Council's director of corporate and commercial services, Bel Lynch, has informed me that in 2021-22:

Burnie welcomed over 100,000 visitors to our combined cultural facilities, as venues such as the Burnie Regional Art Gallery and the Burnie Regional Museum have progressively reawakened.

A revitalised Burnie Arts and Function Centre has welcomed back many special events, conferences, dinners and functions and acts as a hub for so much community activity. The Arts and Function Centre has been a hive of activity as COVID-19 restrictions eased and welcomed the return of so many of our annual community events, as well as new shows. An incredibly diverse range of activities takes place in this busy centre, including eisteddfods, dance and drama, a range of music genres, conferences, fairs, dinners, live performances and much more. A new live performance program has been launched for 2022, kicking off with a free concert from the City of Burnie Brass Band. Patrons have been entertained by a vast range of professional and community performances, including musicals from Hellyer College, Burnie High School and the Burnie Musical Society.

Additionally, there were opportunities to experience contemporary drama from DoMaur Productions, as well as popular touring shows such as Human Nature; classical concerts from the Van Diemen's Band and Virtuosi Tasmania; circus shows; The Sapphires musical; and shows for children, including Erth's Prehistoric World and Trinket the Robot.

The visual arts have also been very invigorated with the exciting establishment of the new CBD contemporary gallery, Intersection Art Space. In a unique collaboration between Burnie City Council, Ten Days on The Island and Business Northwest, the Intersection Art

Space was created in the former Dick Smith building in Wilmot Street to stage the National Portrait Gallery National Photographic Portrait Prize touring exhibition, the only Tasmanian venue for this important national touring project.

The former Dick Smith store has been meticulously refurbished, transforming an empty retail space into an exciting new art gallery for the Burnie community and visitors.

Two more exhibitions followed at Intersection showcasing Tasmanian artists: Steel & Water, an exhibition of new work by Burnie artist, Michael Muruste, and NatureNurture, an exhibition of graphic work by Launceston-based artist Anna Van Stralen and Lex Palmer Bull. A portfolio of works from a Sydney artist, printmaker Bruce Latimer, will be a fourth exhibition to be held at Intersection, opening on 8 October and running for six weeks.

The Burnie Regional Art Gallery and Intersection general manager, Scott Campbell, is very happy with the success of Intersection, which initially began as a pilot pop-up art space. He will be overseeing the exhibition, which has been named Re:Connection. After the last two years of COVID-19 interruptions Mr Campbell said in a recent interview that the exhibition's name was appropriate for a few reasons. He said:

One, of course, is the whole society is going through a reconnection and the visual arts is very much a part of that. Being able to get people along to the opening and the length of the show, we feel this work will reconnect people. Bruce's work itself is full of connections, weird and uncanny connections, but always there's things in his work that show how the whole world is connected.

Meanwhile, the Burnie Regional Gallery space was redecorated and reopened in June to stage the national touring exhibition, JamFactory, celebrating the work and career of one of Australia's most celebrated ceramic and mixed-media artists. Workshops, talks and discussions accompany the exhibitions of both Intersection and the Burnie Regional Art Gallery, building further connections with artists, their work and the public.

Finally, the Federation Street display at the Burnie Regional Museum reopened to the public on 9 March 2022, after the success of the 50th anniversary celebration of the display in November 2021. The temporary exhibition opened in the museum in early June. Tara Palmer, a student from Burnie's Hellyer College displayed her photographic work in the Burnie Identities exhibition. Her photographs won Tara the Helen Denise Jones OAM Memorial Arts Bursary in 2021. A children's play space has also been installed with equipment purchased from a grant through the Australian Museums and Galleries Association Culture, Heritage and Arts Regional Tourism (CHART) program. The space has been very popular with young visitors to Federation Street.

The future does look bright for Burnie Arts with a number of projects either underway or in the planning stages. These include a plan to welcome cruise ships back to Burnie, with a pop-up visitor experience to operate in civic plaza; a new performing arts program for 2023, with an emphasis on Tasmanian performance groups; programming Intersection Art Space to operate continuously - which is good news - from October 2022 to April 2023. Also, there are plans for a major historical exhibition on the theme Burnie at Play to run in the Burnie Regional Gallery space for six months from November; developing a Christmas night market event in

December; and planning for 2023 as a year the Arts and Function Centre will be transformed into the innovative and exciting cultural hub of Burnie.

Burnie City Council is considering preliminary plans for a cultural centre building, with final architectural plans expected in September. The council has committed to consult with the community on these plans.

I commend the council, Bel Lynch and Scott Campbell, as well as the many staff and volunteers who work tirelessly behind the scenes looking after the collections and the visitors to the facilities. I encourage all members to visit when you are in Burnie.

Men's Sheds

[11.23 a.m.]

Ms PALMER (Rosevears) - Mr President, talking about your feelings can be hard. Without wanting to perpetuate a stereotype, it has often been considered particularly challenging if you are a man, even more so if you are a man with a few years of life experience under your belt. I have been fortunate enough to witness a little bit of magic that happens when these men get together with a few tools and some materials in a shed that gives them a place to belong. This connection, this sense of purpose and mateship can be enough to bring down walls, open up conversation, and even save lives.

Such is the power of men's sheds in Tasmania and across the country. This network of fairly basic buildings, indeed sheds, is filled with an array of creativity, the noise of machinery and conversation and satisfaction at what can be learned and what can be achieved. This rumble of chatter and creativity has slowly been transforming the lives of men in suburbs and towns across the state. Men's sheds offer purpose, conversation, mentorship and support. While many people think that men's sheds are places where older men meet to make things, this is just the beginning of the men's sheds message. They have become a safe place for older guys to get connected, share with one another, while enjoying some handiwork.

Sheds are becoming the heart and hub for men in our communities, right across our state. This is especially true in my own electorate of Rosevears. Most recently, the community of Riverside celebrated the end of three long years of hard work and commitment to create a new permanent home for their shed. The Riverside Men's Shed came from humble beginnings in the backyard of the Atkins family in Cormiston Road about 10 years ago. This family's generosity enabled men to gather a few times a week to swap stories and skills. Three years ago in 2019, when the property was being sold, the dedicated crew committed themselves to finding a new home. They were determined and persistent and not even a global pandemic was going to stop them. Driven by the tenacious Bruce Thomas, the members of the Riverside Men's Shed set out to find a suitable site and raise funds any way they could. They were committed to securing the future of this vital community service.

At the recent official opening of the Riverside Men's Shed, Bruce recalled the group starting out with just \$2000 or \$3000 in the bank. To generate income, members were asked to pay \$3 for each of their twice-weekly visits. Bruce said, 'While it might not have seemed like much, those little \$3 visits did add up over time.' However, there was still a road to travel to reach the \$150 000 they needed to deliver their amazing, new, purpose-built facility. To this end, the group - led by Bruce - set out sourcing funding from about 20 community groups and

supporters. They held sausage sizzles every month for three years, regardless of the weather. I am told it was quite often in the pouring rain, but they would not be deterred. In the end, they did it. They sourced enough funds to develop the Riverside Men's Shed and keep the doors open for those who come to rely on it.

Countless fundraisers, combined with in-kind support and grants from all levels of government has led to the dream of a fully functional shed, where men can get together for a cuppa and a chat, while creating anything from wooden chopping boards to toy cars. This is a group that cares deeply for the men in their area. Their new facility will be a wonderful space to connect, to share with one another and to look after both physical and mental wellbeing.

I pay tribute, not only to Bruce, but to those who worked alongside him and those who were there from the very beginning. It was the vision of founding president, Phil Boughton, who first led to the shed being established along with the hard work of shed coordinator, John Wagemaker, also a founding member. These men have worked alongside Michael Le Rossignol, Peter Cuthbertson and Brian Connelly to strengthen the bonds at Riverside. Thanks must also go to their families and their partners who have supported them in their endeavours. It is important to acknowledge all those who have supported this wonderful project, because without their support it simply would not have been possible. That support includes the West Tamar Council, which worked to help the group secure the land on which the shed could be built.

The Riverside Men's Shed joins the more than 1000 sheds across Australia. A men's shed plays an important role in the prevention of social isolation and the promotion of positive health and wellbeing amongst members. Some members may go to the shed for mateship, support and contact with others. Some will go to undertake woodworking projects for themselves, or for the shed, or for the community. For some the greatest power can be in simply having a place to go.

Mr President, I am so proud of this wonderful group of men and their supporters from my electorate, and I look forward to watching the Riverside Men's Shed continue to grow and to thrive.

MOTION

Birmingham Commonwealth Games - Tribute to Tasmanian Athletes

[11.29 a.m.]

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

That the Legislative Council -

- (1) Acknowledges the Tasmanian athletes who represented Australia at the Birmingham Commonwealth Games;
- (2) pays tribute to their dedication and hard work in realising their Commonwealth dream;

- (3) congratulates them all on a successful Commonwealth Games campaign with twelve medals being won by Tasmanian athletes across a range of sports, including nine gold; and
- (4) recognises them as inspirational role models for our young Tasmanian athletes.

Mr President, we were spoilt with good fortune last year when we were able to witness Tasmania's fine performance at the Tokyo Olympics. The bar was set very high and no doubt the athletes felt the pressure, but yet again, our athletes did us proud. They followed on from what was the most successful Olympics ever for Tasmanian athletes and we now have seen a huge achievement and an incredible result at the Commonwealth Games. Tasmanian athletes achieved an unprecedented 12 medals, including nine gold medals and if we competed as our own country, we would have been placed eighth on the ladder - ahead of Wales with six times our population. A truly gargantuan effort in the history of sport in our state.

It was these games and the result that has cemented Tasmanian athletes into the annals of successful Australian and Commonwealth sports heroes. They are Jacob Despard, Jack Hale, Georgia Baker, Sam Fox, Josh Duffy. Stewart McSweyn was named but unfortunately he was ill so had to withdraw.

Ms Forrest - Very sad.

Mrs HISCUTT - Very sad. Emily Meaney, Josh Beltz, Eddie Ockenden, Rebecca Van Asch, Ariarne Titmus, Jacob Templeton, Jacob Birtwhistle, Erica Burleigh and Hayden Armstrong. These are the names of our champions and heroes. These are our athletes that our children can now look up to and aspire to emulate and follow in the years to come.

Mr President, the games began with a great honour, with Tasmanian Kookaburra, Eddie Ockenden, being the flag-bearer for the Australian team - the first time a Tasmanian has held this position for a major games. A portent of good things to come, given the Kookaburra's gold-winning achievement and Ockenden's fourth.

It is said that nothing worthwhile is ever given, it is earned. That could not be truer than for these athletes. Ultimately, being on the world stage is only earned through hard work, sacrifice and determination - often displayed throughout a lifetime of training. The results of these games reflect the dedication and hard work of our athletes and we all reflect on the incredible picture of them achieving their dreams.

I will take the time today to reflect on the power these athletes hold, as role models for young Tasmanians. We know that one of the challenges is getting kids active and involved in sport. It is so important for the benefits that an active lifestyle provides, and so it is wonderful to see the inspirational role models that our Commonwealth athletes provide.

It is one thing to be a Kookaburra; it is another thing to be an Ockenden. How often do we hear that a child wants to grow up to be a Hale or a Thorpe or a Titmus? I pay tribute and recognise the important role that athletes play as role models for our kids.

The Commonwealth Games are known as the 'friendly games' and they are a competition between nations from the Commonwealth. It is a unique opportunity for our athletes to

compete on the global stage and, other than the two cancelled during the war, they have been occurring in one form or another since 1930. They are an important opportunity for our athletes to compete and aim towards, and fill out the sporting calendar between the Olympics and international championships. Held in Birmingham, these games were the first games held post-COVID-19 and provided, yet again, a sense of returning to normality. Luckily for us, the 2022 Games actually took place in 2022, and did not require a delay like the Tokyo Olympics. Nevertheless, I am sure that the athletes' stress was only added to in the knowledge that they could be forced to miss out due to an insidious virus.

Mr President, Australia has been fortunate enough to hold the Games five times. The last Commonwealth Games was held in 2018 and it was held in the Gold Coast, Australia. We are pleased to be holding the next Commonwealth Games in regional Victoria. This will be the sixth time Australia has held the Commonwealth Games and the first time that it will be held in a decentralised way. Though not held in Tasmania, as a regional state it is pleasing to see a Games held across regions and not just put into major cities.

Mr President, I look forward to one day Tasmania holding a major sporting event. I note the motion.

[11.34 a.m.]

Mr WILLIE (Elwick) - Mr President, I would not miss an opportunity to speak about sport and I rise to congratulate the athletes. I am not sure if the Leader read all of their names out. I will not do it again but well led by Eddie Ockenden, who I believe grew up in my electorate and has been a fine role model for a generation of hockey players and athletes. We are all inspired by athletes and their determination and resilience. It is often said athletes who compete at that level are not born, it is through hard work that they get to that level.

Unlike the motion about the Olympics last year or the year before, the great thing about the Commonwealth Games is it is integrated with the Paralympics, parasports. There are 42 events, eight sports and what a great spectacle to have that elite level of sport shared on our TV screens. It is inclusive, it celebrates diversity and tonight we are going to launch the Parliamentary Friends of the Olympic and Paralympic Movements in Tasmania. Athletics and swimming, the Olympic Movement and the Commonwealth Games have something for everyone. All shapes and sizes, from all backgrounds, can participate in a sport in these games.

The Leader mentioned that with the Victorian Commonwealth Games in 2026 and the Olympics in 2032, for us, the opportunity is to realise the potential of Tasmanians, to have support from the Parliament, so that opportunity to participate and maybe realise their dreams, if they have talent, is extended to all children in our schools.

The athletes who will be competing - particularly in Brisbane in 2032 - are in primary school now. The challenge for our government and the parliament is to make sure all children are getting access to sport. They need good infrastructure that goes with that; they need good leadership; they need the volunteers who dedicate their time, but we need to extend that opportunity to all children in Tasmania because it is about realising our human potential. It is a social justice issue and the challenge for us as we launch the Parliamentary Friends of the Olympic and Paralympic Movements in Tasmania is to make sure we build a legacy.

These are not just the games for Victoria and Brisbane; they are Australian and they are on our doorstep. We know the power of them. They captivate a nation. I remember when the

Sydney Olympic Games took place in 2000. I was only a young man but it completely captivated the nation. The impact of the Olympics and particularly, the Commonwealth Games too - given that it is integrated and inclusive - is huge.

If we do it right and we support our athletes we can get a generation of young people moving and active and continue lifelong habits. It is not just about sport; it is about preventative health too. I will talk a little bit about this tonight, with the launch of the Parliamentary Friends of the Olympic and Paralympic Movements in Tasmania. I wanted to rise to congratulate our athletes at the Commonwealth Games. I particularly think it is good because it is inclusive, that we have the parasports as part of the event. It would be great to see the Olympics go down that path and we have a lot of Tasmanian athletes we can be proud of.

[11.38 a.m.]

Ms ARMITAGE (Launceston) - Mr President, I thank the Leader for bringing on this motion and join with other members here in congratulating the Tasmanians who represented Australia in the 2022 Birmingham Commonwealth Games, which were integrated and inclusive.

We are all aware of how seriously Australians take their sport and here in Tasmania we are very keen to cheer on the people who come from our communities or who we might even personally know. The sense of pride that comes with representing one's country is unique and for this Commonwealth Games, 15 Tasmanians had that experience. I will read their names out again because I actually think that it is important to hear them and give them some recognition: Jacob Despard, Jack Hale and Stewart McSweyn for athletics; Georgia Baker for track and road cycling; Josh Duffy for track cycling; Sam Fox for mountain bike and road cycling; Emily Meaney for diving; Josh Beltz and Eddie Ockenden for hockey; Rebecca Van Asch for lawn bowls, and I remember Rebecca at the Invermay Bowls Club. Her mum and grandma were both there. Rebecca as a young child used to go along and bowl. It shows how going along with your family to bowls - I know how incredibly proud her mum, grandma and family were. Every time you would go to the Invermay Bowls Club, there was young Rebecca practising, and here she is, fabulous she actually made the Commonwealth Games. She did very well as well. Ariarne Titmus - it is great we still claim Ariarne as our own. She was here and I am sure many in this house know Steve and Robin very well. Actually, I had the privilege of selling their house at Riverside when I was in real estate and there was a swimming pool at that house you might understand.

Mr Willie - Did they not name it after her in Launceston?

Ms ARMITAGE - In Launceston we did, but the house I sold did have a swimming pool, and they bought another one with a bigger pool. Young Ariarne is our own, even though she may not currently live here.

Jacob Templeton for para-swimming; Jake Birtwhistle for triathlon; Erica Burleigh for para-triathlon; and Hayden Armstrong for para-triathlon guided. It is wonderful to see the Paras and they are all competing together. It is absolutely fabulous to watch them.

Collectively, these athletes contributed 13 medals to Australia's winning tally of 178 medals - 67 gold, 57 silver, and 54 bronze. Tasmania won 10 of those gold medals, very much emphasising the dedication and extraordinary talent of those who represented our country and our state. For Tasmanians and especially our young Tasmanians, seeing the incredible

performance of our Commonwealth Games athletes is inspirational. Participation in the Commonwealth Games shows it does not matter where you come from, but it is how hard you work and how dedicated you are to your sport that can take you to these elite levels of competition.

I emphasise my utmost praise to the Tasmanians whose hard work and skill got them to the elite levels of sport they play and, whether they came home with a medal or not, we want them to know we are proud of each and every one of them. I am sure that everyone here that has had a child they have taken to sport, whether it be to rowing, or whatever - how much time, and effort that goes in and the training. I was fortunate, I had my niece Donna, who is actually in Hobart at the moment, who went to the Olympics. I know how much time and effort she put in, week in, week out, day and night, and the parents. Getting them to training. It is a never-ending battle, whether you win a medal or not. To actually get there to that elite level of sport is absolutely fantastic. I also pay tribute to the coaches, teams, families, friends, and supporters of all our athletes, without whom it would be impossible for our athletes to reach the heights they do.

Australia once again came through a Commonwealth Games event with strength and discipline. I am sure that in another four years, at the Victorian Commonwealth Games, we will see even more Tasmanians representing the best our country has to offer and inspiring the generations that are to come.

[11.43 a.m.]

Mr VALENTINE (Hobart) - Mr President, I thank the Leader for bringing the motion on this morning. After having been involved in the fundraising side of things for many years, you continually see people who provide such inspiration. The amount of effort people go to to actually get themselves to an Olympic Games or a Commonwealth Games is nothing short of amazing. I know a number of athletes through that journey. They are truly inspirational.

As the member for Elwick pointed out, on this particular occasion, there was that integration of Paralympics. When you watch some of the Paralympians, seeing them perform and how they are so dedicated to being there and putting in their effort, it is amazing. You think about their every day. We get up, we get dressed, have a shower, off to work. People like that cannot always easily do that. When you have a disability you have to cope with day after day, obviously, you get used to doing it. However, the effort that is involved to simply live your life on a daily basis is that much more - it helps you to appreciate how as individuals we ought to appreciate being able-bodied, that we have our full limbs and all those sorts of things to be able to function on a daily basis.

To see them out there performing is inspirational, I cannot overstate it. I thank them for taking the time, having that grit and determination to want to be there so that we can see them perform on behalf of our nation and on behalf of our state. It is something that I take my hat off to, that grit and determination that they have as Paralympians.

When you look at some of the performances, I was impressed with Jack Hale. You noticed in that relay where his teammate fell onto the track. Can you imagine doing all the training, day after day, out there trying to improve your times, trying to get to a circumstance where you can compete and then compete successfully, only to get to a point in a relay where you do not grab the baton? It must have been soul-destroying for that individual, but to have your teammate come up, put their hand on your shoulder, and say 'it happens and you'll get

through this', how wonderful is that? To have that sort of support from a teammate who would have been wanting to perform well and wanting to be able to proudly display to his state that he is up there doing his best. To have that taken away in a split second, I found that an emotional experience, and I thank Jack in particular for that wonderful gesture to his teammate.

I congratulate all the athletes who participated in this Commonwealth Games, whether they were in the Para section or able-bodied section, it takes grit and determination, and we are proud of you. We are proud of every one of those athletes. I look forward to touching base with the event tonight and to make sure that those athletes appreciate that this state, and indeed this country, are behind them. Well done. Well done on bringing home the medals. If you did not bring home a medal, well done on being there. Others do not get medals without you being there, and it is so good to see that grit and determination. I thank them.

[11.48 a.m.]

Ms WEBB (Nelson) - Mr President, I rise to speak briefly in support of the Leader's motion, and I thank her for bringing it. It is no secret that for years Tasmanians have truly punched above their weight when it comes to sporting success, both on the domestic and international stages. What we saw from the Tasmanians representing Australia at this year's Commonwealth Games was certainly no different.

The 15 Tasmanians who represented Australia truly went above and beyond even our already high expectations on the world stage at the Commonwealth Games in Birmingham. The dedication and hard work of these athletes is commendable. While sitting at home we see a short, sometimes even a few seconds performance, and what we do not see is the lifetime of preparation behind these athletes leading to these moments, and their families, friends, coaches and team members who are there as part of that journey.

I wholeheartedly congratulate all these athletes for their incredible work to be selected to represent our country, and their incredible showing at this year's games. Collectively, as others have noted, Tasmanian athletes brought home 13 medals, with 10 of them being gold. I do not know if there are any secessionists amongst us here, but the fact that had Tasmania been counted as its own country, the result would have been good for an eighth overall on the medal table. That is impressive and maybe gives us some pause for thought on that front.

Mr Valentine - That is an interesting one.

Ms WEBB - Truly an incredible result. Notably, we also saw our first ever Tasmanian flag-bearer in Eddie Ockenden who also added a gold medal to the tally when he won his fourth Commonwealth gold in the men's field hockey final. It was an absolutely admirable performance and as others have noted, such a good role model for young Tasmanian sportspeople and more broadly.

These athletes play a crucial role in inspiring the next generation of Tasmanian athletes to achieve greatness but also to participate and enjoy sport and the joy that it holds. For this I thank them, and I wish them all the best moving forward with their sporting careers and other aspects in their life. I thank the Leader for raising the matter for discussion and the motion here today. I support the motion.

[11.51 a.m.]

Mrs HISCUTT (Montgomery - Leader of the Government in the Legislative Council) - Mr President, I thank all members for their comments. A very worthy comment that the member for Hobart made about Jack Hale. That was good to hear. Well done to all the Tasmanian athletes.

Motion agreed to.

MOTION

Public Accounts Committees - 160 Years in Tasmania

[11.52 a.m.]

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

That the Council -

- (1) Notes the 160-year history of Public Accounts Committees in Tasmania; and
- (2) recognises the key role of Public Accounts Committees in public sector accountability, ensuring transparency in the scrutiny of government expenditure, service delivery and performance.

I wish to speak about an important part of Tasmanian parliamentary history and reiterate the importance of the ongoing work of our Tasmanian Joint Standing Committee of Public Accounts.

I particularly take this opportunity to share with you an important event worthy of celebration in this place and the Tasmanian Parliament in general. I seek your indulgence to go back to the year of 1862. In 1862 - a full 100 years before I was born - in that year, explorer, John McDougall Stuart successfully returns from crossing the Australian continent from north to south, on his third attempt. Our future Australian prime ministers, Andrew Fisher and Billy Hughes are born in the UK. Taxpaying women of legal majority - unmarried women, divorced women and widows - are granted the right to vote in municipal elections making Sweden the first country in the world to grant women the right to vote. The American Civil War continues to rage in North America. The age of sail makes way for the age of steam and the Tasmanian Colonial Treasurer cannot account for whether the public coffers were short £25 000, about \$2.9 million in today's dollars, or at four pence a quart of milk, enough milk spilt to have kept the entire 1862 population of 81 492 satisfied for over a month. There are some important statistics there for members.

Before I highlight this seminal event, I note that William Gladstone, Chancellor of the Exchequer, moved for the appointment of a Select Committee on Public Accounts to be established in the UK House of Commons on 8 April 1861. It was not until 3 April 1862 that the motion by Gladstone on 31 March 1862 was resolved to be a Standing Order of the House. This read:

That there shall be a Standing Committee, to be designated 'The Committee of Public Accounts' for the Examination of the Accounts showing the appropriation of the sums granted by Parliament to meet the Public Expenditure, to consist of nine Members, who shall be nominated at the commencement of every Session, and of whom five shall be a quorum.

According to the literature, authors Kate Jones and Kerry Jacobs asserted:

It has generally been assumed that the first Australian public accounts committee was that established in the colony of Victoria in 1895. However, recent research suggests that a six-member public accounts committee was established in the Tasmanian parliament as early as 1862 and continued to operate throughout the nineteenth century and beyond.

Based on recent research conducted by the committee secretary - and I thank him for his great efforts in preparing this for me - it would not appear this is quite the case. The records show that only four months on from the commencement of the permanent UK Public Accounts Committee, on 28 August 1862, on the motion of Mr John Balfe, the MHA member for Franklin, a House of Assembly select committee was appointed to inquire into the system of keeping and auditing public accounts with the following members: Mr John Perkins MHA, member for Kingborough; Mr Charles Henty MHA, member for George Town; Mr Frederick Innes, Colonial Treasurer; Mr William Sharland MHA, member for New Norfolk; Mr John Crookes MHA, member for Launceston; and Mr John Balfe MHA, member for Franklin. All male, I might add; probably because there were no women here anyway.

Mr President, the *Mercury* reported on the occasion that it was not until a new clerk from the Post Office had gone to work, presumably for Treasury, that the amount of the £25 000 could not be accounted for. Whether the amount was lost or a mistake could not be ascertained. The Colonial Treasurer, through Mr Balfe, said:

... he was free to confess, he could not understand, for he really could not imagine how such a mistake could occur in the profit and loss account.

He had been informed on inquiry that the system of keeping public accounts at the present time was different from that pursued some seven or eight years ago and, judging only from the acknowledgement of the honourable Colonial Treasurer, the present system was open to great objection, for the fact of such error escaping the auditor was manifest.

He did not wish to impugn the officer or assert that the money had been lost, but what he could say was that he had paid great attention to the public accounts, and never yet been able to understand them.

He was not wholly unacquainted with accounts presented in an intelligible way, but in the details now laid before the public he defied any man of even more than ordinary arithmetical knowledge to obtain a clear understanding.

It sounds just as complicated back then as it probably is now for many people. Curiously, after all the fanfare, no meeting was ever held after the appointment of the said committee, and no similar select committee was established by the House again until 29 October 1875. This

was the first meeting where a PAC report was tabled, but not printed, on 2 November 1875. Such was the gravity of the report that it was simply recorded in the *Tasmanian Tribune* as:

Committee of Public Accounts.

The TREASURER brought up a report of the Public Accounts Committee, and moved it to be read. Agreed to.

In reality, whilst there was an appointment of a PAC select committees for the periods of 1876-1881, and 1887-1916, no PAC over that period met during their respective terms. I might add, things are different now.

There was a scurry of activity from the 1916-17 financial year to the 1920-21 financial year periods, with a total of 18 meetings but no reports were recorded and unusually, from 1921-22 to 1924-25 the House of Assembly select committees tabled 14 reports but there was no record of meetings. I am glad things are slightly different today.

Mr Willie - - No *Hansard* back then either.

Ms FORREST - Yes, probably all handwritten notes. The glory period between 1925-26 to 1930, saw a total of 16 meetings and 19 reports being tabled. The period from 1931-1943 only managed one meeting and a single report in 1934. The 1943-44 session had the select committee meet 11 times, but no reports; and from 1944-45 through to 1958 there were no meetings recorded. Not a terribly active committee.

It was nearly a century later, since the advent of the first appointed PAC in 1862, that the Tasmanian Parliament started to see consistent meetings, and eventually more reporting from the Public Accounts Committee. Of note, whilst there were no recorded meetings of the House of Assembly Public Accounts Committee over the period, the first woman member to be appointed was for the term 1955-59, Mrs - then Dame - Mabel Miller MHA, member for Franklin. The Legislative Council's short-lived Public Accounts and Finance Committee appointed Mrs Phyllis Benjamin MLC, member for Hobart, between 1968 and 1969.

On 17 December 1960, the House of Assembly Standing Orders Committee, in its report back to the House, recommended a new standing order No. 408A to be included in the Standing Orders. The standing order read: "

Public Accounts Committee

408A

- (1) A Committee of Public Accounts, to consist of seven Members, of whom four shall be a Quorum, shall be appointed when this Standing Order becomes effective and thereafter at the commencement of each Parliament, for the examination of the accounts showing the appropriation of the sum granted by Parliament to meet public expenditure, and of such other accounts laid before Parliament as the Committee may think fit.
- (2) The Committee shall have the power to send for Persons, Papers, and Records, to report from time to time, and to sit during any adjournment exceeding Fourteen days and any recess of Parliament.

This was the first time that a Tasmanian Public Accounts Committee became a standing committee in parliament. A similar amendment in the Legislative Council Standing Orders saw, for the first time, the establishment of a Select Committee of Public Accounts and Finance in that Chamber, under the authority of standing order No. 248A. This was agreed on 11 November 1965. That standing order stated:

At the beginning of every Session a Select Committee on Public Accounts and Finance shall be appointed.

The Parliamentary Committee of Public Accounts Report on the Review of the Public Accounts Act 1970 (No. 34 of 2017), conveniently contains an annotated extract from the Public Accounts Committee Bill 1970 second reading notes. In those second reading notes, it is noted that the bill was designed to give effect to the following resolution which was agreed to by both Houses of Parliament on Tuesday 4 November 1968. This motion was:

That the Legislative Council and House of Assembly jointly recognise the autonomous role and independence of each House to the other, but in the matter of appointment of Committees of Public Accounts, accept the proposition that interests generally would be better served if both Houses were represented on a single Committee of Public Accounts.

The Public Accounts Committee Act 1970 - the PAC act - finally commenced on 15 December 1970. The resultant Joint Standing Committee of Public Accounts has blossomed accordingly, albeit with ongoing, very gendered language, assuming all members and committee secretariat will be male. I still have not been able to fix that. It is time for some gender-neutralising language in this committee's act, and for other joint committees and the acts that they sit under.

Since 1971 the PAC has consistently tabled a rich and varied range of reports on the topical issues of the day, including but not limited to:

- Stores control: Hydro-Electric Commission and Education Department (No. 26) 20 July 1971;
- Tasmanian Public Hospitals: Outstanding Fees (No. 68) 28 October 1971;
- Travel by State Employees (No. 5) 9 March 1972;
- Rental Accommodation in Savings Bank of Tasmania: Delay in moving in (No. 54) 20 September 1979;
- Report on Purchase of Imported Wooden Benches for the Kingston Police Station (No. 92) 10 December 1986 - this is a really important one;
- Report on Prison Officers Absenteeism (No. 16) 1 April 1987;
- Report on Accrual Accounting in 1988 (No. 31) 25 August 1988;
- Independent Review of the Tasmanian Government Redundancy Program (No. 18) 20 August 1991;
- Cost of Fire Protection in Schools (No. 5) 24 April 1996;
- Inquiry into certain matters related to the Skills Development Fund: Intelligent Island Program (No. 7) 31 May 2001.

We start to see some recurring themes as we move toward our current time:

- Ambulance Services in Tasmania (No. 20) 4 December 2003;
- Inquiry into Television Advertisements by the Tasmanian Greens (No 20) 26 August 2008;

The former chair, the Honourable Ivan Dean's passion, I might add:

- Inquiry into the Efficiency and Effectiveness of the Fox Eradication Program in Tasmania (No 53) 24 December 2009;
- Review of Special Report No 72 of the Auditor-General into Public Sector Performance Information (No 13) 27 June 2013;
- Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (RSPCA) Inquiry (No 23) 14 November 2013.

That is a little of the history of various things that have been covered and I have picked out some of the interesting ones. However, more recently the committee has undertaken an increased number of follow-up inquiries of:

- Auditor-General's reports to assess the compliance and uptake of recommendations made in the Auditor-General's Performance Audits, and we have been noting a number of those in the Chamber here more recently;
- Follow-up reviews of public works as assessed and recommended by the Joint Standing Committee on Public Works;
- Another one we will be dealing with later today - inquiries of its own motion.

These inquiries include, but this is not an exhaustive list, since 2019 of follow-up reviews of the Auditor-General's reports:

- Fraud Control in Local Government, 18 October 2019;
- Quality of Metro Services, 26 June 2020;
- Motor Vehicle Fleet Management in Government Departments, 26 June 2020;
- Compliance with the Alcohol, Tobacco and Other Drugs Plan, 2008-2013, 26 June 2020;
- Provision of Social Housing, 26 June 2020;
- Compliance with Legislation, 26 June 2020;
- Event Funding, 8 November 2021;
- Student Attendance and Engagement Year 7-10, 19 November 2021; and
- Performance of Tasmania's Four Major Hospitals in The Delivery of Emergency Department Services, 23 February 2022, which takes us up to the current time.

Also the committee has undertaken follow-up work reviews of the public works recommended by the Joint Standing Committee on Public Works and these have included:

- Construction of the Dunalley Primary School;
- George Town Hub;
- Colebrook Main Road, Richmond - Heavy Vehicle Link Road;
- Midland Highway Works including Mangalore to Bagdad Stage 1; and Midland Highway, Kempton to Melton Mowbray Stage 1; and Perth to Breadalbane Duplication;

- Progress of the Sorell Emergency Services Hub and Major Redevelopment of Sorell School, which you will note is on the Notice Paper today for further debate.

Regarding the inquiries undertaken by its own motion of the Public Accounts Committee, or referral by another member of parliament, which is sometimes the way these own motions come to the committee, areas that have been considered include:

- Review into the Office of the Ombudsman and Health Complaints Commissioner, 27 March 2020;
- Review of Tasmanian Government Fiscal Sustainability Report 2016, 29 September 2020; and again, the Tasmanian Government Fiscal Sustainability Report 2021, 25 August 2021 - and that led to the Treasury, as it is a Treasury report, recognising in that first report that there were errors and they reissued the report in line with the errors that were identified during that initial inquiry.

We also have undertaken an inquiry into the Government's economic and health expenditure related to the COVID-19 pandemic and that was tabled in 13 August 2021. There is a current inquiry underway into Hydro Tasmania and the termination of the Basslink Services Agreement and there is another ongoing inquiry into the Tasmanian Government's Continuing Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic focused on the time since the last report was finalised and particularly, focused around the reopening of the Tasmanian border.

PAC has significant powers under the act, including the PAC may summon witnesses to appear before it and give evidence and to produce documents. A witness who is summoned to appear or who appears before the committee has the same protection and privileges as a witness in an action tried in a Supreme Court. Except where it considers there is good and sufficient reason to take evidence in private, all evidence shall be taken by the committee in public. When requested to do so by a witness, the committee will take in private any evidence that in the opinion of the committee relates to a secret or a confidential matter. Any person who discloses or publishes any evidence contrary to these provisions of this section is guilty of an offence that is liable to a fine not exceeding 100 penalty units, or \$17 300, or imprisonment for a term of up to 12 months, or to both such fine and imprisonment. The committee does take this responsibility very seriously, the preservation of confidential information.

This very important work is a vital aspect of public accountability of government and expenditure of public funds. The PAC also has a special relationship with the Auditor-General that is cooperative, open and frank and also respects and maintains the independence of both parties as complementary bodies to the parliament's oversight function. Many aspects of this relationship are described in the statement of understanding, which is published on the Public Accounts Committee website. If anyone is interested in knowing how that relationship works, it is worth having a look at that statement of understanding. It was originally brought in by the former Auditor-General Mike Blake and then our current Auditor-General Rod Whitehead reviewed that with the committee and updated it. This relationship is important as PAC relies on the work of the Auditor-General to assist the parliament in holding executive government to account. The Auditor-General also relies on the work of the committee to raise awareness and promote corrective action in response to audit findings. A key role of the Public Accounts Committee is to hold government to account for the audit findings and the recommendations the Auditor-General has made in his work.

I have been a member of PAC almost continuously since 2010, about 12 years of service to this important committee. I was privileged to be elected as the Chair in 2021. I acknowledge the commitment of previous Chairs I have worked with on the PAC, including the honourable Jim Wilkinson and the honourable Ivan Dean. As have previous Chairs, I have focused on working in a consensus-driven way in order to add to the strength and impact of the decisions of the committee and the impact of its reports. With respect to the crisis including the long outage of Basslink and low water storages and the Government's COVID-19 pandemic response, the Public Accounts Committee has an important role to play in overseeing governance, response and recovery to a crisis through the examination of government spending and administrative aspects underpinning the expenditure at such times.

With particularly complex matters, the committee has engaged expert advice to provide necessary support to the committee. This was particularly the case with our inquiry into the financial position of the energy entities around the time of the extended Basslink outage and the drought that saw a range of measures to be taken to ensure we did not need to have power brownouts or blackouts. As members in that particular case did not have deep knowledge of the area under investigation - we had not worked in the energy sector - we sought energy sector advice and engaged an expert in the field to assist us. A number of the members of the committee on this occasion undertook the Australian Energy Market Operator training package, which is a useful package to do if you are interested in how the energy market works. As confusing as it can appear from the outside, this better equipped us to understand the market and how it worked.

The Public Accounts Committee can hold the Government to account with respect to its report findings and recommendations through debate. It would be remiss of me not to mention the three special reports the PAC has tabled in the past five years. This goes to the heart of the matter I raised earlier about confidentiality. There were three special reports released by the committee in 2017 and one in 2020. One was the Failure to Comply with a Summons, March 2017; the second was the Unauthorised Disclosure of Committee Deliberations, March 2017; and the third, the Failure of a Minister to Agree to Publicly Release Documents, 20 November 2020. Those were all related to that inquiry on the energy entities.

In many respects, the committee got to a bit of a stand-off around those matters. There was a document provided to the committee that was redacted as it had been provided to an external party in a redacted form under an RTI. A battle began as to whether parliamentary committees have more rights than an average member of the public. We could not really break through, and there was a summons issued to the Treasurer to appear before the committee and produce an unredacted version of the document. Members who were here at the time will remember the Treasurer turned up for the meeting but he did not produce the document. He said he complied with the summons but not to the full extent. These matters led to these three reports as well as the Treasurer's and government's concern at the time that some matters had been allegedly leaked from the committee. The excuse was that, 'oh, we cannot trust the committee, so we are not going to give you anything'. That is why it is important that those confidentiality provisions are maintained vigorously.

These three special reports that were tabled in parliament relating to alleged leaks from the committee related to confidential information and committee deliberations. The other one, as I said, was the failure of the Treasurer to comply in full with the summons. Members who were in parliament at the time will recall these special reports. They related to matters raised in the PAC inquiry into the financial performance of the state-owned energy entities. The

government did claim the committee had leaked information related to the letter I referred to, that had been provided to the committee in a redacted form.

Even though we went through the process of releasing those three reports, there was no further action taken in the end. The committee reported, and the unredacted version of the letter was never provided to the committee.

That did lead to the decision that I took to put a motion on the Notice Paper here to establish a select committee inquiry into the production of documents to look at the issue more broadly. It had been a problem for other committees as well. It reached a crisis point in this particular instance. I commend that report to all members who may not have read it, particularly new members to the place, because it very clearly outlines what responsible government looks like, what powers the parliament has, what powers committees have, and it is a comprehensive report full of valuable information, particularly for new members.

Through these experiences, particularly the experience on the PAC at that time, it has provided us with a number of important learnings. From my perspective as the current Chair, but former member for 12 years, I will summarise these, as they are relevant to all the work we do in this place, not just on the Public Accounts Committee. It is important to ensure that relevant acts and parliamentary Standing Orders can provide clear guidance and requirements related to the management of confidential information; that all members are aware of the statutory and Standing Order provisions related to committee proceedings and confidentiality; and that all committee deliberations should remain confidential. All media communications should be dealt with according to Standing Orders and other agreed mechanisms, with a clear resolution if that is to be outside the Standing Orders' provisions. In matters under consideration by a committee, where matters are complex, engage expert advice to support the committee, if that is needed. The use of special and final committee reports to inform the parliament are important to the public, as well to the media, to highlight the work and the value of the work the Public Accounts Committees undertake.

As we have done quite frequently in recent sitting weeks, we list all Public Accounts Committee reports for debate in parliament, and this assists in two ways: it enhances public awareness of our work; it holds the government or government-owned businesses to account, and also often evokes a bit of media interest and engagement with members and the government. This is assisted by regularly informing the media of upcoming public hearings and the release of any reports.

As the Tasmanian Public Accounts Committee has been doing for some time now, we regularly review previous committee and Auditor-General reports to assess the progress and adoption of recommendations. That helps to focus the attention of the departments to whom the recommendations relate. We often see a flurry of activity when we send the first questionnaire to them. Without that follow-up, a lot of these Auditor-General's reports would sit on the shelf.

When a committee is not provided with documents or information without reasonable excuse, consider what coercive and punitive measures are available, and can be utilised if the requested documents are not produced. They are outlined in that Production of Documents report, all the various measures.

However, I digress slightly from the key focus of the motion, so back to celebrating 160 years of history of PACs in Tasmania, and the importance of PACs generally. You may ask, where to from here? I draw from the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association's material on the parliamentary mechanisms of public financial accountability, and I read:

Today, Public Accounts Committees and Auditors-General operate in a very different context in the public sector environment to that of 'Gladstonian' times. However, the founding principles on which the parliamentary mechanism of public financial accountability ... established over 150 years ago have not changed.

The founding principles of ex post oversight (oversight after the event) are that taxpayers rightly expect the Parliament should oversee and scrutinise the spending of monies collected from them in the form of taxes and the activities on which it is spent.

Parliament appoints a specialised audit committee - the Public Accounts Committee (or equivalent) - to assist it with its ex-post oversight of the budget.

Using the independent work of the Auditor-General (or similar), PACs review the audit reports and findings to hold to account those charged with the use of public funds; and 'looking back' seeks to identify appropriate steps to address any shortcomings or underlying problems.

While established PACs all function with varying degrees of success, the Committee as an institutional model is considered to be one of the most effective oversight mechanisms available to the legislature or parliament.

It is for these reasons that the PAC is regarded as a vital committee of Parliament and why legislatures in Commonwealth and non-Commonwealth countries have established PACs to oversee the spending of public funds.

On that note, as the current Chair of the PAC, I commend to you all the good scrutiny and oversight efforts of past and present members of the committee, in all its varied forms, even though historically they did not report many meetings or even table many reports over the last 160 years. I look forward to serving the same into the future.

Who knows what the next 40 years will entail when the committee meets our bicentenary in 2062. I will not be here then.

Mr PRESIDENT - You will be 100.

Ms FORREST - Yes, but I will not be here then. The predicted advent of the small nuclear reactor design perhaps, we may see that. Autonomous drones delivering parcels - we are likely to see that. Health tracking hearing aids, we are already seeing that, and the age of the brain computer interface, that is already happening in parts too. Apparently, there are no jet packs at this stage, but it would be helpful for travelling down the highway at the moment.

I thank all the current members of the PAC for their collective good governance and oversight efforts and their willingness to work in a consensus-driven way to achieve good outcomes on behalf of the Tasmanian community. The other two members in this place at the moment are the member for Nelson and the member for Elwick and I appreciate their contribution and work on the committee.

On behalf of the PAC, I also look forward to tabling well-considered and outcome-focused reports in parliament on any matter related to the management, administration or use of public sector finances or the accounts of any public authority or other organisation controlled by the state or in which the state has an interest. I particularly acknowledge the efforts of the current committee secretary, Simon Scott, in researching the committee's 160-year history. Hopefully, this narrative will be made public as part of the parliament's website review in the fullness of time. It is always good to record history.

I also note the secretary, in turn, acknowledges the assistance of other people in this place, the Parliamentary Library and Parliamentary Research Service, in their collective assistance in locating key documents and evidence from the records.

I welcome members' contributions to this motion, as we celebrate and recognise the long history and important work of the Public Accounts Committees over the last 160 years.

[12.23 p.m.]

Mr WILLIE (Elwick) - As a member of the committee I rise to support the Chair but will start by acknowledging the secretariat, Mr Simon Scott, who put a lot of work into this research. I have read the research and he brings an enthusiasm for the institution of parliament and the functions of parliament and what it is capable of to produce good outcomes. I respect that and appreciate his support as a member of the committee.

I also acknowledge the member for Murchison. Probably since the Public Accounts Committee Act was established in 1970, she is probably one of the longest continuously serving members since that time, along with the former member for Windermere. I have had a brief scan over the years and those two names appear to be predominant in service.

The committee is well served by this Chamber, too, in terms of stability. You can look at the make-up of the committee over the last five years and this Chamber has provided a lot of stability in terms of membership and knowledge.

Ms Webb - The last five months even.

Mr WILLIE - Yes, we have had regular changes from the other place - and that is not a reflection on the other place, just talking about this Chamber and the stability we have provided the committee. It is important if there is a vacancy, I would encourage your members to take that up. It is a great way to extend your knowledge about the administration of public sector finances and state-owned entities. We do a whole range of things, the performance of different departments and even things like local government. In my time, one of the first reports we looked at was local government and fraud control. There is a whole range of things you can learn by being a member of the committee. Also, as the member for Murchison has outlined, it provides a very important service to the Tasmanian community because we often, in this place, will pass appropriations and other financial bills, but we need to make sure we follow that up and the state is getting a good deal and good administration of those funds. This provides that

extra check and balance, as well as the various parliament forums here in the Chamber and other committees. The value of PACs is reflected across the Westminster system, because they are a very common feature across Westminster systems and other forms of parliament and governance.

Some of the roles we undertake, as the member for Murchison outlined, include the relationship with the Auditor-General - which is a good relationship. We look at financial audits, performance audits and have a good relationship where we share the work. The Auditor-General often looks into matters, makes recommendations to Government and he or she, depending on who it is, may follow up those to see if a government department, or a government-owned entity, has taken that on board and implemented the recommendations. We can do that too and share that work and it is always of value and a good process. It is a good process - think of recent times, where government departments have to explain their position in a public forum and justify why they have, or have not, implemented a recommendation and what they expect that to produce.

It is about good governance. It is a good process for government entities and government departments to participate in. It should not be something to be feared. We have Government members on the committee as well and I commend most institutions that interact with the committee. They often participate in good faith and turn up with a wealth of information ready to engage. That does not always happen.

There has been some great political theatre produced by the PAC over my time in parliament, as an observer, but at times also as a participant. The matters on which the PAC has found itself rubbing up against government at times are at the heart of good governance, whether it is responsible government, whether it is the power of the upper House. These are all matters that deserve further interrogation and discussion and debate. That happened, in my time on the committee, with the inquiry into COVID-19 and there was rigorous debate within the committee and then rigorous debate in the public forum for some of those principles.

Obviously, there was the very well-publicised inquiry into the Tamar Valley Power Station - well, it was into the Basslink outage and energy security but it did narrow down to that particular asset of the state and what may, or may not, have occurred in terms of -

Ms Forrest - Whether it was for sale or not.

Mr WILLIE - Yes, in terms of ministers' actions and again, whilst it provided great political theatre, it went to some of those hearts of good governance, responsible government, the power of the upper House to produce documents. Even in my time on the committee we have had public servants appear in a public forum and say, 'You cannot access that because it was refused under RTI.' I would disagree with that and one day I may be on that side of the table.

Ms Forrest - We will be having a go at you too, if you try that game.

Mr WILLIE - I would welcome that because I believe in Westminster parliaments and the power to do good. As members of parliament we are students of that and we should uphold the institution. It has its flaws. I cannot remember the quote from Winston Churchill, but it was something like it was a very flawed system and is better than all the rest. We are fortunate to live in a society that is government by a democracy, a Westminster parliament and if I am

fortunate to be on the other side of the table, I would endeavour to uphold those principles and promote good governance.

The member also mentioned the production of documents committee which explored some of these things. I participated in that too and found it very worthwhile and we were fortunate to go to Victoria and New South Wales on that committee. There were some landmark court cases, Egan and Chadwick, and we were very fortunate to meet Mr Michael Egan who was a member of the upper House for a long period of time.

Ms Forrest - There were varying views around that.

Mr WILLIE - He opened by saying the upper House should be abolished, even though he served in it for about 20 years.

Mr PRESIDENT - It says a lot about him, really.

Ms Forrest - If you are interested, you should read his evidence; it is quite hilarious.

Mr WILLIE - Those landmark court decisions were all about responsible government, the power of the upper House to request documents and have those produced. New South Wales and Victoria have put in place more procedures than in our parliament. It was disappointing when in 2020 we tabled a document in this parliament to be discussed, but perhaps we did not progress in a way we could have. We could have maybe looked at amending the Standing Orders for any future occurrence where any committee of this House or a joint House committee was having trouble in the production of documents to facilitate their work. That may be something we look at in the future as a House, but that was certainly an interesting committee.

In terms of recent times, looking at public works reports is an important function of the Public Accounts Committee, who once they approve a project do not have the power to recall it and to further scrutinise the spending. That is an important function of the Public Accounts Committee to look at some of these things. In recent times, the Government has had a good story to tell with some of these projects, where they have been on budget and on time. That is an opportunity for them to explain that - not always, the Sorell High School one that we will debate was not necessarily on time. Again, it is an opportunity to explain what the hold-up and what the impacts may have been, and it provides that good check and balance on public spending. The Public Works Committee serves a very important role in scrutinising future spending, but then it is important we follow that up too.

I note the two Chairs in my time, the former member for Windermere, who was a long-serving member of the committee, very passionate about the Public Accounts and its role in the parliament and I have been fortunate to serve with him. Also, the member for Murchison who is also equally very passionate about the Public Accounts and the role it serves in the parliament and the Tasmanian people. I noticed the rigor the member for Murchison brings to the committee and welcome that. I have been enjoying my time serving the Tasmanian people and I look to continue doing so. I rose briefly to support the member and I look forward to continuing our work on the Public Accounts.

Also, before I finish, recognising 160 years. It is remarkable this parliament was so proactive, even though it did not meet for a long time.

Ms Forrest - Well, we could not find £25 000.

Mr WILLIE - It had its head in the space that this was an important thing and it was almost futuristic of that committee. I note that.

Mr PRESIDENT - While the member wipes the lectern down and before I give the member for Nelson the call, the quote from Churchill was, 'democracy is the worst form of government, except for all the others that have been tried.'

Mr WILLIE - Yes. Are we not lucky to suffer that?

[12.35 p.m.]

Ms WEBB (Nelson) - Mr President, I rise to speak in support of the member for Murchison's motion, as Chair of the PAC, celebrating 160 years of the committee in this state. I will follow on and support the contributions made by the member for Murchison and the member for Elwick, as two more experienced members of PAC than I am. I am relatively new, just on a year or so. It is a new area of learning for me in my time in the parliament. I am very appreciative of the experience and the leadership by more experienced members of the committee, particularly through the Chair. I am enjoying the challenge of coming to understand the different aspects of scrutiny and work that is done by PAC, and how that both interacts with other mechanisms of scrutiny and how it adds value to our excellent parliamentary system.

I also acknowledge and thank the secretariat of PAC, particularly Simon Scott. The work that has been put in here to assist us with this history and to understand the trailblazing nature of Tasmania in this respect has been fascinating to read and engage with, and I appreciate that we are able to document it and celebrate it here. I like the idea of our parliament being a trailblazer in good governance, and in a functional and exceptional parliamentary system that delivers the best quality parliamentary democracy for the community.

We are very fortunate in this state, and across Australia, to be governed in a Westminster tradition with a parliamentary democracy. Our parliament does not simply exist to serve as an extension of the government of the day, the executive government. It has many essential mechanisms to provide oversight and accountability to the people who we represent, the citizens of Tasmania - the people who elected us and put us here to do so.

Parliamentary committees are particularly important in delivering that function. Each committee, whether it is sessional or select or standing, plays an important role in that oversight and scrutiny, and ensuring the government of the day is reaching the highest standards of good governance, or at least being held to account to do so. In her contribution, the member for Murchison detailed many aspects of that long history of the Public Accounts Committee in our parliament, from the first time in 1862, all the way through to our work contributing to our post- or still in-COVID-19 times.

It is always interesting to hear our PAC described as 'all-powerful', and there is some truth to that. It sounds a little sensationalist when you say it, but as far as transparency in democracy is concerned, it is not a bad thing to have some strong mechanisms available to us.

Like the member for Elwick, I find being a member of PAC to be an incredible opportunity for learning and growth. A broad number of topics and matters come through in the scrutiny and the reports that we do, in the things that we examine, and that is quite

fascinating and challenging in its scope. I was interested to encounter the relationship between the PAC and the Auditor-General, and how those two statutory entities work in a coordinated and quite functional and productive way to deliver scrutiny and to have those checks and balances and return reviews in place.

It is very interesting to hear about some of the more controversial things that have come to pass in relation to PAC over time. I have not yet had the opportunity to be involved in any of those. Who knows what may occur? I was also a member of the Production of Documents inquiry, quite early on in my time in this place, and I found that to be extremely informative. Should controversy arise in the area of production of documents, I am well equipped as a relatively new member to bring to bear some of the knowledge that we -

Ms Forrest - Bring out a report and slam it on the table.

Ms WEBB - Indeed. We will be able to bring that to bear in resolving it very productively, I am sure. I will leave it at that, Mr President. A strong, functional PAC is an essential part of our parliamentary democracy. We have a strong tradition of it in our state. The committee works well and is under exceptional leadership, through the member for Murchison. I am enjoying being a part of it and continuing to learn much from my time on it. We have excellent support through secretariats and through the other parliamentary support services that help us do that job well. I thank the member for Murchison for bringing the motion to recognise and celebrate the history of this committee.

I support the motion.

[12.41 p.m.]

Ms PALMER (Rosevears - Deputy Leader of the Government in the Legislative Council) - Mr President, I thank the member for Murchison for the opportunity to speak on this notice of motion on behalf of the Government. The Government will be supporting the member's motion. I thank all those who have been involved in the Public Accounts Committees in Tasmania, both currently and historically, during its long 160 year history.

Modern public accounts committees can be traced back to the Standing Committee of Public Accounts in the United Kingdom, set up in 1862. In the United Kingdom, scrutiny of executive spending had been a core function of parliament since the seventeenth century. However, in the wake of several failures of financial accountability, Sir Francis Baring had agitated strenuously for more formal and rigorous oversight and William Gladstone introduced the committee. Following this, many jurisdictions adopted the model, although with varying emphasis. Terms of reference differed greatly in their breadth and the relationship to parliament differed in jurisdictions. Common themes were the committee's relationship with the Auditor-General and the convention that PACs examined the efficiency and effectiveness in the implementation of a policy, rather than focusing on the desirability of a policy.

In Tasmania, the Public Accounts Committee was established in 1970 with the passage of the Public Accounts Committee Act 1970. This formalised the committee as a joint standing committee comprised of six members. Prior to this, there was a Select Committee on Public Accounts and Finance in the Legislative Council, established under standing order 248A and a Committee of Public Accounts in the House of Assembly, under standing order 408A. The committees, as they operated under Standing Orders prior to enactment, can be traced back to the 1880s. Prior to the 1880s there was a Royal Commission into Public Accounts in southern Tasmania and northern Tasmania in 1863. There were eight people appointed to inquire into

the southern district, five of whom were members of the Tasmanian Parliament. The northern district had five people appointed to the commission, all of whom were from parliament. These reports were a reaction to the state of Tasmanian finances and did not result in an ongoing committee being established.

Moving forward over the decades, the PAC has had the opportunity to scrutinise a number of key issues throughout Tasmania, including, but not limited to, the operations of Housing Tasmania; fuel distribution on King Island; the Intelligent Island program following the sale of the second tranche of Telstra shares, with the committee looking into the allocation and distribution of funds; procurement in government departments; the Hobart International Airport, specifically in relation to ownership arrangements; the acquisition and purchase of the fibre-optic cable; the Community Support Levy; an inquiry into the RSPCA; an inquiry into efficiency and effectiveness of fox eradication - we all giggle, do we not, every time.

Ms Forrest - We do.

Ms PALMER - An inquiry into administration of Crown lands, shack sites; inquiry into the financial position and performance of government-owned energy entities; inquiry into certain matters related to the sale of the Trust Bank; and the disaggregation of the Hydro-Electric Corporation and other related matters.

In recent times, there has been no greater example of transparency in the scrutiny of government expenditure, service delivery and performance than through the committee's role in the oversight of the Tasmanian Government's response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The initial hearing of the inquiry into the Government's economic response to the COVID-19 pandemic was followed by a second inquiry into the Tasmanian Government's continuing response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The Tasmanian Government has welcomed the opportunity to provide information to the Public Accounts Committee. The pandemic has had an unprecedented impact not only on Tasmania, but nationally and internationally, and has had both an economic and social impact.

Tasmania has responded quickly and the response from all government departments should be commended. Evidence provided during the committee process has demonstrated clearly how departmental personnel at all levels responded promptly and collaboratively to the challenges faced. Throughout the pandemic, the Government has adjusted restrictions and support mechanisms to reflect changing Public Health advice.

As we transition to living with COVID-19, the Tasmanian Government has continued to balance the interests of Public Health advice with the social and economic needs of the Tasmanian community. The Government has supported a range of initiatives and measures that have ensured that Tasmania has reached very high vaccination rates and outperformed many other states in economic growth. Given the challenges faced by our state, such as our dispersed population, including many rural and remote communities, and an ageing population, the work performed by the Government and supported by Tasmanians has ensured that we continue to manage this transition effectively.

The Government welcomed the Public Accounts Committee's initial findings, which found that the overall response to the COVID-19 pandemic was timely and effective in controlling and preventing the spread of disease and supporting Tasmanians through both social and economic packages.

The pandemic also provided an opportunity for all members of parliament to work together to effectively respond to the rapidly changing environment for the benefit of Tasmanians. I have no doubt that the Public Accounts Committee will continue to play a key role as an integral mechanism of parliament in holding the government of the day accountable for its decision-making.

I note the motion.

[12.47 p.m.]

Ms FORREST (Murchison) - It is always good to celebrate a birthday. I thank members for their contributions and the kind words from the other members of the committee. It has been a committee that has worked well together. We have done a lot of work over the most recent few years, particularly the number of reports we have tabled has stepped up, but also some of the complexity regarding some of the matters we have dealt with has been quite large in terms of getting all the information together.

I appreciate the support of the secretariat and our other parliamentary officers who assist with that, and the Parliamentary Research Service and the Library who always are responsive to our needs in getting information, particularly with the COVID-19 inquiry into the time lines and keeping those up-to-date with such a rapidly moving feast.

To pick up on a couple of points from other members. I note that around the world and around Australia there are different formats for the public accounts committees. Some of them have always had government members as the Chair; some of them have always had opposition members; sometimes that has changed, the Chairs. Tasmania has been relatively unique in that, for certainly my time in the parliament, always having an Independent member who is the Chair.

I know New South Wales currently has an Independent member as the Chair, and has been for a number of years. That gives the committee a greater capacity to try to cut through the politics, perhaps, and try to work toward consensus reporting, which is always the better and preferred outcome.

There are other organisations, regional networks of public accounts committees, which meet regularly and less so during COVID-19 obviously, but before and since we have actually had restrictions lifted, they have met. Members may recall recently I travelled with the secretary to New Zealand to attend the ACPAC, which is the Australasian Council of Public Accounts Committees conference. That is usually a biennial event and it was virtual and in-person this year. It was great to be back at those events, where we can share ideas and understand what happens in other jurisdictions. It is a great opportunity to see what other committees are doing.

Then there is the CAPAC, which the Commonwealth version of that, and the Tasmanian Parliament is also a member of that. After a quick text during the ACPAC annual general meeting to the Clerks, I did ask if we can host the ACPAC conference in 2026 in Tasmania. We will be hosting the ACPAC conference here in Tasmania. The next one is Western Australia, they do the mid-term meeting next year and then the conference the following year, and then Tasmania will host the mid-term meeting and then the conference the following year. I hope I am still here to participate in that, but that remains to be seen next year, what the people of Murchison think.

They are important organisations, and it is interesting to hear from all the other jurisdictions, many other nations, as to how they operate, the benefits of government members as Chairs or Independent members as Chairs. Not all of them have that opportunity, they do not all have Independent members on their committees. It is an important part of also assisting other perhaps emerging committees that are only newly established, and also new members to those committees, and perhaps helping them to see how we do things here and what we can learn from them as well as what they can learn from us.

I also acknowledge - particularly during the COVID-19 inquiry - the willingness of the Government to participate in that inquiry. We know that we had to wait at times for ministers and departmental staff to be available. When you are dealing with a crisis, as we were, it was not always possible to have departmental officers in front of the committee - particularly health officers - when we wanted.

With a little bit of encouragement, the Government has been more willing to provide documents to the committee. We almost had a little stand-off in the COVID-19 inquiry, but we pushed through and the documents that were requested were provided to the committee in confidence, and that is as it should be. Whilst there was resistance initially, the committee did prevail, and there has been no leak from the committee related to those documents, and I hope there never would be, in relation to information received that way.

I note that this Government has been very cooperative, much more cooperative in that than in more recent times. I thank members for their contribution, and I look forward to continuing to work with the PAC. It is an important committee and, as the member for Nelson mentioned, it is a great learning opportunity. I do not think anyone in this place actually comes from a finance background, so it does take a while to get your head around the public finances, which for some are just as complicated now as they were 160 years ago. It is important to help us understand that to improve our role in scrutiny of the budget and government expenditure and holding the government to account.

Thanks to members for their support of the motion. I appreciate it.

Motion agreed to.

MOTION

Report of the Parliamentary Standing Committee of Public Accounts Review of Selected Public Works Committee Reports - Consideration and Noting

[12.53 p.m.]

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

That the report of the Parliamentary Standing Committee of Public Accounts Review of Selected Public Works Committee reports 27 of 2015: Midland Highway, Mangalore to Bagdad Stage 1 and Midland Highway, Kempton to Melton Mowbray Stage 1; and 28 of 2015: Midland Highway, Perth to Breadalbane Duplication, be considered and noted.

Following on from our 160th birthday celebrations, I note one of the Parliamentary Public Accounts Committee's reports, and this relates to a review of some works undertaken that were recommended by the Standing Committee on Public Works, specifically related to works on the Midland Highway.

Those who are driving up and down the highway at the moment know it is not over yet. It takes a good five hours to drive down at the moment, that is unless you cut across the mountains, which is a more preferable option at the moment if you are coming from the north-west.

Mr PRESIDENT - In the best electorate too.

Ms FORREST - We do spend a bit of time in the electorate of Derwent in that process, yes, I must say, across the border, and actually spend a bit of time in McIntyre as well.

This review was a decision of the committee to look at the works on the Midland Highway, particular the Mangalore to Bagdad stage 1, the Midland Highway Kempton to Melton Mowbray stage 1, and the Midland Highway Perth to Breadalbane duplication projects. It is important work of the committee to look at the Public Works Committee's reports as they determine that they will recommend a certain public work and also to ensure, as much as we can, that what was agreed to and recommended by the committee was delivered, in terms of: was it on budget? If it was not delivered on budget, why not? There can be very good and robust reasons why that might be the case. That is fine, but it is important these things are asked of the relevant minister and the department who have been overseeing the delivery of these really major public works in a lot of cases. We also ask questions if there were any variations to the contract during the process and why those variations were necessary. Often that can also relate to the issue of coming in over budget perhaps, in some cases, depending on the nature of the variation and the timeliness of the work, was it done on time? Particularly with major roadworks, we know that weather is a significant variable that can impact negatively on a project.

The other test - I know the Public Works Committee often asks it, I assume always asks about - is the contribution of local employment, like the contribution of local contractors. We do have some pretty reliable and very able road-building construction companies in Tasmania. Again, there are some things like major bridges that may need overseas expertise, but those things are important and things the committee will also follow up.

The process of the committee, as undertaken with these works, is to actually initially send a questionnaire to the relevant minister, to be sent to the department to answer questions in relation to those matters. Was the project delivered on time? Was it on budget? Were there variations? Has it delivered what it was intended to deliver? Also, about the local employment.

This particular section of the highway is obviously a heavily utilised section of our highway. To read from some of the executive summary here, this section is part of the Government's Midland Highway Strategic 10 Year Action Plan, which is:

a 10-year plan with a commitment of a total of \$500 million from Australian and Tasmanian Governments to upgrade the Midland Highway [and] targets a number of key public works during its lifetime.

Including the three that the committee reviewed.

We go on to say:

The AusRAP Star Rating Australia's National Network of Highways 2013 report found that the majority of the Midland Highway rated either only 1- or 2-star in its 5-star safety rating scale. The identified projects [these three projects] are part of the plan's overall objective to deliver a minimum 3-star rating for the Midland Highway, using the 'Safe System Approach' which has been adopted by all Australian states and territory road authorities.

The committee was interested to know why we would settle for a three-star rating and not aim to get to a four-star rating, acknowledging there are differences in that. In doing that we needed to inform ourselves as to what the difference is between a three-star rating and a four- or five-star rating. The committee has included in the report some information on that to make it a more comprehensive report and I hope members actually find that useful to read. We also outlined and described the actual works again and referenced some of the works of the Public Works Committee in doing that.

One of the things raised, particularly in relation to the Midland Highway, seems to be a matter raised regularly in various forms, and that is the use of wire rope barriers as a separation and run-off road protection, particularly on significant sections of the Midland Highway and other roads around the state. The member for Launceston is chairing the Road Safety Committee and I am sure it has been raised with her and that committee. We also provide some information on that, even though it was not strictly related to the recommendation to proceed with these works. It was raised and there is some information in the report on that and the Government's decision to use that product. We also note that over time the different products come and go in terms of the actual wire rope barriers themselves and that sometimes -

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

STATEMENT BY PRESIDENT

Relocation of Hansard Monitors

Mr PRESIDENT - Honourable members, before I call on questions without notice, I advise that our Hansard monitors are undertaking their role remotely. Those more astute may have noticed that we do not have a Hansard person in the Hansard area. They are now working out of an office in the Salamanca building and the change in their working environment was made necessary in terms of occupational health and safety. It follows advice from an ergonomic assessment.

Our traditional, yet beautiful, Hansard bench is no longer up to modern standards. They are all now in an appropriately fitted-out space and both Houses are being monitored from downstairs in the new building. If any member has a document or other information, such as the spelling of names or reference material that would assist - because I have seen members drop documents up, the member for Hobart is a frequent visitor up there - you can hand that to one of our Chamber assistants. That will be forwarded directly to the editor of the place or you

can email that person. If you have a hard copy, hand it to our assistants and everything happens magically from there on.

QUESTIONS

Working Together - Lowering of School Age Reforms

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

[2.32 p.m.]

Because of the way the Government managed its lowering of the school age reforms, there is a trust deficit between the Liberal Government and the early education and care sector. They were surprised to learn of the Premier's announcement to expand Working Together, as were members of the Department of Education present at a 130-strong sector conference recently.

- (1) Will the Working Together expansion provide universal access or will it remain targeted towards the current cohort accessing Working Together?
- (2) Can the Government rule out that this is lowering the school age by stealth?

ANSWER

I thank the member for his question. The early childhood education and care sector, the ECEC sector, plays a critical role in providing access to early learning. The Government has worked closely with the ECEC services, families and key stakeholders to design Working Together and to provide increased access to quality early learning for more children.

Now is the right time to expand Working Together, as a first step towards the goal of universal access to early learning for all Tasmanian children in the year before kindergarten.

Specifically:

- (1) The Government is looking to expand Working Together from 2024 and the Department of Education has requested all ECEC services in Tasmania submit an expression of interest to deliver more places in the program. The Government will continue to work closely with families, ECEC services and other stakeholders to grow access to early learning in Tasmania.
- (2) This initiative is about equality for all Tasmanian children. It is about taking the steps - the next step - to ensure that every Tasmanian child has the chance to participate in early learning and to experience the many positive outcomes this experience brings for their learning and life outcomes. All families should have the opportunity available to them to access early learning for their three-year-old children.

Where there is not the capacity in an ECEC setting, the department will consult broadly on how that access can be provided.

Mr WILLIE - I might resubmit that because that was a non-answer on both fronts. The question was about universal access, so I will re-ask that.

Working Together - Consultation with Sector

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

[2.34 p.m.]

Mr President, it is clear the Premier made the Working Together expansion announcement without consulting with the sector or with people within the Department of Education responsible for Working Together. Working Together is currently delivered by the early education and care sector in a highly regulated environment with extensive professional learning support. The Government's proposal to deliver Working Together in libraries, schools and child and family centres means that it is unlikely to meet the high benchmark through the national quality standards.

There are also concerns within the sector that it will impact the viability of existing services, which may close and deprive children and families from accessing early learning and care.

- (1) Will the early childhood education and care sector be required to continue meeting the high benchmarks of the national quality standards?
- (2) Will the Government-run Working Together be subject to self-assessment against the national quality standards?

ANSWER

I thank the member for his question. The Tasmanian Government has worked closely with the early learning education and care sector to deliver Working Together since 2018 and looks forward to building on the strength of this partnership. Now is the right time to expand Working Together as a first step towards the goal of universal access to early learning for all Tasmanian children in the year before kindergarten.

- (1) There will be no change in the regulatory requirement for the ECEC sector. The national quality framework will continue to provide a national consistent approach to regulation, assessment and quality improvement with the delivery of regulatory services.
- (2) The evolution of Working Together will be subject to extensive consultation with the ECEC sector and will have an explicit focus on quality early learning.

MOTION

Report of the Parliamentary Standing Committee of Public Accounts Review of Selected Public Works Committee Reports - Consideration and Noting

Resumed from page 32.

[2.37 p.m.]

Ms FORREST (Murchison) - Mr President, before lunchbreak I was talking about wire road barriers, some of their challenges over time where certain products may go off the market. It has been a bit of an issue over time where a particular wire road barrier has been used and then is no longer available. A different type is sought and the mechanisms are not interchangeable. While they were outside actual comments and considerations made by the Public Works Committee it was a matter we followed up. We also suggest all the members of the Government may look at the benefits and appropriateness of actually having standard fulfilment of the wire road barriers, acknowledging that sometimes companies who are brave do not continue. However, it does mean they might be waiting on parts to repair a wire barrier if a vehicle crashes into it. They are more likely to have the parts required if you have a consistent product around the state, then you can probably try to find replacement parts for those that no longer are made.

The Government cannot control a lot of that, it was a point the committee raised. It was interesting, after we sent them a short questionnaire and had the written feedback from the department. We also invited the department officers to speak to the committee and provide some further information relating to the questionnaire we sent and to drill down into some of the matters more fully. It was interesting because these are part of the overall 10-year strategy, that when a project comes in under budget, which occasionally happens, that money can then be shifted to another project within the same plan. That actually happened in this circumstance and is actually outlined in the report. That actually did occur. It makes sense as sometimes things do go over budget. We have seen the challenge with the recent increase in building costs. This may become a major problem if you do not have all the equipment you need at the outset and the prices rise in between the decision to start and the completion of the project. The project delivered close to time and it was only the Perth to Breadalbane duplication, which is quite an elaborate design. It is very nice to drive through, I will also add.

MR PRESIDENT - Very Los Angeles.

Ms FORREST - It is a bit, yes. You have to make sure you do not make the turns. There is one turn coming up to the north-west you can easily miss and you can end up in Launceston, which is not where you want to go when you are heading to the north-west. A little bit more lighting and signage is needed. However, the sliplane that takes you to the north-west, Illawarra Road, is almost like a brow of a bit of a hill and particularly at night you cannot see it. There is no lighting there, and you simply cannot see it. It is a 110-kilometre zone and you have vehicles behind you with potentially vehicles beside you as it is a dual carriageway. Then to try to make sure you do not miss it without slowing down too much, and becoming a hazard to the vehicles behind you - the Leader has also experienced that. It is hard enough in the daylight to see it, because it drops away and you cannot see it as you approach. I do not know if something can be done to assist at all, but lighting at night with clear signage, 'this is it, turn off now' may be helpful.

It would be very difficult for tourists or others who are following their GPS but thinking, 'well, I cannot see a road turn-off there'. If I was unfamiliar with the road, I would not be turning off there, because you think you are going to go over the bank. You will not, but you could hit the guardrail.

Sometimes it is not until these things are built and used that some of these minor things that can create a traffic hazard can be identified and perhaps should be looked at.

That was delivered on time, on schedule. The other two, the Mangalore to Bagdad stage 1 and the Kempton to Melton Mowbray stage 1 were both delayed at various stages in their construction. However, as the committee was informed, there were unusually wet weather conditions which actually played a part. We all accept that, particularly heavier rain that can affect getting the surface of the road in really good condition, and then sealing it when the weather is right too, because right temperature, right conditions, that is all important. Overall, it is good to see they were pretty much, fairly close to time and mostly around budget.

All three projects we reviewed in this report reported that individual completed projects satisfied the stated intended purpose. We did question whether the whole Midland Highway should be upgraded to AusRAP four status. There was some information provided to the committee on that and it is in the report if members wish to read it. All through, the projects under review reported the respective projects delivered their intended benefits as stated - the benefits to increase, upgrade it, to a higher AusRAP rating, which has been done, but then we also need to keep a track on any crashes that may occur on those roads.

You cannot account for inattention, some bad behaviour drivers or sheer bad luck. Someone could have a medical event while they are driving and that can have tragic outcomes, obviously. Not just for that person, but for anyone else who is in the vicinity. As I understand it - and I have sat on the Road Safety Committee with the former member for Launceston, Mr Don Wing. We looked at these matters and it is about building a safe system so that when people do make errors of judgment or have an event that maybe they do have very limited control over, they do not lose their life as a result and their injuries will be less serious.

We can clearly see from the roads that would be most likely the outcome, but then as I said, that turn-off to go up to the north-west and connect with the Illawarra Road, is problematic in terms of visibility, so maybe that can be addressed in some way.

It is interesting to consider how the department says the respective project delivered on its intended benefits. I am not sure how you can say that when the road has not been open that long but I hope that is something that is continually monitored. If there were issues or potential problems identified on a particular road I hope that there would be a process of constant review and taking action on things that are raised, predominantly by the road users, the people out there using them that see the problems.

Again, I reiterate the useful process the Public Accounts Committee is taking in these. We actually find it interesting and learn a lot about the actual processes of the Public Works Committee and also the problems that occur during construction, problems that are identified which I have talked about in previous projects and how the Government, or the department deal with some of those. I appreciate comments any other members want to make and also any feedback from the Government on that.

[2.46 p.m.]

Mr VALENTINE (Hobart) - Mr President, I thank the Public Accounts Committee for their work on this. Being the Chair of the Public Works Committee, when we sit and consider these projects, one cannot help but wonder if, in fact, what we are being told is fact and whether a project will deliver for the people of Tasmania. It is an important part of the process that the Public Accounts Committee can follow up on that. There is a degree of comfort in knowing that that actually happens and that value is indeed being realised.

For that reason, I appreciate the work that they do. I sometimes wonder when we receive projects for consideration, references for consideration, as to the timeliness of those. Sometimes we get more information than other times. There is less for us to consider perhaps in some references than in others that might come to us. Schools, for instance, have a huge amount of information - education, the department certainly provides much information.

Other times, you can have a project of significant value that has a small amount of information, but mainly due to the fact that it is roads, always expensive, never cheap. Sometimes I wonder if we are getting things perhaps prematurely. It is important that the Public Accounts Committee undertakes the work that it does in relation to these projects. It is a belt and braces, checks and balances arrangement. It provides an insight for us on the committee, I am sure, as we read these sorts of reports to see whether what we were told, in fact, was realised.

I take the member for Murchison's point with regard to things like the off-ramps and how sometimes you can build a huge road, but it will still have issues and problems associated with it. We try to question and query all sorts of things and there are Australian road standards that have to be complied with for safety reasons when roads are constructed. Quite clearly they are being complied with, otherwise we would not have it in front of us, I would suggest.

The department is pretty good in that regard, from my experience. It is interesting; it is the information for us to take on board that sometimes a ramp might be built that is not so easily seen by those travelling on that road; or the lighting or signage is not sufficient. That all helps us in assessing a project when it comes forward.

The member talked about wire rope barriers and the supply of them. I am sure just about every member gets an email from time to time from members of the community about the benefit of wire rope barriers per se, and whether they are actually doing their job.

I will declare I am a motorcyclist, and the motorcycle fraternity often say they are cheese cutters; they rip people apart when they come off their motorbikes. To an extent that is quite true and there are other measures that can be taken to reduce the severity of those accidents. One thing that comes to mind when these sorts of barriers are used, when it comes to crashes on the roads the type of barrier where the crash happened does not seem to be recorded. It would be useful information to know that. I believe it is not recorded, from the information that comes to me, but it would be good to see how those barriers perform, for instance, and whether or not they can cause a problem.

We have heard from members of the public that cars can ride over a barrier and flip if they are near the beginning of the wire rope barrier where it slopes up from a concrete footing - from where the wire starts and it comes up to a height and then it continues - and if a car happens to hit that then it can cause the car to flip over. There are all sorts of things like

that, but they are matters for us to investigate as we have references brought before us in the Public Works Committee.

I thank the Public Accounts Committee for the work it does. It is valuable work. It completes the cycle. We can learn from reports like this and ask the question at the right time when we are looking at it from the Public Works Committee perspective.

[2.53 p.m.]

Mrs HISCUTT (Montgomery - Leader of the Government in the Legislative Council) - Mr President, when the member for Murchison was referring to the Perth Link Roads project, the project that the committee investigated was the Perth to Breadalbane project?

Ms Forrest - Yes.

Mrs HISCUTT - I wanted to clarify that.

I have a precis of the whys and the wherefores - the objective of the projects that were studied.

The objective of the Midland Highway 10 Year Action Plan is to deliver a minimum 3-star Australian Road Assessment Program (AusRAP) rating for the highway's entire length. This is being achieved by delivering: appropriate lane widths; sealed shoulders; audio-tactile edge lines; improved delineation; protected turning; separation of opposing traffic flows by flexible safety barriers in the central median; and, where traffic volumes warrant, duplications.

The Midland Highway 10 Year Action Plan provides a minimum 3-star AusRAP-rated highway, comprising 2+1 and 1+1 lane arrangements that deliver an appropriate standard for the traffic volumes, implementing desired safety and efficiency outcomes within the \$565 million budget.

Other jurisdictions, such as Victoria and New Zealand, are also delivering the 2+1 and the 1+1 arrangements on their highways.

The Public Accounts Committee reviewed the Mangalore to Bagdad stage 1, the Kempton to Melton Mowbray stage 1 and the Perth to Breadalbane duplication project. All three projects delivered on the minimum 3-star safety objective and used local contractors and suppliers to support the Tasmanian regional economy. Construction contingencies were planned for, allowing resolution for poor ground and other conditions during construction.

The report of the Public Accounts Committee confirmed that the Midland Highway Action Plan projects are being delivered in a professional manner. Cost savings from forecast but unmet design and construction risks on one project are being shifted to cover costs encountered on another project within the action plan. Construction variations are typically encountered on all road projects. Identifying all potential changes in ground and existing pavement conditions before commencement of construction would delay projects by years, and be a poor use of public money.

Apart from the Perth Link Road project, which was constructed on a new alignment, little realignment of the Midland Highway has been undertaken, supporting re-use of the existing pavement and minimising costs. The Midland Highway 10 Year Action Plan is already

delivering significant safety benefits to Tasmanians. About 100 kilometres of highway has been upgraded to a minimum 3-star AusRAP safety rating. The remaining 50 kilometres of safety improvements between Pontville roundabout and Breadalbane are currently being constructed, comprising the Oatlands, Ross and Campbell Town north projects. The median flexible safety barrier has been capturing out-of-control vehicles, preventing head-on and run-off-the-road crashes by redirecting crashing vehicles back into the appropriate lane.

I will now move to the Mangalore to Bagdad stage 1. A central turning lane managed by an 80-kilometre per hour speed limit was installed in Mangalore to Bagdad, to provide an appropriate balance of safe and efficient traffic movement in this residential area. High speed 2+1 and 1+1 traffic lane arrangements divided by a flexible safety barrier would have been unreasonably costly and unsafe for this location. The speed limit at the Mangalore to Bagdad stage 1 project was 80 kilometres per hour prior to, and after, the safety upgrade project.

For the Mangalore to Bagdad stage 2 project, which was not reviewed by the Public Accounts Committee, the speed limit was reduced from 100 to 80 kilometres per hour to address the safety risks which were associated with the density of private accesses and side roads through Mangalore.

Ms Forrest - I think your husband complains about that.

Mrs HISCUTT - In support of the decision to reduce the speed limit, a travel time survey was conducted in 2016. That study concluded that most traffic levels are at less than 100 kilometres per hour between Pontville and Bagdad due to slower moving vehicles and the lack of overtaking opportunities. The average speed of vehicles was 90 kilometres per hour prior to the stage 2 work, and an 80 kilometre per hour speed limit has resulted in an increase in travel time of 30 seconds on average.

I will move to the Kempton to Melton Mowbray stage 1. Kempton to Melton Mowbray stage 1 included rearrangement of access to Mood Food. A fatal crash occurred after construction, following which sight distance improvements were undertaken including removal of a short section of median safety barrier and relocation signage. Safe use of the access layout will continue to be monitored.

Turning to the Perth to Breadalbane duplication, also known as the Perth Link Road, it was the largest single project of the Midland Highway Action Plan at a cost of \$92 million. The project has delivered a divided dual-lane highway of four lanes over a length of 4.5 kilometres around the western side of Perth township, including a central flexible safety barrier, a new roundabout, highway access ramps and a cycling path from Drummond Street to Illawarra Road.

In general, the new Midland Highway has a number of key design features. Flexible safety barriers, also known as wire rope barriers, are a key element in the highway upgrade, both on the roadside and within a central median, to separate traffic travelling in opposite directions. Another feature of the Midland Highway Action Plan is the significant increase in safe overtaking opportunities. Once completed, the 150 kilometres of upgraded highway will include 95 kilometres of overtaking lane protected by a flexible median safety barrier. That is something to look forward to, member for Murchison.

The overtaking lanes are strategically located to provide safe overtaking opportunities in both directions of travel. With any large-scale highway project, traffic management measures can result in frustrations on the part of road users. Traffic delays during construction are being minimised as far as practical, allowing contractors to conduct works along reasonable lengths of highway and complete the work sooner than shorter worksites would permit. The sooner the works are complete, the sooner the highway can be more safely driven at 110 kilometres an hour.

The State Roads division of the Department of State Growth continues to monitor traffic delays and work with the contractor to make adjustments if necessary. In relation to the project costs, the Government's initial commitment was \$500 million for a minimum 3-star AusRAP rated Midland Highway. To meet the safety objective, additional funding has since been provided in the relevant 2020 budgets, the Australian Government's additional \$52 million and the Tasmanian Government's additional \$13 million, for a total of \$565 million. I will seek some advice.

I welcome the opportunity to make comment on this motion from the member for Murchison and even though we get lots of complaints about the road works and the time it takes, we cannot build something new without this. I ask for people's patience as we look forward to the completion of this highway.

[3.02 p.m.]

Ms FORREST (Murchison) - Mr President, I thank members for their contributions on this. I acknowledge the section I was referring to on the Perth slip-lane is not part of this, otherwise you are going to Launceston.

Mrs Hiscutt - Yes, that is right.

Ms FORREST - Then you go on the Perth to Breadalbane road east of Launceston. That is why we tried to turn off before then.

Mr Willie - You could be going to Evandale or the airport or somewhere like that.

Ms FORREST - It is the one that goes out between Perth to the roundabout where you go to the airport.

Mr PRESIDENT - I do not think the member for Elwick should give any directions to anyone. He is probably one of the most lost members of the upper House.

Ms FORREST - I could give you some directions like I received in one country I was visiting, where they say, 'you know where that building is? Well, it is not there. If you go past that building, then you go to that building that has the red roof, well it is not there either'. That is probably the sort of advice the member for Elwick could give.

Mr Willie - The President is referring to a meeting I was supposed to attend in Elizabeth Street in Launceston. I tried to go to a meeting in Elizabeth Street in Hobart.

Ms FORREST - That is only marginally out of the way.

Mr PRESIDENT - Then there was the time you went down to the Huon and got lost.

Ms FORREST - We are being distracted.

Mr PRESIDENT - The member might be able to help you next time.

Ms FORREST - Given advice from the local member, I would suggest.

Thanks for that, members. I concur with the member for Hobart and as the Chair of the Public Works Committee these are important accountability mechanisms.

Mr Valentine - They certainly are.

Ms FORREST - Yes. If the Public Works Committee deals with the information they have to hand and they approve or recommend a project, then, as we have found in other ones, when this project starts it is below surface areas that create significant challenges. They cannot go back and revisit. It is reliant on another committee process, some other process to ensure these things do not blow out financially or time-wise.

Mr Valentine - It is a good check on the contingency cost, though.

Ms FORREST - Yes, there is always contingency cost built into these things and generally, they make the most of it. Historically, depending on where works are, there can be underground services like old pipes and even other infrastructure that were not known about as records were not kept or accurate. We did not have GPS back when a lot of these things were done to identify where they are. We all accept there can be challenges in breaking new ground, if you like, and I acknowledge that a lot of this work goes on with current corridor widening, rather than a whole new section, which happens from time to time.

Mr Valentine - Through you Mr President, one of the big issues these days is the escalation cost, because of materials costs.

Ms FORREST - Yes, that is right. I acknowledge there is an awful lot of roadworks going on on the Midland Highway at the moment and it is very slow. However, I note the police are taking particular attention around that area and in my last two, three, four, five, six, seven - whatever number of trips up and down the highway - I would not have had a trip up and down the highway without seeing at least one, and often three, drivers pulled over by police. I am glad the police are taking a particular attention to this, because this is in areas where workers are. They are on the side of the road, near the workings, and it is important that we all take responsibility for their safety. Yes - at the moment, it adds at least 15 minutes to the trip, so you have to factor it in, or go over the Highland Lakes, which is a much better option. It is a lovely drive, except when it gets really snowy on the top and it was not looking like snow when you left. You have to take it easy then. That is a lovely road through there now, all sealed - thanks to the former member for Western Tiers, I would expect.

Mr PRESIDENT - No.

Ms FORREST - No? I thought he was the one who advocated for -

Mr PRESIDENT - No, the current member for Derwent had that.

Ms FORREST - Was it? Okay, but I appreciate the member's contribution. We will continue to bring these matters forward and debate them when we have assessed them. If any members in our House feel there is an area that does warrant another look, for whatever information they may have, you are quite welcome to write to the committee and request that. We do not all drive on all the roads around the state, or engage with some of the other projects that are funded through the major works budget. If members have concerns they are quite welcome to bring those to the committee.

Report considered and noted.

MOTION

Government Administration Committee A - Report - Inquiry into the Roy Fagan Centre - Consideration and Noting

[3.07 p.m.]

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

That the report of the Legislative Council Sessional Government Administration Committee A inquiry into the Roy Fagan Centre be considered and noted.

Mr President, I am clearing the Notice Paper. Members or others may be interested in this short inquiry process into the Roy Fagan Centre. Rather than establish a full inquiry into the response by the Government into some tragic and sad deaths of residents at the Roy Fagan Centre, which is part of Older Persons Mental Health Services - and the former member for Huon raised his concern about it - we decided to undertake a short inquiry process to assess the Government's response to two Coroner's reports, one of which had recommendations on it. A review of Older Persons Mental Health Services, particularly the Roy Fagan Centre and the situations that had occurred there, was also done. These were quite tragic circumstances that we were inquiring into, and that was done with due respect to the families of those who had died, or who had some very unpleasant experiences. It is an old centre; but the purpose of a short inquiry process is to ascertain whether we can get the information we need through that process, or whether we need to recommend a full inquiry and undertake a full inquiry.

You will note from the report that the committee was satisfied that the work that had been done by the Government in response to those Coroner's reports and the review of Older Persons Mental Health Services did address the recommendations being made and the factors that had contributed to the problems. I will start by reading from our short inquiry overview, because the Premier, as Minister for Health, wanted to make it clear that this was something that he wanted treated with due respect. This is what he closed his appearance before the committee with - and I will read it because it is important that this forms part of this debate. I asked him if he had any closing comments he wished to make in the hearing and he said:

I wanted to take us back to why we are here and I recall very vividly a conversation from Dr Groves -

He is the chief psychiatrist -

... around noon on Christmas Day 2020. Putting myself in the shoes of the family who were there to pick up their dear dad and husband at the time and how distressing that was and must have been for them, particularly on a day that should have been a happier day, where families do get together. I phoned a member of the family the following day and offered my apology, and I followed that up in writing again, and also subsequent phone calls. I want to reiterate that today. I made a commitment to the family that as a result of what was a horrific and distressing incident, that there will be considerable improvement in systems and resourcing and continuative care. I am satisfied to date that that is progressing well. I just want to reinforce - responding to Mr Duigan's question as well - the importance of those communications with families of residents, but also the family that is the reason we are here today. I also thank very much the hardworking staff that naturally were very distressed as well, and felt that very deeply, in terms of the public commentary, and also internally. That would have been very distressing for them. I thank them and the families affected, that we've listened to, gained their lived experience, spoken to the staff, and have been invaluable in terms of making these improvements moving forward.

I add that because it is important that - we were all very cognisant of the fact that loved ones had died and that there have been some unfortunate incidents that had occurred.

Being a short inquiry process, not a lot of commentary about the evidence was received. We got the information, the evidence, and basically collated it, which is our process for a short inquiry process. Overall, we made six findings and we did note that in response to the two coronial inquests and the review of the Roy Fagan Older Persons Mental Health Services there had been additional funding put in place to support medical nursing, allied health and ancillary staffing increases - that was one of the issues that was identified, the inadequate staffing levels.

There had also been additional funding for infrastructure upgrades and one of the things that Mr Dale Webster spoke about was - because it is an old building and it is in a lovely setting but it is an old building and the state does not own the building. It leased the building. They put a lot of baffling in on the walls, which actually cut down the noise in there considerably, to the point that the residents there were much calmer and much more settled. According to the staff and to Mr Webster on their behalf, it made a huge difference to the lived experience of the residents in there and the way they felt in that environment. It seems like a small thing, and you think, why was that not done earlier? It is a shame it takes some sort of tragic event to see these sorts of things happening but it has happened and that is a positive thing.

There has been a reported improvement in patient wellbeing and outcomes and staff experience. The staff need to be happy in their workplace too and they all felt very upset by events that had occurred.

There was a greater focus on continuing professional development for the staff at the Roy Fagan Centre, particularly in issues relating to wound management and things like that, which is one of the problems that occurred with the inappropriately attended wound.

The fifth finding was an improvement of documentation processes within the Roy Fagan Centre. This is important in any setting but particularly in a healthcare setting. We used to have a sign on the wall when I worked in maternity services: if it's not documented, it didn't

happen. You might have done it, you might have given that drug, you might have done the dressing, you might have turned the patient every two hours or whatever but if you do not document it, it may as well not have happened if you end up in court or you end up with a complaint. So you do have to document. That was a problem in the Roy Fagan Centre but evidence provided to the committee said that has improved.

There was also a commitment to providing contemporary best practice models of care across Older Persons Mental Health Services, including infrastructure upgrades, some of which I have mentioned, at the Roy Fagan Centre and in stage three planning for the Royal Hobart Hospital Master Plan.

The committee was satisfied that there had been appropriate responses to the factors that were raised, both by the coroner and in the review that was undertaken by Dr Groves.

There were only two recommendations and they were:

- (1) The Department maintain regular consumer and key stakeholder engagement, including families, health professionals and advocacy groups to ... monitor patient experiences, wellbeing and outcomes and ... inform progress towards best practice contemporary models of care.

It was relatively still early on in the piece when we looked into this so it would be helpful for the Government, maybe now or at some stage in the future, to update the parliament in relation to staff surveys, surveys with families who have loved ones in Roy Fagan, and with the patients themselves as to how they are experiencing their care now. Also, to inform us as to how the contemporary models of care and contemporary practices are being adopted and rolled out.

It is okay to say it but we need to see you do it.

The second recommendation was:

- (2) The Government publicly report the progress of all recommendations from the Review of the Roy Fagan Centre Older Persons Mental Health Services annually until fully implemented.

One would expect that could be done through the annual report of Mental Health Services broadly but it is important to report against them until they are all completed.

I thank the committee members for their work on this short but interesting inquiry. Sadly, sometimes it takes a tragedy to get some change which should have occurred anyway but it is good to see that the Government took it very seriously and has put in place mechanisms to deal with the really urgent matters.

Mr Webster and others, Ms Morgan-Wicks as well, were talking to us in front of the committee about the future of the centre because it is not owned by the state. It is in a beautiful location which is therapeutic in itself but it limits what you can do with the facility as it is - it is an older building.

If you were building it from scratch, you would probably put it in a similar location but you would not build it the way it is now. That is the nature of contemporary care and changing expectations so I would appreciate members' comments and feedback on the report, particularly feedback from the Government.

[3.17 p.m.]

Mrs HISCUTT (Montgomery - Leader of the Government in the Legislative Council) - Mr President, I am pleased to have the opportunity to discuss the report of the Legislative Council Government Administration Committee A short inquiry into the Roy Fagan Centre. The Government was appreciative of that report.

The report provides a comprehensive assessment of recent matters relating to the Roy Fagan Centre with a particular focus on the actions taken by the Government and progress made regarding the recommendations of the review of the Roy Fagan Centre and Older Persons Mental Health Services. The Tasmanian Government is absolutely committed to ensuring that the Roy Fagan Centre and Older Persons Mental Health Services provide a safe, quality service to their clients.

The independent review established to examine the standard of patient care at the Roy Fagan Centre and Older Persons Mental Health Services more broadly, made six recommendations in July last year, all of which the Government accepted with an implementation plan released in September last year.

It is important to emphasise that the recommendations of that review went beyond the Roy Fagan Centre and provide a framework for the contemporary Older Persons Mental Health Services for the state with emphasis on care in the community rather than transfer to a specialist facility.

A project control group has been established with representation from key stakeholder groups, including the Roy Fagan Centre and Older Persons Mental Health Services, Council On the Ageing, Mental Health Council of Tasmania, Flourish, Mental Health Families and Friends and the University of Tasmania. This group provides advice to the Deputy Secretary, Community Mental Health and Wellbeing and supports the implementation of the review's recommendations.

I am advised that they are meeting regularly on these matters, having last met in August with the next meeting scheduled for October.

In 2021-22, \$1 million was allocated to support the initial stages of the review's implementation plan which provides continuation of an onsite medical officer, enables an additional nursing shift at the Roy Fagan Centre, and has supported the employment of a resource to develop a longer term project plan.

Mr President, I am pleased that in this year's Budget, an additional \$20.5 million has been secured to continue this work. Importantly, changes have already been made to resourcing, processes, and procedures at the Roy Fagan Centre including increases in staffing:

- (1) Commenced the recruitment process for a statewide speciality director and group director for the service. Statements of duties for both positions have been drafted, and are in the consultation stage. This will bring Older Persons Mental Health

Services in line with the structure in place, or planned, for all service streams across statewide Mental Health Services. Most importantly, this will provide the leadership to create a genuinely statewide contemporary service which is patient-centred but clinically-led.

- (2) Approved establishment of a nurse unit manager to work with the assistant director of nursing for a fixed term at the Roy Fagan Centre.
- (3) Increase in consultation and consultant psychiatrists to one FTE for the service.
- (4) Additional nursing staff of one FTE, which is an eight-hour shift, seven days a week.
- (5) Additional ward aides.
- (6) Approval granted to employ five case managers with Older Persons Mental Health Services statewide community teams.
- (7) Clinical nurse educator resource for Older Persons Mental Health Services increased to one FTE statewide.
- (8) Contracted private physiotherapists and speech therapists while subsequent workforce planning occurs.
- (9) A program manager has commenced, and will work directly with the new group director and statewide speciality director, and other key stakeholders, to develop a recruitment strategy, operational service models, and staffing model inclusive of allied health resources.

Mr President, there is also the development and implementation of new protocol for wound care, including training of all nurses; new systems for checking on individual hygiene needs, and how to assist patients who may be resistant during care; and updated processes for open disclosure. In addition, there is the revision of care plans to include comprehensive summaries available to all staff, and new protocols for documenting care given by assistants in nursing or ward aides - as you say, member for Murchison, if it is not written down. There are also improved handover practices.

Future Older Persons Mental Health Services infrastructure developments are also being considered. The Government is confident that this work will significantly improve the level of care and treatment provided to older Tasmanians, and better meet the needs and expectations of the community.

The Government notes the short inquiry report into the Roy Fagan Centre, and acknowledges and accepts the two recommendations made that:

- (1) An annual report on progress towards addressing the recommendations of the review of the Roy Fagan Centre Older Persons Mental Health Services report will be made publicly available. The annual report on the progress toward addressing Roy Fagan Centre review recommendations will commence from December 2022 and will be publicly available, in line with the committee's recommendations.

- (2) That there will continue to be regular engagement with consumers and key stakeholder groups to monitor patient experiences, wellbeing, and outcomes, and inform best practice models of care.

Mr President, we will ensure these recommendations are implemented.

The Government thanks the committee for their interest, and their considerable work in undertaking this important short inquiry process. We note the report.

[3.25 p.m.]

Ms FORREST (Murchison) - Mr President, I appreciate the response from the Government, particularly for their commitment to accepting both recommendations and a clear time line and outline of how that will be complied with.

The Leader will probably inform us through another process, but I assume a report such as that will be tabled in this place so it could be considered, or at least made available to members so we can see how progress is being made. It is something to be followed up in budget Estimates, or through other questions.

You do not always go looking for these reports - it is easier if they come to the parliament, being as it was a recommendation from a committee of this place that this occur. It would be helpful if those reports and updates on the progress are tabled in the parliament.

Report considered and noted.

FAMILY VIOLENCE REFORMS BILL 2022 (No. 10)

Third Reading

Continued from Thursday 28 August 2022 (page 47).

[3.26 p.m.]

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

That the bill now be read the third time.

Bill read the third time.

HEALTH LEGISLATION (MISCELLANEOUS AMENDMENTS) BILL 2022 (No. 19)

Second Reading

[3.27 p.m.]

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

That the bill now be read for the second time.

Mr President, it is my intention to read the second reading speech and then adjourn.

Mr President, the purpose of this bill is to make minor amendments to several health-related acts. The Tasmanian Government is committed to ensuring that Tasmania's legislation remains up to date and fit for purpose. Accordingly, this bill proposes minor amendments to update, clarify and improve the operation of several pieces of legislation. I will now outline the reasons behind each of the main proposed changes.

There are the amendments to the definition of 'paramedic': under the Ambulance Service Act 1982 and Ambulance Service (Paramedic) Regulations 2014, a paramedic is a person who is registered under the Health Practitioner Regulation National Law (Tasmania) in the paramedic profession. Paramedicine became a regulated profession under the Health Practitioner Regulation National Law (Tasmania) on 1 December 2018. Since then, it has been a requirement for all paramedics to be registered with the Paramedicine Board of Australia and to meet the board's registration requirements before being able to lawfully practise in Australia. Sections of the Ambulance Service Act that are concerned with defining paramedics, and the Ambulance Service (Paramedic) Regulations, predate this requirement.

This bill proposes removing the definition of 'paramedic' from the Ambulance Service Act 1982 and instead inserting a new, contemporary definition for the term in the Acts Interpretation Act 1931. Under the proposed new definition, the term 'paramedic' is defined to mean a person registered under the Health Practitioner Regulation National Law (Tasmania) in the paramedicine profession. This is consistent with the definition provided for the term through section 3AB of the Ambulance Service Act 1982 and the Ambulance Service (Paramedic) Regulations 2014 and is consistent with the requirements of the Health Practitioner Regulation National Law (Tasmania).

The term 'paramedic' is also used in the Poisons Act 1971 and in the End-of-Life Choices (Voluntary Assisted Dying) Act 2021. In both cases, the term is defined with reference to the meaning of 'paramedic' that is set out in the Ambulance Service Act.

As members will know, except where otherwise expressly provided, the provisions of the Acts Interpretation Act have application in the interpretation and construction of all Tasmanian acts, except in clearly defined instances. The bill proposes amending the Poisons Act and End-of-Life Choices (Voluntary Assisted Dying) Act to remove the definitions of 'paramedic' contained in those acts in favour of the Acts Interpretation Act's definition in this context.

The bill also proposes rescinding the Ambulance Service (Paramedic) Regulations on the basis that they will no longer be required.

I will talk about the amendments to the definition of a 'pharmacist': the term 'pharmacist' is used in various Tasmanian acts. Some acts use and define the term, while others simply use it. The bill proposes inserting a new definition for the term 'pharmacist' in the Acts Interpretation Act 1931. The definition reflects the definition set out in the Agricultural and Veterinary Chemicals (Control of Use) Act 1995, the Asbestos-Related Diseases (Occupational Exposure) Compensation Act 2011, the Public Trustee Act 1930 and the Workers Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 1988. It will apply in the interpretation and construction

of these acts and in the interpretation and construction of other acts that use the term but that do not define it.

There are two acts that use the term 'pharmacist' in unique ways. The first of these is the Poisons Act 1971. The Poisons Act uses the term 'pharmaceutical chemist'. Under section 3 of that act the term 'pharmaceutical chemist' is defined to mean a person registered under the Health Practitioner Regulation National Law (Tasmania) in the pharmacy profession but it does not include a person who holds provisional, student or non-practising registration on that profession.

The Poisons Act also uses the term 'pharmacy trainee'. That term is defined under section 3 of the act to mean a person who holds provisional registration in the pharmacy profession. This differentiation reflects the registration scheme that exists for pharmacists under the Health Practitioner Regulation National Law (Australia) and the requirement for a pharmacist to undertake a period of training, and to be provisionally registered for this purpose before progressing to general registration.

The bill proposes retaining this differentiation by replacing the terms 'pharmaceutical chemist' and 'pharmacy trainee' with new, more contemporary terms that better align with the language used in the Health Practitioner Regulation National Law (Tasmania).

The second act to use the term 'pharmacist' in a unique way is the Pharmacy Control Act 2001. That act defines the term 'pharmacist' to mean a person who holds general registration under the Health Practitioner Regulation National Law (Tasmania) in the pharmacy profession.

The Pharmacy Control Act is concerned with pharmacy ownership and requires a pharmacist owner to hold general registration in the pharmacy profession. Retaining the definition as drafted is consistent with this requirement.

The definition of 'pharmacist' proposed to be included in the Acts Interpretation Act will not apply to the Poisons Act and Pharmacy Control Act. Instead, the definitions for the terms that are provided in the acts themselves will apply.

I will now turn to the amendments to the Health Act and the Health (Fees) Regulations. The bill proposes amending the Health Act and Health (Fees) Regulations to, in effect, relocate the definition of 'hospital services' from the regulations to the act. This is needed as the definition is used in the act as well as in the regulations. Other than a minor change to the definition of 'health service establishment', the definitions are themselves not changing.

Amendments to the Poisons Act and Poisons Regulations: as I have already noted, this bill proposes minor amendments to update, clarify and improve the operation of several pieces of legislation. In relation to the Poisons Act and Poisons Regulations, the bill proposes several amendments to update references to pharmacists, and to correct the spelling of the word 'authorise' and its derivatives. These are minor, technical changes that do not change the legislation's use or application.

The bill also proposes more substantial amendments to sections of the act relating to the monitored medicines database and to provisions regulating drugs of dependence.

The bill proposes amending provisions that require prescribers and dispensers to check the monitored medicines database to provide for the drafting of regulations which effectively exempt certain prescribers and dispensers from those requirements.

The bill also proposes amending provisions that make it an offence to make a drug of dependence available to a person in certain, relevant, circumstances, to provide for the drafting of regulations which, again, effectively exempt certain prescribers from those offences.

The circumstances in which regulations may be considered include circumstances involving patients who are in receipt of pain medication as part of their end-of-life care. The amendments also propose minor changes to section 59E of the Poisons Act. Those prescribed changes are needed to allow the secretary to authorise a medical practitioner, dentist, or other prescriber to make more than one narcotic substance or specified substance available to a patient, and to specify an amount that is up to a maximum amount through a single authority. The amendments will streamline section 59E's operation and provide greater flexibility for prescribers without compromising any of the protections and oversight mechanisms that the section affords vulnerable patients.

I will now speak about the amendments to the Public Health Act. Lastly, the bill proposes amendments to sections 10 and 151 of the Public Health Act. Section 10 of the Public Health Act provides for the appointment of persons as environmental health officers and medical officers of health. Environmental health officers and medical officers of health have various powers and functions under the Public Health Act, including the power to enter and inspect premises and vehicles, and the power to issue infringement notices.

The bill proposes amending section 10 of the Public Health Act to clarify the Director of Public Health's power to appoint a person with approved qualifications as an environmental health officer or medical officer of health for the purposes of the act. The proposed amendments will align the appointment process under section 10 of the Public Health Act to appointment processes in place under other similar legislation, such as the Food Act of 2003 and the Radiation Protection Act 2005.

Given the nature of their powers and functions, the bill also proposes inserting provisions clarifying, and removing any doubt about, the validity of past appointments and of powers and functions exercised by environmental health officers or medical officers of health prior to the making of the amendments.

The bill proposes amending section 151 of the Public Health Act to clarify the enforceable nature of a requirement, imposed by the Director of Public Health, for a person, public authority, or agency, to remove or destroy an article, item, goods, or substances that, in the director's opinion, may cause a threat to public health. This amendment is of a technical nature, and addresses a drafting anomaly.

Before I commend the bill to the House I will seek some advice.

I commend the bill to the House and I adjourn the debate until tomorrow.

Debate adjourned.

MESSAGE FROM HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

Motion for Respect

[3.41 p.m.]

Mr PRESIDENT - There are two messages from the House of Assembly.

Mr President, the House of Assembly having agreed to the following resolution begs now to transmit the same to the Legislative Council and to request its concurrence therein, that the House of Assembly:

- (1) Notes:
 - (a) the Motion for Respect: Report into Workplace Culture in the Tasmanian Ministerial and Parliamentary Services report released on Monday 29 August 2022; and
 - (b) that the Report provides 14 recommendations to improve workplace culture and processes, and ensure a shared responsibility for the varied workplaces covered by the Report.
- (2) Acknowledges:
 - (a) those who shared their experiences and apologises for the hurt and harm caused to them;
 - (b) the need to improve workplace culture and process in the workplaces covered by the Report;
 - (c) that Tasmanians expect Members of Parliament and their offices to set the highest standards in workplace culture and accountability;
 - (d) that staff employed in the workplaces covered by the Report are hardworking, dedicated and valued by Members of Parliament;
 - (e) that the Report addresses a number of individual workplaces with respective needs and employment conditions; and
 - (f) that each workplace must retain its individual rights to employ and manage staff, in line with best practice workplace policies, processes and procedures.
- (3) Resolves:
 - (a) that Members and staff in the workplaces covered by the Report have a right to a safe and inclusive work

environment free from discrimination, bullying, sexual harassment; and

- (b) that best practice workplace policies, processes and procedures enable safe and respectful workplaces and contribute towards positive culture.

(4) Supports:

- (a) the development and sharing of policies, procedures and frameworks, and relevant codes of conduct, that would ensure consistency across the workplaces covered in the Report; and
- (b) the provision of ongoing professional development and training to deliver a culture of continuous improvement.

(5) Commits to:

- (a) ensuring oversight and accountability for the implementation of recommendations by the relevant employer.

Signed Mark Shelton, Speaker
House of Assembly
6 September 2022

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

That the motion be taken into consideration tomorrow.

Motion agreed to.

MESSAGE FROM HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

Workplace Oversight Committee

[3.44 p.m.]

Mr PRESIDENT - The second message from the House of Assembly:

Mr President, the House of Assembly having agreed to the following resolution, begs now to transmit the same to the Legislative Council and to request its concurrence therein -

Resolved that:

- (1) A Joint Sessional Workplace Culture Oversight Committee be appointed with power to send for persons and papers and with leave to

report from time to time, to oversee the implementation of any recommendations, by the relevant employer, contained in the report Motion for Respect: Report into Workplace Culture in the Tasmanian Ministerial and Parliamentary Services (August 2022);

- (2) The number of Members to be appointed to serve on the said Committee on the part of the House of Assembly be 4.

Signed Mark Shelton, Speaker
House of Assembly
6 September 2022

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

That that motion be taken into consideration tomorrow.

Motion agreed to.

ADJOURNMENT

[3.45 p.m.]

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

That at its rising the Council does adjourn until 11 a.m. on Wednesday,
7 September.

Motion agreed to.

Mrs HISCUTT (Montgomery - Leader of the Government in the Legislative Council) -
Mr President, before I move the adjournment, can I remind members of our 9 a.m. briefing in the morning? That will be on the health legislation bill that we have started, moving on to the Homes Tasmania Bill at 9 a.m. in Committee Room 2.

I move that the Council do now adjourn.

The Council adjourned at 3.45 p.m.