

Thursday 8 August 2019

The Speaker, **Ms Hickey**, took the Chair at 10.00 a.m., acknowledged the Traditional People and read Prayers.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE

Premier - Mr Hodgman

[10.02 p.m.]

Mr ROCKLIFF (Braddon - Minister for Education and Training) - Madam Speaker, I advise that the Premier will be absent from the House today to attend the meeting of the Council of Australian Governments in northern Queensland. In the Premier's absence I will be acting as Premier and will take all questions relating to his portfolios.

QUESTIONS

Mersey Community Hospital - Elective Surgery Availability

Ms WHITE question to MINISTER for HEALTH, Ms COURTNEY

[10.03 a.m.]

The chaos and dysfunction consuming the Hodgman Liberal Government culminated in the dumping of the failed former Health minister, Michael Ferguson, but his destructive legacy lives on. One of the key outcomes of the Health White Paper was that the Mersey Community Hospital would become an elective surgery centre and perform up to 75 per cent of all elective surgery procedures in the state. How do you explain reports that elective surgery activity at the Mersey Community Hospital has been slashed? Neurology has decreased to one session a month instead of one a fortnight. Ophthalmology decreased to one day per fortnight instead of one day a week. Ear, nose and throat surgery decreased to one list a month instead of one list per fortnight. It is understood that general surgery will also decrease by an unspecified amount. Did you sign off on this dramatic downgrade in services at the Mersey or was this a poisoned chalice left to you by the failed former Health minister, Michael Ferguson?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I will begin by refuting your assertions with regard to the former Health minister, Michael Ferguson. In his five years as minister, we saw record spending, record numbers of beds open, wards open and people employed within our health system. For those opposite to try to misrepresent the last five years is shameful.

With regard to elective surgery and the issues raised by the Opposition Leader, Health has been and continues to be this Government's top priority. We are investing more in Health. Our overall spending as part of the state Budget has increased to 32 per cent from 25 per cent a decade ago. Our hospitals are busy. Over the course of a year we see more than 28 000 emergency and elective surgeries performed. We are investing across our hospital system. Hundreds of new staff will be employed and beds will be opened in coming years. The Royal Hobart Hospital is almost complete and this significant investment helps with bed flow and making sure any impacts on elective surgery

are minimised. For the Opposition to make these allegations with regard to elective surgery when they were responsible -

Ms WHITE - Point of order, Madam Speaker, it goes to standing order 45. Can the minister please answer and confirm whether there has been a dramatic downgrading of services at the Mersey? This is about the Mersey. I hope the minister can answer the details of the question.

Madam SPEAKER - Leader of the Opposition, that is not a point of order. I will be counting these points of orders today. Please proceed.

Ms COURTNEY - Thank you, Madam Speaker. The other side making these allegations would be laughable if it were not so serious. We saw Tasmanians on the elective surgery waiting list for 10 years under Labor. It has taken a Liberal Government to reinvest in elective surgery and our entire health system to see Tasmanians being cared for. I thank the hardworking and dedicated staff we have -

Members interjecting.

Madam SPEAKER - At the front line we have Rebecca White, David O'Byrne and Mr Bacon, all on one warning.

Mr Bacon - For what?

Madam SPEAKER - For talking out and interrupting. Do not question the Chair. That is number two.

Ms COURTNEY - Thank you, Madam Speaker. It is important that the services those staff deliver across the state are acknowledged every day in this place. There is no better supporter of the Mersey than the Hodgman Liberal Government. The Mersey does a wide range of surgeries and procedures across a number of specialties, including diagnostic procedures such as endoscopy.

I am advised that the levels of surgical-related activity will be maintained in 2019-20. The mix of procedures is determined by clinicians and will vary from year to year based on capacity and need. There is no impact in efficiency dividends or delivery of frontline services at the Mersey. It was the Liberal Government that secured the \$730 million, 10-year deal for the Mersey Community Hospital, better than anything we have ever seen on the other side. Yesterday I mentioned the 24-hour helipad we have servicing the north-west community. We are investing \$35 million for major capital upgrades across this campus. I can stand here today and categorically say that there is no better friend of the Mersey Hospital than the Hodgman Liberal Government.

Elective Surgery - Funding

Ms WHITE question to MINISTER for HEALTH, Ms COURTNEY

[10.08 a.m.]

At the end of March this year there were 9426 Tasmanians waiting for elective surgery. That is in addition to the 30 000 waiting to join the list. Due to your Government's chronic underfunding of Health, this elective surgery waiting list figure has grown by over 3000 in one year. We have been told by health professionals on the front line that as a result of your savage budget cuts only

category 1 patients waiting for elective surgery at the Royal Hobart Hospital are able to access appointments due to the lack of beds and funding. On 22 July federal Health minister, Greg Hunt, told the federal parliament -

There is \$20 million towards elective surgery, as the member for Denison and I discussed recently, of which the first \$5 million has already been paid as part of an agreement - something I've discussed with the Minister for Health in Tasmania, Sarah Courtney ...

Given the federal minister has confirmed that additional funding has been delivered to your Government specifically for the delivery of elective surgeries, how can you possibly justify what is happening at our hospitals, including the Mersey, and your so-called elective surgery centre?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, as the member would know, it is the other side that cut elective surgery in our state in their term of government. It is our side that has reinvested in this important area and we will continue to do so, with record investment into Health funding, 32 per cent of our Budget, more than 1000 new people working within our health system delivering services for Tasmanians, more beds, more wards and more investment in capital across our state so we can deliver the health services we need for Tasmanians.

Madam SPEAKER - Order. Ms Butler, you will get a warning if you keep mumbling.

Ms COURTNEY - The other side comes in here and talks about elective surgery when they left Tasmanians on the list for 10 years. Also, when it comes to an alternative from the other side we wait to see what the alternative policy is from the Labor Party.

Ms WHITE - Point of order, Madam Speaker, under standing order 45, relevance. I ask you to draw the minister's attention to the question and whether she can confirm that only category 1 patients at the Royal Hobart Hospital are currently receiving elective surgery because of the Government's mismanagement and budget cuts.

Madam SPEAKER - That is not a point of order. Please proceed, minister.

Ms COURTNEY - Thank you, Madam Speaker. As we saw yesterday, the Labor Party voted to show Tasmanians that they only have one policy.

Ms O'BYRNE - Point of order, Madam Speaker. Standing order 2 says that members are not to say things in the House that they know to be untrue. We only have one policy on free TAFE, which is one more than the Government has.

Madam SPEAKER - I do not believe that is a point of order either.

Ms COURTNEY - Madam Speaker, obviously, the member on the other side who sacked a nurse a day is very sensitive about that fact that they do not actually have a health policy yet. Indeed, we know they do not because we did not see anything in the alternative budget that the opposition treasurer has failed to deliver, year in, year out, not being able to show Tasmanians what they would offer -

Mr O'Byrne - This is about Mr Hunt's money for you.

Madam SPEAKER - Mr O'Byrne, that is warning number two.

Ms COURTNEY - We acknowledge there are challenges in our health system. I have seen that from the first day of being Health minister. Speaking to clinicians and visiting emergency departments, I am very aware of the challenges we have in our health system and we are working hard to address them. Last week I updated the House on the Access Solutions meeting. I am dedicated and committed to making sure all those are implemented. If we are able to increase flow within the hospital and the availability of beds, we are able to ensure we have availability for elective surgery. We are committed to making sure Tasmanians get the health care they need and I am committed to delivering that.

University of Tasmania - Freedom of Speech

Ms O'CONNOR question to MINISTER for EDUCATION and TRAINING, Mr ROCKLIFF

[10.13 a.m.]

In recent weeks pro-democracy students have posted a symbolic Lennon Wall at the University of Tasmania's student lounge, with hundreds of messages of support and solidarity for students fighting for their freedom in Hong Kong. The wall was torn down by pro-Beijing students a bit over a week ago, breaking the hearts of students from Hong Kong and Taiwan, and then replaced by students who stand with Hong Kong. The night before last, it was torn down again in defiance of a statement from UTAS management that 'the protection of freedom of speech on a university campus is paramount'. Are you concerned about attempts to crush freedom of speech on the UTAS campus and will you today condemn these acts and make a strong statement of support for pro-democracy students on the UTAS campus?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the member for her question. I am prepared to make a strong statement in respect to freedom of speech at the university campus, or anywhere, quite frankly. Freedom of speech is paramount, particularly when it comes to our student voice. That is why, as Minister for Education and Training, when students recently rose to speak about climate change I did not condemn them having a say. My interest as minister was about ensuring student safety and we knew exactly where they were when they were protesting outside Parliament House. We welcome the student voice. As I said to the youth at the Youth Parliament here a few weeks ago, in many respects the young people's voice is our social conscience when it comes to our community -

Ms O'Connor - Make a statement of support for the students in Hong Kong and Taiwan.

Madam SPEAKER - Ms O'Connor, I have to be fair to everyone.

Mr ROCKLIFF - We are a democratic state and a democratic nation. We will always stand up for democracy and freedom of speech.

Skills Funding and Economic Growth

Mrs RYLAH question to MINISTER for EDUCATION and TRAINING, Mr ROCKLIFF

[10.15 a.m.]

Can you update the House on skills funding and initiatives provided by the Hodgman majority Liberal Government that support Tasmania's economic growth?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the member for Franklin, Mrs Rylah, for her question and her interest in this matter. Under the Hodgman majority Liberal Government Tasmania has seen a dramatic turnaround in economic performance and employment levels. For the first time in almost 15 years our economy is the strongest growing in the nation. There are more than 12 500 additional Tasmanians in work than when we came to office, including 7100 more women and 1400 more young people, but we know there is more to do to maintain the momentum in our growing economy and continue to deliver our long-term plan for Tasmania.

Education and skills remain at the heart of our plan. I am pleased to provide the House with details of a \$3.7 million investment for training that will benefit over 2500 Tasmanians. The most recent skills fund round will provide over \$2.1 million in jobseeker training and industries, including transport and logistics, security, aged services, retail and agriculture. It includes \$400 000 for jobseeker training in disability services and, I am pleased to note, over \$175 000 for jobseekers and volunteer groups in the mental health sector.

Over \$1.4 million will be invested in training workers in priority industries such as forestry, aquaculture, construction, transport and logistics, civil construction and manufacturing. This also includes \$400 000 from existing employees in disability and aged services and \$100 000 to train voluntary groups in sectors such as community services, disability services and agriculture.

We are also continuing our investment in workforce development initiatives to ensure industries and our regions maintain Tasmania's economic growth. With \$150 000 of support, the Tasmanian Seafood Industry Council will deliver their Rising with the Tide project that will address industry skills, issues and connect workforce demand to meaningful training outcomes. Through a grant of \$115 000, the West Coast Council will deliver their regional development of vocational education and training teacher capability program, which aims to build a VET teaching capability on the west coast of Tasmania, so critical to maintaining rural and regional engagement for growth.

Our work in close partnership with the federal Morrison Liberal Government has seen \$3.9 million invested into the north-west for job creation, \$29 million made available through the skills national partnership and a federal commitment of \$17 million for training to support the Battery of the Nation project.

I am also very pleased to update the House that TasTAFE, the organisation we inherited from the previous government with a \$2.5 million debt from the Tasmania Tomorrow reforms, has just passed its ASQA re-registration audit with accreditation for seven years. I congratulate Jenny Dodd, the CEO of TasTAFE, the executive and the 800 employees within TasTAFE for their very hard work - an incredible accolade for their team.

What we have seen, unfortunately, when it comes to federal and state policies is that they are not helping the vocational education and training sector. The 2012 reforms of the federal Labor government set vocational education and training in turmoil. TasTAFE is recovering from being abolished in and around 2009 when it comes to the Tas Tomorrow reforms. I have been critical of the Labor Opposition for not having any policies. I was wrong. By their own admission they have one policy across all sectors of government. I would say to the members that they need to work a little harder and develop more than one policy before the Tasmanian community takes them seriously.

Ambulance Services - Budget Cuts

Ms WHITE question to MINISTER for HEALTH, Ms COURTNEY

[10.20 a.m.]

This week Will Hodgman claimed that ambulance services would be protected from the Liberal Government's savage budget cuts. However, paramedics are reporting to us that they are routinely unable to restock lifesaving equipment in their ambulances. These items include commonly used needles for inserting cannulas, and vital medications. One paramedic from the north-west region used a set of defibrillator pads, and could not restock another set. How can you claim that ambulance paramedics will not be impacted by budget cuts when they already cannot access routinely used lifesaving equipment?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the member for her question. From previous experience we should not necessarily take what is within the question from the Opposition as truth. I would be more than happy to look into that, because I do not want to see that. We should not have paramedics not having availability of the equipment that they need. I am more than happy to look into that.

With regards to paramedics and ambulances, it is this side of the Chamber that is investing in our ambulance services. We saw that yesterday when I was talking about increased investment in our aeromedical support, making sure that more Tasmanians - and particularly Tasmanians in regional areas - have access to lifesaving hospitals when they need it most. We are making sure that Tasmanians, no matter where they live, have availability to the world-class clinicians and services that we have here in Tasmania. I thank the paramedics we have because I know they work very hard. I know that many of them are working very hard at the moment, and are under a lot of pressure. I thank them for the work they do, day in, day out, and doing it servicing their community. We are fortunate to have these people working in such a dedicated way.

Regarding the demand on our health system, we know there is increased demand and we are responding to it. We have had the Access Solutions meeting with the former minister and the chair, and I am pleased they were delivering on those Access Solutions initiatives to ensure we get flow in the hospitals, to be able to support paramedics and the ambulance services, to make sure we try to minimise ramping, and ensure access to our hospitals.

The reason I know we are doing this is because we are investing more money. We are seeing over \$200 million more invested into Ambulance Tasmania than in the 2013-14 budget - an 87 per cent increase in the budget for Ambulance Tasmania. As of March this year, there were

92 more full-time paramedics and dispatch officers at Ambulance Tasmania than five years ago, so we are responding to the increased demand.

Ms White - How many needles?

Madam SPEAKER - Order, Ms White.

Ms COURTNEY - I know there are pressures, I understand that, but we are supporting the Tasmanians who are working within this system. We have a \$125 million plan, which will see 42 new paramedics recruited across Tasmania. We have new ambulance stations for Glenorchy and Burnie. We have more staff in a state operation centre. We are introducing secondary triage and supporting our volunteers more.

On this side of the Chamber, we have policies that we have committed to the people of Tasmania, the Tasmanians that voted for our side, and we are delivering, unlike the other side that do not have a plan, now have one policy - but nothing related to health, no alternative budget, and no capacity to tell Tasmanians what they would do.

Waste Levy Plan and Container Deposit Scheme

Dr WOODRUFF question to **MINISTER for ENVIRONMENT, PARKS and HERITAGE, Mr GUTWEIN**

[10.25 a.m.]

We heard the bad news on Friday that SKM Recycling, the company that picks up recyclables from five southern councils has been declared insolvent. Without an immediate intervention, this means that kerbside recyclables are destined for landfill from those councils. That would be a disaster for those local councils, for the environment, and it would cripple people's confidence in the value of recycling. We do not have any capacity to recycle plastics and paper on-island, and we desperately need to put downward pressure on landfill and to generate money for a Tasmanian waste-recycling industry.

Your Government has stalled on signing a waste levy plan since 2014. Your draft waste strategy, plans to continue to delay until 2021. Will you heed the plea of Sorell Mayor, Kerry Vincent, and prioritise and bring forward the container deposit scheme, as well as a statewide-based levy?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the member for that question on this important matter. I am aware, as all members of this House are, of the circumstances around SKM, and we are continuing to work closely with the Local Government Association. The Local Government minister has been engaged with LGAT, and to be clear, at the moment it is business as usual. That is my understanding. I met with a council yesterday in my current role and had a discussion with them and this issue was not raised.

Setting that aside, we understand there have been some shifts - certainly, the impact of China's position, and the more recent challenges associated with SKM. We will continue to work closely

with the local government sector. As the member correctly mentioned, we have brought forward our waste action plan for public consultation.

Dr Woodruff - The waste levy plan has been there since 2014.

Madam SPEAKER - Order, Dr Woodruff.

Mr GUTWEIN - We are committed to working through the process and to ensuring that the waste levy, the container refund scheme, are implemented successfully, after we have appropriately consulted with local government to ensure that with local government, and with industry, we get the settings right. The plan is out there. We are consulting, we are doing what we said we would do.

Regarding the current challenges in front of us -

Dr Woodruff - It is pathetic.

Mr GUTWEIN - I know that the member wants to raise issues and create concern, but we are working closely with local government. We will work through this process and we will sensibly introduce the waste levy, and also the container refund scheme.

Bushfires - Independent Review

Dr BROAD question to MINISTER for POLICE, FIRE and EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT, Mr SHELTON

[10.28 a.m.]

In the chaos and dysfunction that resulted in Michael Ferguson being dumped as minister for emergency management, it appears the Australasian Fire and Emergency Service Authorities Council's independent review into last summer's bushfires has slipped from your radar. The report is now well overdue. One of the issues that was raised at the time of the bushfire emergency was resourcing of remote area teams. Can you provide a guarantee that the TFS has been quarantined from your Government's \$450 million budget cuts, and can you assure Tasmanians that remote area firefighting teams will be adequately resourced, trained and equipped, ready to respond to emergencies ahead of the upcoming fire season?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, it gives me pleasure to rise for my first question, and I thank the member for the question.

As far as the AFAC review goes, as members are aware, there was a comprehensive, multi-agency response to the bushfires, and any resources requested by our firefighting experts was made available by the Government. Our firefighters did an excellent job, which is demonstrated by the success they had in protecting both life and property. Firefighting personnel from Parks and Wildlife Service, Tasmania Fire Service, and Sustainable Timber Tasmania worked together to combat the bushfires around the state.

Our state is resourced each year to respond to typical demands of the fire season and we are better prepared to respond to major fire events than ever before. To prepare for the bushfire season, the Government has recorded a spend of \$55 million invested on targeted fuel reduction programs. In the 2017-18 Budget, the Government also allocated additional funding of \$4 million over four years for bushfire management in the TWWHA. The Government, without reservation, has complete confidence in Tasmania Fire Service, Parks and Wildlife Service, Sustainable Timber Tasmania and the partnering agencies to respond to bushfires. Following any major event, there are always lessons to be learnt and the best way -

Dr BROAD - Point of order, standing order 45, I draw your attention to relevance. I asked questions specifically about remote area teams and whether the Tasmania Fire Service will be quarantined from your \$450 million budget cuts.

Madam SPEAKER - That is not a point of order. We will move on.

Mr SHELTON - On the point of order, you also included the AFAC review in your question. The Tasmanian Government commissioned the Australasian Fire and Emergency Services Authority Council, a peak body for response to fire emergencies and the land management agencies to undertake an independent review of the 2019 fires. The AFAC review was wideranging and seeks to investigate issues varying from time lines and effectiveness of the fire response, impact and success of fuel management programs, coordination of emergency activities and the suitability of aviation resources for firefighting and protection of natural values.

The review has been led by Mal Cronstedt, an Australian Fire Service Medal recipient who has more than 40 years' experience in the fire emergency services. The Constedt Review provides a means for members of the public and other interested parties to make submissions. The four-week public consultation period was extended with an additional week over Easter last year to allow additional time for members to lodge formal submissions. That report has been finalised. I have a copy of it and will be making further announcements about its recommendations in due course.

Buy Local Policy and Assistance for Small Businesses

Mrs PETRUSMA question to MINISTER for SMALL BUSINESS, Mr FERGUSON

[10.33 a.m.]

What is the Hodgman Majority Liberal Government doing to assist small business and how is it progressing with its Buy Local policy, which is aimed at encouraging local business participation?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the member for her question and her longstanding support for small business in Tasmania. It is something the Hodgman majority Liberal Government believes in which is just as well because, in working with our small business sector, we have to give a lot of credit for the great way they have performed in this state and assisted our state with the dramatic turnaround in economic performance.

For the first time in almost 15 years, our economy is the strongest growing in the nation. Today, there are more than 12 500 additional Tasmanians in work than when we came to office in 2014. Do not believe the things that are said by members opposite who are trying to shoot down the good

news and destroy confidence. There are 12 500 more Tasmanians in work - that is 12 500 lives - and we celebrate that success. It speaks to the way Tasmania is now seeing itself as a vibrant and confident state.

Tasmanians will never forget the job losses that occurred under the former Labor-Greens government: 10 000 Tasmanians lost their jobs, the statewide unemployment rate spiked to 8.6 per cent, and our state was plunged into recession. Just five years later, in comparison, Tasmania is almost unrecognisable. While there is always more to do, there is a buzz in the air in Tasmania, confidence is palpable, Tasmanians feel happier about the direction our state is travelling and they are excited about what the future will bring. They do not want to go back to the dark days of Labor and the Greens.

We want to do more. We want to help more Tasmanians and we want to see more families supported. We can do that because we get it. We understand small business. We know that private sector businesses are the heartbeat of the Tasmanian economy, which is why we deliberately put in place business-friendly policies. We have policies for business and our hard work is paying off. It has been endorsed by the results of the Sensis Business Index for the March 2019 quarter, which was commented upon by the Treasurer. It confirmed that the Hodgman Government's policies are the most popular in the nation for the seventh quarter in a row. That has been backed up by the NAB Monthly Business Survey for June 2019, showing that Tasmanian businesses continue to enjoy the strongest business conditions in the nation for the sixth consecutive month in a row. You were not able to say that in the dark days of 2013. It is also backed up by the CommSec State of the States report of July, only last month. It confirmed that our state, Tasmania, is leading the nation on equipment investment, relative population growth, housing finance, housing starts and vehicle sales, all signs that New South Wales and Victoria are being challenged for their top positions on their metrics in the year ahead.

We are doing more. Our Business Growth Strategy is another example of the Government taking new strides and supporting new business. Our growth strategy is a partnership with business in Tasmania, particularly through the TCCI and the Small Business Council because we want to work together to create more jobs and economic activity. The strategy outlines how, by working together, the private sector and the Government can build on the high levels of confidence currently reported in the Tasmanian business community, take advantage of new opportunities in our economy - including in science and technology with 500 more jobs in the last year, according to the digital polls from the ACS - ensuring the Government's policies are aligned with business and industry goals and targets.

We are working with business, supporting the aspirations of people who put their own money on the line, and backing them in so they can achieve for our state. Our record investment in infrastructure is building roads, bridges and hospitals. We have laid bricks on hospitals. Schools and homes will also be a boon for contractors and subcontractors, many of whom are small to medium businesses. Who can forget the Labor Party's determined opposition against our local benefits test, which we promoted in our alternative budgets when we were in opposition? It was vigorously opposed by the then economic development minister. We have, since coming to office, implemented the local benefits test. It is imbedded in procurement rules and it is achieving its aims. What were its aims? It was about growing business opportunities in our state, helping Tasmanians to get government jobs and ensuring local business has every chance of winning government tenders. It is doing what it intended to do.

Last week I visited the business Haven Built with Todd and Anna Appleby. They have won government work, like so many other small businesses, in record numbers. We introduced that test and it is working. Recently, we doubled the points awarded for local benefits. We doubled the mandatory minimum waiting assigned to local small and medium enterprises and there is more.

Ms White - Five minutes.

Mr FERGUSON - It is good news. I am sorry the Leader of the Opposition does not want to hear this but it is good news for Tasmanian business. We have them listed for up to 90 per cent of Tasmanian Government contracts. That is great news. This could be your second policy if you would adopt it, I say to the Leader of the Opposition, through you, Madam Speaker.

Our Buy Local policy still ensures that Tasmanian taxpayers are getting good value for money. We are doing more for small business and we are supporting them with \$7.5 million for targeted small business grants for apprentices and trainees and that is worth up to \$5000 for each new trainee or apprentice. We have appointed a small business advocate for Tasmanian small businesses to ensure we are acting to create a more level playing field. This could be Labor's third policy if they would adopt it. We have also extended funding for the enterprise hubs in Launceston and Hobart for a further year at \$278 000. It is working and we are helping those startups.

I will conclude on this important point: we understand small business and we believe the Government's role is to help them achieve their goals, with family businesses particularly that are making difficult and personal financial risks because they want their independence and want to employ other Tasmanians. They do not trust Labor, which has no credibility when it comes to the economy and jobs. We encourage the Labor Party to come on board and support our business growth strategy and in so doing send a clear message to small business in Tasmania that Tasmania is backing small business and growing jobs.

Agri-Food Plan - Jobs and Investment

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

[10.41 a.m.]

Can you update the House on how the Hodgman majority Liberal Government's comprehensive Agri-Food Plan is delivering jobs, export dollars and increased confidence for our Tasmanian dairy farmers and processors?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the member for his question and his strong support not just for the dairy sector but agriculture across the board, particularly on the east coast. As the member knows, there is no bigger supporter of our rural and regional sector than the Hodgman majority Liberal Government.

Our dairy products are in demand around the world. This week the Australian Bureau of Statistics released the latest export data showing there has been an almost 48 per cent increase in Tasmanian dairy exports in 2018-19 to \$145 million. This is good news for the sector, and it is on

the back of strong agriculture exports with an increase in the value of meat, fruit and vegetables. The data also shows that butter, skim milk powder and whey products have increased in 2018-19.

Tasmania's agriculture and fisheries sectors are well positioned to take advantage of this strong demand. We are continuing to build a strong trade relationship with the implementation of the Government's trade strategy and the Premier as our Trade minister. We have the free trade agreement increasing the competitiveness of our primary industry sector. For example, the Chinese tariffs on dairy products have halved over the past four years and that is very encouraging. We say thank you to the Morrison Liberal Government for their efforts in that regard.

Our major dairy processors have demonstrated confidence in agriculture and dairy in this state. They are investing and, for various reasons, Tasmania's dairy sector is outperforming the rest of the country with very good results this last financial year. Why would our farmers not be confident about the future when they know they have the Hodgman Liberal Government backing them to the hilt? We have their backs, we are backing the dairy sector, and they know that, their families know that and the agribusinesses know that as well.

We have a comprehensive Agri-Food Plan to grow a competitive, sustainable, innovative and profitable agriculture sector. In terms of dairy, we have plans to grow more, milk more and make more. We have a commitment of \$900 000 over the next four years to support the dairy farmers, farm businesses and value-adding strategies. Last month I was very pleased to announce a \$300 000 three-year project in partnership with Dairy Tasmania to help the dairy industry take the sector to the next level. In addition, \$250 000 will be made available to the successful on-farm energy audit and capital grant program to specifically help dairy farmers achieve energy savings. This is all on the back of our Tasmania First energy policy.

We have extended the stock underpass program on the back of our landmark biosecurity legislation. I cannot pre-empt the upper House but it passed the second reading upstairs last night and, all being well, the third reading today, and we will have landmark biosecurity legislation delivered by this Government to support and benefit Tasmanians one and all.

Our farm gate value target is \$10 billion by 2050. That is where we are headed and we are very pleased. Based on the last ABS statistics we have had a 9 per cent increase in agricultural production over the last financial year. That is very encouraging. It is little wonder that the rural confidence survey from Rabobank showed that two-thirds of Tasmanian farmers were positive about the outlook. That is no surprise at all.

The Hodgman Liberal Government has a strong vision and a strong plan to grow a competitive, innovative, sustainable, profitable agricultural sector. Regarding the Labor policy with respect to agriculture - they do not have one. We are still waiting. We know they have one policy but in terms of agriculture they still do not have one. It is a massive big vacuum. But guess what? We are getting on with the job.

Bushfires - Independent Review

Dr BROAD question to MINISTER for POLICE, FIRE and EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT, Mr SHELTON

[10.46 a.m.]

In his last response he went nowhere near discussing the issue of remote area teams. We have obtained a leaked copy of the latest AFAC review, which highlights the fact that the former failed

minister for emergency services, Michael Ferguson, ignored recommendation 11 from Dr Tony Press' independent review into the January fires which was to fund and train more remote area teams, which was also a recommendation from the previous AFAC review of 2016. Given this and your Government's failure to act on recommendations of previous reviews, how can we have any confidence that you will act on recommendations of this new report?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the member for his question. As I have stated before, there is an AFAC review underway. The process is that it comes to the minister and then the Government has to acknowledge that review and come back with the reports. That process is underway.

As far as the specific question goes, what we have to be aware of is that the bushfire from December last year through to March this year was the second-largest Tasmanian fire event in modern history. It was the largest fire event this state has seen since 1967. A total of 210 000 hectares of Tasmania, including Wilderness World Heritage Area, was burnt - 3 per cent of the state. It was a huge fire and a magnificent effort by all those involved, our firefighters and responders, to that fire.

Dr BROAD - Point of order, Madam Speaker, under standing order 45, relevance. Although obviously the firefighting effort was magnificent, I draw the minister's attention to the specific question about the funding and training of remote area teams.

Madam SPEAKER - That is not a point of order but I have allowed it on *Hansard*.

Mr SHELTON - I will get around to talking about the issue the member has raised, but I have a few minutes to give a background and context to this on the way through. I wish to talk about the tremendous effort that our firefighting agencies went to when confronted with this fire -

Members interjecting.

Madam SPEAKER - Order. Could we resume composure, please? Both sides.

Mr SHELTON - As this Government has always done, it committed to a significant review of the fires and all the implications. AFAC examined the cause, chronology and response to the 2018-19 bushfire and the terms of reference of that inquiry -

1. The causes, chronology and response of the 2018-19 bushfires in Tasmania on and following 28 December 2018.
2. The effectiveness of community messaging and warnings.
3. The timeliness and effectiveness of the fire response and management strategy, including accommodating the priorities of life, property, timber production and forest asset values, and environmental and cultural values by Tasmanian fire agencies.

Ms White - You already read this in your last answer.

Madam SPEAKER - Order, Ms White, warning number two.

Dr BROAD - Point of order, it goes to relevance. We are not here to hear about the terms of reference. The specific question was relating to the recommendations of previous reports, and if the Government will adopt the recommendations of this new report.

Madam SPEAKER - I accept your frustration but it is not a point of order. That will be the last frivolous point of order, thank you very much.

Mr SHELTON - Thank you, Madam Speaker. The terms of reference continue -

4. The impact and effectiveness of fuel management programs in the fire affected areas on the management and containment of the fires.
5. The effectiveness of state, regional and local command, control and co-ordination arrangements, to include agency interoperability and the co-ordination of emergency management activities with government and non-government organisations.
6. The effectiveness of the arrangements in place for requesting and managing interstate and international assistance and the significance of interstate and international assistance in managing the fires.
7. The use and effectiveness of aviation firefighting resources, in particular, the suitability of aircraft types for the protection of environmental values, forest assets and the rural/urban interface in Tasmania. (Note: this should also focus on the potential effectiveness of winch-capable aircraft as a first response)
8. Any other matter that the Review team identifies in the course of its activities as warranting discussion.

There has been a significant review of last year's fire. It will include a number of recommendations and I am sure, because of the discussion around Tasmania since the beginning of this year, the issues the member raises about the capability of remote firefighters will be part of the review. I hope the member is not asking me to comment before the public has a chance to read the review and understand the view of the review team on these issues.

Ms O'CONNOR - Point of order, Madam Speaker, standing order 48. The minister has had more than sufficient time. We are now running at five-and-a-half minutes on one question.

Madam SPEAKER - It is not a point of order but I am sure the minister is winding up.

Mr SHELTON - I am winding up. I am sure everybody is interested in what is in the review and I can assure you it is not that far away.

Bushfires - Independent Report

Dr BROAD question to MINISTER for POLICE, FIRE and EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT, Mr SHELTON

[10.53 a.m.]

The Gell River fire was one of the largest and most severe fires that burnt last summer. The AFAC review found that fire crews withdrew believing that the Gell fire had been extinguished

three days after the fire was first detected. These crews sought assistance from an aerial intelligence gathering aircraft, or an AIG, to try to detect any hotspots using thermal imaging but there was not one available in the state at that time. The Gell River fire ended up destroying 35 062 hectares including sensitive sections of a Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area and commercial timber reserves. Why was there no AIG aircraft available when firefighters needed one? Why was there no AIG aircraft based in Tasmania last summer during the fires, and will you commit to ensuring this resource is available for the upcoming fire season?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the member for his question. The member has been looking at some documents and I do not know which document he has been reading from. That does not appear to be the same document I have. However, I am not aware that the member has a copy of the report. I will be referring to the AFAC report shortly. I will be making a ministerial statement on issues raised by members that are included in the AFAC review. I am not going to the specifics of the question because the review is to be made public. When I have received feedback on all these issues I will report to members as to directions the Government is taking. Until that time and until the ministerial statement, members will have to wait for more detail.

Supported Accommodation - Provision

Mrs RYLAH question to MINISTER for HOUSING, Mr JAENSCH

[10.56 a.m.]

Can you please update the House on how the Hodgman majority Liberal Government is delivering on our plan to provide more supported accommodation for Tasmanians in need?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for Braddon, Mrs Rylah, for her question and her interest in this matter. This is Homelessness Week and the Hodgman majority Liberal Government is committed to addressing homelessness and reducing housing stress across Tasmania. This means supporting Tasmanians in need with accommodation that meets their needs so they can build better lives and achieve independence. Through our affordable housing strategy and actions plans we are pulling all the levers available to us to increase the supply of homes for Tasmanians across the spectrum of need because, as the theme of this week's Homelessness Week reminds us, Housing Ends Homelessness.

We have announced an extra \$5 million to increase the capacity of specialist homeless shelters to ensure support is provided to people in emergency need. This includes addressing different groups such as families, women escaping family violence and rough sleepers with different solutions for each of their needs. We are implementing this as a matter of urgency, our work plan is well underway and I will continue to update the community and the House as it progresses. I thank the shelter operators, the councils involved, Housing Tasmania's team and the suppliers of the new accommodation that is on its way, for their efforts to get that done quickly.

In a significant step to provide more longer-term supported accommodation for those leaving emergency shelters I am pleased to announce today that the state Government has entered an agreement to purchase the property known as the Waratah Hotel on Murray Street in Hobart. Once

upgraded, the facility will offer long-term supported accommodation with onsite specialist services for residents whose needs may not be met by mainstream social housing. It will operate on a similar basis to other supported accommodation facilities across the state, including Bilton Lodge, Haven Lodge, Indigo Lodge and Burnie Lodge. These facilities have been offering stable, supported accommodation for over 10 years and have achieved excellent outcomes for their residents. I commend them for their work. We anticipate that the Waratah facility will offer around 24 ensuite units for tenants who require supported accommodation with a capacity to further develop the site into the future. Once the purchase is finalised and settled, detailed plans to refurbish the site will be developed and submitted through the normal council processes. We expect that the facility will be operational in 2020 once the works are completed.

Developments such as this are an important part of the Hodgman majority Liberal Government's Affordable Housing Strategy, which sees investment of almost \$200 million over eight years, the largest state investment into affordable housing in Tasmania's history. In a week where our homelessness services are working hard to increase community awareness of this issue and the work that they do, I am proud to be part of a Government that gets that housing ends homelessness and is doing something about it. In this place, we know that the Greens at least care about this issue and are bringing forward solutions, albeit those that would deter investment in new housing in Tasmania but at least they have something. At least they are bringing it forward.

Members interjecting.

Mr JAENSCH - The best that Labor has been able to do, when it comes to policies on housing, is to propose that we hold an inquiry. I believe that the intention of that is now clear, because they are hoping that somewhere in the submissions, in the representations that are made into that, there will be something they can take and adopt to be their second policy. Another policy for them, two! They increase their policy basket by 100 per cent, and have another policy - this time on housing - because they do not have any of their own.

As Minister for Housing, and we as the Hodgman majority Liberal Government, will continue to deliver more social and affordable housing for Tasmanians who need it, and homeless accommodation as well. We remain committed to releasing Government-owned land for more social and affordable housing across the state, as we said we would, and as everybody in this House and this Parliament agreed to as an emergency provision - a response to the need in Tasmania for more houses right now. We will see that through.

I hope others will continue to support that as well. I will continue to meet the commitments of the Hodgman majority Liberal Government when it comes to the supply of houses, because, Madam Speaker -

Ms O'CONNOR - Point of order, Madam Speaker, standing order 48, the minister's answer to a Dorothy Dixier question is now running at five minutes. We have had four Dorothys -

Madam SPEAKER - I have been timing it.

Ms O'CONNOR - Thank you, Madam Speaker, if I could just complete my point of order. That means that a third of Question Time has already gone on Dorothy Dixier questions, and we are running a bit over 5 minutes.

Madam SPEAKER - Yes, I understand your frustration, but he was actually up to 4 minutes and 15 seconds. I have been timing it on the Apple watch, which I think is what you might have.

Ms O'Connor - Five and a half minutes.

Madam SPEAKER - No, that is not right. Please continue, but I do ask you to wind up.

Mr JAENSCH - Madam Speaker, we will continue to deliver on our commitments to supply more housing for Tasmania, and more services for those who need them. That is what we said we would do. That is what Tasmanians want. That is what they expect from us, and they do not want cheap tricks or lazy politics. They expect us to get on with the job and that is what I, and my colleagues, are focused on.

Social Housing - Availability

Ms STANDEN question to MINISTER for HOUSING, Mr JAENSCH

[11.02 a.m.]

This chaotic and dysfunctional Government's failure to deliver on its promise to build over 900 new social housing properties has been well documented. As a result, the housing and homelessness crisis has become one of the Hodgman Liberal Government's most shameful legacies. Figures from the *Report on Government Services* report clearly show that the statewide stock of social and community housing, when the Liberals came to power in 2014, was 13 102. During Estimates, it was confirmed that as of May 2019, the statewide stock of social and community housing was 12 485. That is a net reduction of 617 homes under your watch, at a time when we are facing a housing crisis, with 3300 people on the waiting list, and 1600 people sleeping rough on any given night.

If it is true, as you have just said, that the theme for national Homelessness Week, 'Housing Ends Homelessness', is true, then why has your Government reduced the amount of housing available in this state over the past five years?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the Opposition spokesperson for housing for her first question on homelessness and housing in this week.

I am very proud to be part of a government that has delivered more housing for Tasmanians. It is investing in more housing for Tasmanians -

Members interjecting.

Madam SPEAKER - Order. We are nearly there. I am just asking everyone to be good.

Mr JAENSCH - We have been good for the last five years delivering housing for Tasmanians. We have met our targets under Affordable Housing Action Plan Number 1. We have set new targets for Affordable Housing Action Plan Number 2.

Members interjecting.

Madam SPEAKER - Order, Ms O'Byrne and Ms Standen, please.

Mr JAENSCH - We will continue to invest and commit and deliver on more housing for Tasmanians. Over the period of the Affordable Housing Action Plan, Number 1, we delivered 984 new affordable housing lots and homes for people in need across a spectrum of need, which we have explained ad nauseam here before, and we have committed to building more houses for Tasmanians who need them over the next four years.

Ms STANDEN - Point of order, standing order 45 goes to relevance. I ask you to draw the minister's attention to the question, which was very clear, and that is, can the minister confirm that there has been a net reduction of 617 homes on his watch?

Madam SPEAKER - That is not a point of order. I ask the minister to proceed.

Mr JAENSCH - I can confirm that this Government has been building more houses than ever before. In 2018-19, there were 292 new social housing dwellings including: 10 under public housing reinvestment; 66 community housing stock leverage program; 131 in the community housing sector; 19 through assisted private purchases; 43 through innovative partnerships with local government and community housing providers; 17 new backyard units; and six in disability accommodation, and we are committed to keep rolling out our program of delivery of social housing, and housing across the whole range of need -

Members interjecting.

Madam SPEAKER - Order, I am being very tolerant because we are at the fine end of it.

Mr JAENSCH - including expanded shelters for those who find themselves in acute housing crisis, including new supported accommodation for those who need it when they move out, and including new social housing for Tasmanians who are moving through that system and can be placed in longer-term housing that suits their needs.

As we committed to do, we will be releasing more government land, rezoned to deliver more housing, because that is what Tasmanians want. That is what we committed to do at the Housing Summit in March last year. That is what every member of this House voted for when we created emergency provisions that allowed us to do that.

We are getting to the pointy end of some fairly important projects in delivering new housing, new housing land for Tasmanians, and I expect the support of this House for it.

Time expired.

SITTING DATES

[11.09 a.m.]

Mr FERGUSON (Bass - Leader of Government Business)(by leave) - Madam Speaker, I move that the House at its rising adjourn until Tuesday, 3 September next at 10 a.m.

Mr O'BYRNE (Franklin) - Madam Speaker, we will be supporting this motion, but we should reflect on the fact that this Government, in the last two days, has introduced not one bill into this

House, and over the last few days they have been scrambling around. Last week they ran on the blue; we had the bills lined up and, therefore -

Government members interjecting.

Mr O'BYRNE - Oh, you do not like it? All of a sudden they are chattier over that side. It would be nice to have the same grace afforded to us, too.

It is very clear that this Government, 18 months in, can barely pull together a legislative agenda. You prorogued parliament early this year, you run away from responsibility, you run away from accountability and not one bill has been introduced in the last two sitting days. I can understand why you are a bit grumpy about it.

Ms Archer - Wasting time on quorums.

Mr O'BYRNE - Even with our quorum calls, because you cannot even bother turning up for work. It is a government's responsibility to hold a quorum in this House and we have to call quorums to get you back in to show some interest in the parliamentary process.

Madam SPEAKER - Mr O'Byrne, my advice is that it is not the government's responsibility to make up a quorum. It is the responsibility of every member of parliament.

Mr O'BYRNE - This is the Government's agenda, Madam Speaker.

Madam SPEAKER - But it is not their call to make a quorum. Are you debating the motion?

Mr O'BYRNE - Yes. It is very clear that this is a visionless government, a directionless government, a government reeling from the vacuous background of this Liberal Party with no agenda for the state. You take credit for everyone else's work, you bask in the reflective glory of other people, and virtually every day of these last two sitting weeks after your appalling reshuffle, it seems you have no agenda. There is no major vision.

It was an appalling contribution that we saw in private member's time yesterday by the member for Lyons, who should reflect on how he got into this House. Let us not forget how you got into this House and the irony of you getting up and speaking on that is not lost on the people of Tasmania, I can tell you.

Last week you could barely fill a day and two days this week you do not have a bill to introduce in the House so we have work to do. The Tasmanian people see that you have no vision, you have no direction and you are an embarrassment.

Motion agreed to.

BIOSECURITY BILL 2019 (No. 15)

Bill agreed to by the Legislative Council without amendment.

MATTER OF PUBLIC IMPORTANCE

Threat to Tasmania's GMO-free status

[11.13 a.m.]

Ms O'CONNOR (Clark - Leader of the Greens - Motion) - Madam Speaker, I move -

That the House take note of the following matter: the threat to Tasmania's GMO-free status.

I rise on behalf of the Greens today to speak about this matter in the spirit of bipartisanship, because I believe that the entire parliament supports the moratorium on genetically modified organisms in Tasmania and strongly supports the extension of the moratorium to 10 years as part of our unending support for Tasmania's primary producers, reliant as they are on our clean, green brand and our GM-free status.

We are raising this issue today because we want some clarification from the minister on the implications for Tasmania's GM moratorium of the Commonwealth position around the gene technology regulations as they relate to SDN-1 organisms, because our concern is that it will be a moratorium in name only if SDN-1-manipulated organisms come into Tasmania's production systems. The moratorium imposed under the Tasmanian Genetically Modified Organisms Control Act 2004 is only possible under provisions in the Gene Technology Act 2000 of the Commonwealth. Federal law classifies what is and is not classified as a genetically modified organism.

The declassification of SDN-1-modified organisms as GMOs in the federal Gene Technology Amendment (2019 Measures No. 1) Regulations will mean that the state moratorium will no longer capture these gene-edited organisms.

Site directed nuclease, or SDN, techniques introduce editing to a genome by inserting a double-strand break. When this break is repaired by allowing the cell to self-repair, it is classified as SDN-1. SDN-1 techniques include zinc finger nucleases (ZFN), Transcription activator-like effect nucleases (TALENs) and the more commonly known clustered regularly interspaced short palindromic repeats using the Cas9 enzyme (CRISPR-Cas9). SDN-1 techniques induce mutation through the host cell's natural repair mechanisms. The argument put forward by proponents of deregulation is that because this is the same process as natural mutation, it poses no additional risk compared to non-GM organisms. The problem, however, is that the technology can have off-target effects. Off-target cuts, for example, can occur in locations that disrupt essential cellular functions. Aside from off-target effects it is unknown in many cases whether or not the enzymes, such as Cas9, used in SDN-1 techniques have persisting effect. In some cases, persistence effects have been observed. For example the crossing of nuclease and guide RNA can result in unintended genetic modification in offspring.

We would like the minister when he gets to his feet to go to the question of the federal plan to remove SDN-1 genetic engineering from the list of GMOs which means that organisms modified with that technique will not be able to be captured by our moratorium. Many respected geneticists report observations that SDN-1 techniques can cause off-target or unexpected mutations. The SDN-1 techniques are clearly genetic engineering or manipulation and many other countries have classified them as genetically modified organisms.

We would like to know on behalf of Tasmania's primary producers and everyone who relies on our clean, green, GM-free status whether the minister agrees that what is happening at a federal level is putting Tasmania's moratorium at risk. We cannot see that it is doing anything but that. When we received our briefing on the biosecurity bill we sought advice from the minister's officers on whether the bill could be used to restrict SDN-1-edited organisms. The advice we got, and I do not want to verbal them, was that this may be an option. Perhaps the minister could go to that question about whether we have the capacity under the Biosecurity Act, which has now come back to the House, to protect the moratorium.

Mr Barnett - It has passed with no amendment.

Ms O'CONNOR - Well done and well noted, minister.

We would like to know if you have sought advice on the options that may be available to keep SDN-1-edited organisms out of Tasmania, including the possible application of the Biosecurity Act 2019. On 1 August this year, our Australian Greens Senator, Janet Rice, tabled a disallowance motion to disallow Gene Technology Amendment (2019 Measures No. 1) Regulations which would declassify SDN-1 genetic engineering techniques. Minister, it is our understanding that Tasmania was the only state to vote against the declassification of SDN-1 genetic engineering techniques. Are you able to confirm that, and will you be asking your Tasmanian Liberal colleagues in the Senate to back up the stance you took to the legislative and governance forum on gene technology by supporting Senator Rice's disallowance motion?

We believe this is an issue on which there should be a unity ticket out of Tasmania. The Tasmanian Senate team of all persuasions - Liberal, Labor, Greens and Senator Lambie - as well as every member of the House of Representatives should be advocating to protect Tasmania's GM-free status, and we believe that it does not matter what party you come from. In the Senate there is a disallowance motion which we cannot bring forward unless we have the support of Labor Senators, but we should also have the support of Tasmanian Liberal Senators. There is no question that the decision not to classify SDN-1 organisms as GM organisms will impact on our GM-free status. Unfortunately, I get the feeling that we have had the moratorium extended to 10 years in order to try to deflect from what is a very clear and present risk to our GM-free status.

Perhaps the minister could address the questions I have put to him in the interests of tripartisanship and also make a commitment to the House that he will advocate to his federal colleagues to support the Greens' disallowance motion.

Time expired.

[11.20 a.m.]

Mr BARNETT (Lyons - Minister for Primary Industries) - Madam Deputy Speaker, I am pleased to contribute on behalf of the Hodgman majority Liberal Government with respect to our GMO policy, including the new gene techniques referred to in the member for Clark and Leader for the Greens' contribution. I am pleased, honoured and delighted to have made the announcement yesterday to extend the moratorium for 10 years for our Government. It will provide certainty and confidence to Tasmanian businesses, agriculture and agribusiness in particular. The feedback has been very encouraging.

This is all part of our Government's plan to increase our agricultural output to \$10 billion by 2050. We have seen very good statistics coming from the dairy sector, with an increase in exports

of some 48 per cent. We see an increase in agricultural production by 9 per cent in the last available statistics, which is very encouraging and tells us we are on track. There is also the very good news received a few moments ago that the Biosecurity Bill has passed through the upper House without any amendments. It supports exactly the legislation we put through this place. I thank all members of parliament, upper House and lower House, and stakeholders across the community for their terrific support. I met with Wine Tasmania this morning with respect to the Biosecurity Bill.

Ms O'Connor - Perhaps, minister, you could address some of the issues I raised.

Mr BARNETT - Absolutely. I met with Wine Tasmania, Salmonid Growers' Association, and Fruit Growers Tasmania and they are very grateful and pleased with that bill. With respect to GMO, we have received terrific support for the decision we have made to extend the moratorium for 10 years in terms of building that confidence. Stuart Burgess, CEO of Fruit Growers Tasmania, said in correspondence to me that -

Fruit Growers Tasmania would like to congratulate the Government on the announcement of the extension of the GMO moratorium in Tasmania for a further 10 years. This approach provides certainty for our export-facing producers who tirelessly invest in the development of exports of our exceptional premium Tasmanian produce.

We believe this announcement further enhances our world-leading, ultra-premium Tasmanian brand. Peter Skillern, CEO of TFGA, said in the media release yesterday that the TFGA welcomed the news that Tasmania GMO moratorium would be extended another 10 years. Greenham, the beef processor, is very supportive. Sheralee Davies, CEO of Wine Tasmania, has indicated strong support on behalf of her sector. I have communicated with Lindsey Bourke from the Beekeepers Association and they are very supportive. We have extended that.

There will be a change to our gene technology policy and guidelines. They will be updated on that detail. I will be bringing a bill to this House in the not too distant future. I have indicated there will be regular reviews of the developments in gene technology, markets and consumer sentiment, which can trigger an earlier review of the policy, should developments warrant it.

Under the national gene technology scheme, Tasmania regulates our GMO moratorium for marketing purposes. People know that and it is on the public record. Other aspects of gene technology are regulated by the Australian Government, including human health safety and environment impacts. One of the issues, our amendments to the federal Gene Technology Regulations, as has been raised by the honourable member, will come into effect later this year. This followed a review of the federal Gene Technology Regulator to clarify the status of organisms developed using certain new gene editing techniques such as SDN-1. My advice with respect to that technique is that it will not be regulated as a GMO on the basis that organisms modified using this technique pose the same risk as and are indistinguishable from organisms carrying naturally occurring genetic changes.

We have always advocated for Tasmanian interests in maintaining our brand and our markets and that will continue. I am advised the Commonwealth changes to the regulations will commence in three phases from October this year. The federal regulation in no way impacts on Tasmania's ability to have a moratorium on GMOs and that is really important. We have and will continue to work with our exporters and other stakeholders to address any potential market implications as they arise. I have taken advice with respect to the implications and I am looking at all options in

advancing Tasmania's interest to ensure we stay ahead of the pack and Tasmania is put first in all of these respects. I ask the Greens, please, do not scaremonger. Please, do not be wreckers. My concern is that the Greens, with what they are up to, could scare the markets and express a view to the markets. We want to ensure Tasmania is number one and we want to advance Tasmania's interests. I do not want the message coming through from here that there is some concern.

The changes to the federal regulations clarifying the status of certain gene editing techniques in no way impacts on Tasmania's ability to have a moratorium on GMOs. Let us make that very clear. That should be made clear by the Greens and anybody else in this parliament. We strongly advocate for Tasmania's interests in maintaining our brand and market and will continue to do so. We are still consulting with the industry about this. We will continue to work with the exporters and stakeholders to make sure their interests are protected, preserved and supported. You can be assured of that and, as minister, I give you that commitment.

I would like to hear Labor's position. We know they have one policy but we would like them to make it very clear, what their policy is with respect to GMOs. We have heard high-level support but I would like to think a comprehensive view will be expressed by the Labor Opposition in adopting the Government's policy position. It is based on research. It is based on advice. It is based on the feedback that was overwhelmingly in support of a GMO-free state and we have made that decision for a 10-year moratorium.

Time expired.

[11.27 a.m.]

Dr BROAD - Madam Deputy Speaker, first, to address the issue the minister raised. He has not been listening because we have expressed full support for a GMO moratorium and it was Labor that originally put it in place. The 10-year moratorium is a good thing but there is no advantage for Tasmania for genetically modified products to be grown in Tasmania at the moment. There is an advantage from being GMO-free because it gives a marketing advantage, especially for industries like honey and it plays in well with our clean and green brand.

I might highlight that what we are hearing today from the Greens is a technology bogey-man type argument that, all of a sudden, we should be really scared about something because it is technical, it sounds complicated and it will destroy our clean and green brand. Our clean and green brand is very important to our state. It gives us a marketing advantage. The Greens seem as though they are the only experts in what is a clean and green brand. They love the clean and green brand because they get to threaten to undermine it at every turn and that is what we are hearing here today.

We hear scary things like 'at risk', we hear that the technologies they are talking about in SDN-1. The most commonly known form of SDN-1 is the CRISPR-Cas9 technology, which is a targeted technology that punches out genes and so on, but the attitude is that of, 'Oh, my goodness! It induces mutations so we have to be very scared'. The Greens did not provide any evidence about the safety of this technology. They did not provide any evidence of where people were at risk. They raised the issue that, because it is technology and because it is pretty scary, things are going to be at risk. This is the type of straw man, bogey-man type argument they use to get their own way. Let us talk about some of the issues they raise.

This technology punches out genes in a quite targeted way. We are not talking about technology that inserts a fish gene in a tomato or something like that, as has previously been used in GM technology in which you can take a gene from pretty much anything and insert it in

something else. This technology the Greens have brought this motion on about is a technology that basically punches out targeted genes, so if you have a wheat plant that has a particular gene that inhibits growth, makes the plant grow more slowly, or a disease might latch onto a particular gene and make a plant vulnerable to disease, with this technology you can punch out that gene and therefore that plant will grow and produce more food and feed the world.

That is probably not a bad thing, but the Greens raise that that induces mutation. Obviously the Greens are not familiar with any of the current acceptable plant-breeding technologies. I raise one in particular, which is colchicine-induced mutation. This is something that sounds very scary and maybe telling the Greens about this is not a good idea because they might decide that it is against our GMO-free status, but colchicine has been used for probably 40, 50 years. It induces random mutations in plants, and then from there you test the plants and see which one has a benefit. That is part of modern plant breeding. Colchicine induces random mutations, not to mention that humans have been growing crops for thousands of years and diploids and triploids have been part of plant breeding. Diploid is when there are two copies of the gene and triploid when there are three copies. These techniques have been used for a long time.

What I did not hear was an argument about specifics. Where is an instance where this technology has been used and people got sick or died or got cancer or something? There is none. Because it is new technology, it obviously has to be very scary and we cannot have scientists talking about the safety and specifics of this. All we have to do is refer to the Greens because they are the experts on what is safe. They are the experts on what sort of technology should be used and if it can be assumed to be very scary because it is complicated and requires scientists to explain things in detail, it is very easy just to say because it induces mutation it will impact our GMO status and then suddenly people will not want to buy Tasmanian honey because it is grown in a state where this technology is used.

There is no evidence put forward in this place right now to say why this technology is dangerous. There was some traditionally bred celery in New Zealand in a paddock that was exposed to low light conditions and the pickers went out to pick this celery and it burnt their hands. A traditionally bred celery plant from a plant breeding program, exposed to low light - it was obviously very dark in New Zealand where it was - burnt people's hands. This was a traditionally bred celery plant that had to be removed from the market.

There are checks and balances in the system if things are dangerous. Plant breeding is one of those things that is quite regulated. People do not just put products to market that are dangerous; it just does not happen. As to the idea that this technology is a huge risk, I have not seen any evidence from the Greens that that is the case. There are no specific examples. It is just something that might happen and we should be very scared about it because I suppose the Greens are putting a motion together in federal parliament and they want to get a bit more whiz and bang, and they use the clean, green brand of Tasmania to threaten that. That is all this is about; raising people's fears.

Instead we should be talking about the advantages of a GMO moratorium. We should be talking about the advantages Tasmania has because of our disease-free status and now we talk about biosecurity. I am very glad that that passed because obviously we have had some issues with biosecurity in the past. Tasmania is an island. You can point to it on a map. We have clean water and clean air, a massive marketing advantage. What we do not need is for the Greens to be raising issues like this, to have these boogie man, straw man-type arguments to get their scare campaigns going so they can use our clean, green brand as a threat to hang over our heads if they do not get

their own way. If they do not get their own way the first thing they do is raise the clean, green brand.

Time expired.

[11.34 a.m.]

Mr TUCKER (Lyons) - Madam Deputy Speaker, gene technology is used in a number of fields, including scientific research, medicine, therapeutic goods, veterinary medicine, agriculture and other industries. The use of GMOs in Australia is regulated through the National Gene Technology Scheme administered by an independent Gene Technology Regulator. Under the scheme Tasmania regulates our moratorium on GMOs for marketing purposes.

The GMO moratorium provides marketing advantages not only to Tasmanian primary producers and agribusiness but also to our growing food service, organics and tourism industries. The beef, honey, salmon, fruit, wine and organics industries all show overwhelming support for our continuation of the moratorium in their submissions to the review. Members of the \$8 million honey industry actively promote the GMO-free provenance of Tasmanian honey in both domestic and international markets. Major producers in the \$337 million Tasmanian beef industry such as Greenham Tasmania and the Tasmanian Feedlot have provided tangible evidence of the marketing benefits of the GMO moratorium. At Tasmanian Feedlot they are antibiotic-free and hormone-free and they produce alongside the Robbins Island Tasmanian Wagyu grain-fed beef from Tasmania which gets great advantage from these marketing advantages. Our grass-fed beef brands are becoming enormous in this state. There is Cape Grim, Great Southern, Pinnacle, Uncle Joe's, Bass Strait Pure Southern Beef and Pure Black grass-fed Angus Beef. These programs are GMO-free, antibiotic-free, hormone-free and animal welfare is also included. They have an audit process over a number of years on every property they look at before they buy the stock.

I find it quite concerning that the Greens want to continue to scaremonger and threaten these markets with issues like this where they have GMO-free status and also with animal welfare issues.

Ms O'CONNOR - Point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker, under standing order 144. The member has used offensive words. We are not seeking to scaremonger. We are seeking some clarification on the GM moratorium, so can he please withdraw the accusation that we are scaremongering?

Mr FERGUSON - On the point of order, that is an appalling use of the Standing Orders, frankly, and if the member seriously seeks to claim that that is personally offensive she brings down the purpose of that standing order in any event. I suggest that is nowhere near the level of magnitude and request it be withdrawn.

Ms O'CONNOR - He accused us of scaremongering primary producers and that is a lie. On the point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker, I ask the member to withdraw.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER - The member has been asked to withdraw any offensive comments he made.

Mr TUCKER - I withdraw them, Madam Deputy Speaker, if they were offensive.

I would also like to talk about the benefits within the state from the flow-on from these markets and talk about the last Landfall bull sale on 26 March where a bull sold for \$75 000 which is a

record for the state. This bull will be exporting Tasmanian genetics around the world and that is a flow-on from having these markets where we have these GMO-free, antibiotic-free, hormone-free and animal welfare issues sorted, so there are great benefits from this.

The GMO moratorium will continue for 10 years until 2029 subject to parliament passing an amendment bill. This provides certainty for industries and businesses that rely on the state's GMO-free status. The Genetically Modified Organisms Control Act 2004 will be extended for 10 years. The Tasmanian gene technology policy and supporting guidelines will be updated to reflect the updated policy position. There will continue to be regular reviews of developments in gene technology markets and consumer sentiment, which can trigger a review of the policy earlier should developments warrant it.

A growing trade is a fundamental driver for long-term economic growth in all regions of Tasmania. The Tasmanian Trade Strategy was developed in partnership with Tasmania's exporters and producers and outlines actions to be undertaken as we work to grow our state's exports to \$15 billion per year by 2050. The strategy sets out initiatives across four priority areas to build trade in key sectors, showcase Tasmania in priority markets, support trade logistics and market access and build export capabilities of Tasmanian businesses. Furthermore, this strategy clearly defines Tasmania's key international markets and outlines a plan for increasing our engagement with each of these partners including China, Japan, the United States, Malaysia, Singapore and indeed the Australian domestic market. Tasmania's brand is one of the state's greatest assets. This is an exciting time for our state, with Brand Tasmania, the first statutory place-branding authority established in Australia, up and running. Led by one of the world's leading place-branding experts, and supported by a board with a diverse range of exceptional leaders in their field, Brand Tasmania will build our enviable brand reputation even further, strengthening our brand to ensure it embodies the spirit of this place and its people. It will drive new opportunities as a place to live, to visit, to study, to invest or do business with. By working together - business, government and community - to develop a strong brand, we will bring economic, social and cultural strength to Tasmania and the whole Tasmanian community.

As the minister has clearly said, there is no stronger advocate than the Hodgman Liberal Government for building our brand and markets, and capitalising on our GMO-free status. The changes to federal regulations to clarify the status of certain gene-editing techniques in no way impact on Tasmania's ability to have a moratorium on GMOs. Nonetheless, we have and will continue to work with exporters and stakeholders to address any potential market implications if they arise.

Time expired.

[11.41 a.m.]

Dr WOODRUFF (Franklin) - Madam Deputy Speaker, I want to correct a number of falsehoods and slurs that have been made by previous members.

First, I put on the record that the Tasmanian Greens warmly welcome and strongly support the Government's 10-year moratorium on GMOs. It is important for this state, for our 'clean green' brand. It is important to put on the record that this has always had, and will continue to have, tri-partisan support in this place. Why we have tri-partisan support is because all parties can agree, regardless of what we individually or as a party believe from an ideological, theatrical, politicking point of view. The points we have heard from Dr Broad representing the Labor Party's view might make ideological statements about whether they believe there is any issue with genetically modified

organisms, despite the disagreement amongst some parties about the science and where scientists lie in terms of the impacts on human health of genetically modified organisms. Every single member in this place and all parties agree that it would be devastating for Tasmania's export markets if we lost our GM status, because countries, especially the European Union and China, value our GM-free status. It is one of our huge marketing advantages in the world. That point is utterly lost on the Labor Party.

It is irresponsible for Dr Broad to stand here and to ignore the risks to our export markets from what this federal government change will mean to the authenticity of the brand, 'genetically modified free Tasmania'. That is a brand which is so important to European Union markets, and so important to the Chinese.

What we have is a situation where the federal regulator has talked about the science of this particular form of SDN-1 gene engineering technology, and they have made a decision. Leaving aside whether it is right or wrong - I will come back to that - they have decided that organisms that are SDN-1 engineered will not be classified as genetically modified. That regulator did not look at the market impact of deregulation. They did not consult with farmers. They did not consult with companies that export to the European Union and to China, because the European Union does not accept their version of whether that is genetically modified. They believe that SDN-1 engineering techniques are a form of genetic modification. That is the point. The Greens are standing up for an authentic brand in Tasmania. Why the Labor Party does not understand that is beyond me, but I plead with the minister to listen much more clearly to his staff, because I know they were briefed by the scientists who went to the Tasmanian Institute of Agriculture's GMO forum that was held in April in Launceston and in Hobart, about science technology and marketing for GMO products. They heard from the scientists from Europe, New Zealand and Australia. They all talked about the complexity of this area, and about their concerns for the marketing impact and export for Tasmania, because of the market implications of Australia taking a position that SDN-1 is not a genetically engineering technique. The scientists do not agree on this.

We in this place do not get to decide the science of that issue. We are not even here to discuss whether it has human health impacts. That is an issue many people are concerned about, and the Greens speak for those people, but we also speak for all Tasmanians who want an authentic brand, and who want to make sure this Government is doing everything it can to ensure that we do not lose that.

The Liberal minister must speak to his federal colleagues and plead with the Liberal Senators to look at supporting the motion that the Greens Senator Janet Rice will bring in to disallow that, because they put Tasmania first.

We must look to the future and understand the implications for our markets. Why this has not percolated down, I do not understand, but there is still time to make that change. We can do that for our future, for the European Union, because they will not accept the Australian regulators' decision. They have already made their own decision. They do not agree that it is not genetic engineering; they believe it is. They believe there are risks in mutations. They believe that the naïve lay person's idea that you just 'snip little bits of DNA' is rubbish, because it is so much more complicated, and there are so many unintended consequences that cannot be controlled.

Dr Broad - Like?

Dr WOODRUFF - What our federal regulator is doing is taking no monitoring, Dr Broad. They will not monitor what happens at all in research in Australia. That is the concern. There are no checks and balances. That is the issue, Dr Broad. Surely you would understand.

Dr Broad - Where is the risk?

Dr WOODRUFF - Surely you would understand. Put aside your ideological hatred of the Greens for the moment and look at the issue, which is our export markets. Our authentic brand.

Time expired.

Matter noted.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Bushfires -AFAC Independent Operational Review

[11.49 a.m.]

Mr SHELTON (Lyons - Minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Management) - Madam Deputy Speaker, I rise today to update the House on the Australasian Fire and Emergency Service Authorities Council - AFAC - independent report into Tasmania's fires that occurred from December 2018 through to March 2019.

Today I am releasing the AFAC report, which reviews the management of the fires during this period, and among other matters examines the causes, chronology and response to these fires. The report will be able to be downloaded on the Department of Police Fire and Emergency Management website, together with the submissions made to the review, except for those cases that have specifically requested confidentiality.

There is no doubting that the cause of the vast majority of fires through this summer was the extensive number of dry-lightning strikes that occurred across the state. More than 2400 dry-lightning strikes hit Tasmania in January, starting over 70 fires across much of the state. Some fires were detected over a number of days and weeks after the initial lightning, as lightning ignitions may not appear above the ground for some time after the strike. These strikes ignited the Gell River, Great Pine Tier and Riveaux Road fires, to name three of the more substantial fires that contributed to the more than 210 000 hectares of land that was impacted, which equates to 3 per cent of the Tasmanian landscape.

One thing that is abundantly clear is that lightning does not discriminate where it strikes and it is impossible to predict the location of such strikes. The sheer volume of these lightning events that occurred in the west and south-west led to some fires joining up to form larger fire fronts. This is particularly challenging when vegetation is dense and access to respond is significantly limited, and timely and informed decisions need to be made about the deployment of resources.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the AFAC report determines that:

Meteorological conditions in the lead-up to the season had not been extreme and there was no particular reason leading into summer to expect extensive fire activity.

Leading into the 2018-19 summer, a 'normal' fire season was forecast for much of the state. This indicated at least two or three days of total fire bans were anticipated over the fire season. A coastal strip across the north and east of the state, from Bridport to Rheban, south of Orford, was drier than average and was forecast to have 'above normal' fire potential. Fires in this area were predicted to start more easily and be harder to control.

The Tasmania Fire Service instigated a broad range of multiagency measures in preparedness for the 2018-19 fire season, including public education campaigns, the fuel reduction burning program, use of predictive modelling, exercising emergency management plans, as well as ensuring appropriate resourcing arrangements and contracts - for example, aircraft, plant and machinery - were in place for response to fires.

The strategic fuel reduction program, an initiative of the Hodgman Liberal Government commencing in 2014-15, proceeded well over the last spring, with a large number of burns completed for the season. This included 32 burns conducted across all agencies - TFS, Parks and Wildlife Service and Sustainable Timber Tasmania - to reduce bushfire risk to community and wilderness areas. Statewide relative risk as at November 2018 was at 86.2 per cent, which is the lowest it had been in 15 years.

The AFAC report notes that the three fire agencies:

... were not taken unaware by the 2018-19 season and were able successfully to apply organisational structures and firefighting tactics that had been refined from past experience.

The events this summer were the largest in terms of hectares burned since the bushfires of 1967. There was a comprehensive, multi-agency response to the 2018-19 bushfires and any resource requested by our firefighting experts was made available by government. Firefighting personnel from Tasmania Fire Service, Parks and Wildlife Service and Sustainable Timber Tasmania worked together to combat bushfires around the state. Our fire agencies were faced with a number of large fires in several areas of the state, at times in remote and difficult environments, which required large numbers of resources, detailed planning and major commitments from our agencies here as well as from interstate and overseas.

A key conclusion from the AFAC report is one that provides the context that all who commentate on the events of last summer must consider. That is:

... while there are reasoned arguments for increasing Tasmanian state firefighting capacity, it will never be large enough to deal with a season like 2018-19 ...

That is why we invest in strong partnerships between our fire agencies here in Tasmania as well as interstate and overseas.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I will now provide the House with some key facts and figures to put the scale of the response into perspective. Regional and state management structures were stood up across the state during the lengthy campaign with incident management teams activated to manage fires in the Gell River, Riveaux Road, Rosebery and Great Pine Tier areas. Approximately 2000 employees and volunteers from TFS and the State Emergency Service, 248 PWS, 116 STT personnel and 127 STT firefighting contractors and machinery operators were deployed during the

2018-19 firefighting campaign. Most of these personnel undertook multiple rotations, meaning there were thousands of deployment rotations by Tasmanians.

The Tasmanian Interoperability Register was activated with the Department of Premier and Cabinet on 17 January 2019 for generalist support staff from other government departments to the state operations centre and incident management teams. This made available many public servants to provide operational support.

An interstate and international liaison unit was established in Tasmania from 10 January 2019 to coordinate ongoing resource requests and interstate deployments to Tasmania. There were approximately 1144 interstate and international personnel rotations involving personnel from Victoria (23), New South Wales and Australian Capital Territory (765), Queensland (77), South Australia (93), Western Australia (94), New Zealand (81) and Emergency Management Australia and AFAC (11). This was supported by a base camp deployed from New South Wales to assist the management of the Gell River fire, being positioned close to the fireground to ensure quick and efficient fireground rotations. The base camp was operational at Fenton Forest from Monday 14 January 2019 and was initially established for 80 personnel but was expanded for a capacity of an extra 50 personnel on 18 January 2019.

Aircraft were used extensively during the bushfire campaign to:

- identify new fire starts after lightning storms;
- mount rapid first attacks on fires using water and gel;
- lay retardant lines intended to slow the advance of a fire to allow for it to be controlled from the ground;
- acquire intelligence about fire spread and hot spots; and
- insert and extract remote area fire crews to undertake that ground attack

Seven airbases were established at Friendly Beaches, Valley Field, Port Arthur, Strathgordon, Bushy Park, Cambridge and Rosebery. There were also four aviation management centres in operation throughout the state. This supported TFS' operational concept of 'rapid weight of response', which aims to contain and extinguish newly detected or reported bushfires at the earliest opportunity on days of very high fire danger.

Tasmania's National Aerial Firefighting Centre aircraft contracts were engaged, providing two fixed-wing aircraft and five helicopters, along with additional resources under 'call on demand' conditions. There were up to 40 aircraft airborne across the state at the peak of the emergency. During the period, large air tankers were called on from New South Wales and Victoria, including the staging and deployment of large air tankers out of Hobart.

In addition, a number of specialist fixed-winged aircrafts were requested. These included aircraft capable of drafting and collecting water from lakes, command and control aircraft, aerial observation aircraft and specialist winch capable aircraft to insert crews into remote and isolated areas to undertake direct firefighting operations.

A major priority for the Government during the bushfires was also the provision of accurate and timely information to the public, as well as allowing opportunities for the community to engage with TFS and other fire agencies around the bushfires. A total of 41 community forums were held, along with the insertion of community liaison officers into evacuation centres to provide contemporary information to those impacted by the bushfires. Daily media briefings were held at 3 p.m. during the height of the fire activity to provide bushfire information to the whole community.

Of course, following any major fire event like the one Tasmania experience this last summer, there are always lessons to be learned, and the best way for that to occur is through a robust, independent review with input from experts. The Premier announced in his state of the state address in March 2019 that the Government had commissioned an independent review of the bushfire campaign to be conducted by the Australasian Fire and Emergency Service Authorities Council - AFAC - the peak body responsible for representing fire, emergency services and land management agencies.

The AFAC review was chaired and led by Mal Cronstedt AFSM, who brought more than 40 years of experience in fire and emergency management to the review team. Mr Cronstedt is currently the Deputy Commissioner of the Department of Fire and Emergency Services in Western Australia. Deputy Commissioner Cronstedt was joined on the review team by Guy Thomas, Director Asset Services within Queensland Parks & Wildlife Service, and Paul Considine, Director Capability and Assurance at AFAC. The review team's combined knowledge brought together a wealth of varied experience across the urban fire, rural fire, land management and aviation operations from both an Australian and overseas perspective.

The intention of the AFAC review was that it be wide-ranging and the terms of reference gave the review team a broad remit. Importantly, the AFAC review provided a means for members of the public and other interested parties to make submissions. A call for public submissions to the AFAC review was advertised in the three Tasmanian newspapers on 6 April and also further promoted through social media in the following weeks. The four-week public consultation period was extended by an additional week until 10 May to account for the Easter holiday period and requests for additional time to lodge submissions. Members of the public were able to lodge formal submissions or make an appointment to talk in person or on the phone to the review team.

The review received 80 submissions, which the review team read and had regard to. The review team travelled to Tasmania on several occasions and meet with personnel from Tasmania's fire agencies, other agencies and representative bodies. The review team also had the opportunity to visit a number of the firegrounds and discuss the strategies used there. The review team also took time to contact stakeholders by email and telephone to discuss their experience of the management of the fires. As part of the review process, the review team also considered all documentation relevant to Tasmanian emergency management arrangements, preparedness, response and recovery.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the Government welcomes the AFAC report. Tasmania has a history of proactively seeking external independent reviews of significant fire seasons. As stated by the authors of this review, this is a demonstration of a culture of seeking to learn from major events.

The AFAC report notes that there are two stories to tell about the impacts of these fires: the significant success of the Tasmanian fire agencies in protecting human life and property, and, as in 2016, the damage done to ecological and wilderness values in the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area. Lamentable though the damage to natural values was, Tasmanians should see the efforts to preserve human life as a major achievement.

I too wish to acknowledge the tremendous effort of our career and volunteer firefighters and their colleagues behind the scenes who put in an incredible effort over many weeks this summer. Along with our emergency service colleagues the police and SES, they have protected Tasmanian lives, property and the environment in a protracted and complex bushfire season.

As often occurs in events of this scale, certain accounts of the fires have gained traction in public dialogue that, on closer interrogation, are not supported by reality, including:

- that the Gell River fire was not properly managed in its early stages allowing it to escape;
- that the Great Pine Tier fire could have been stopped if firefighters had been allowed to use machinery in the World Heritage Area; and
- that arguments between agencies meant that the Riveaux Road fire went unchecked.

I can confirm today that it is the opinion of the authors of the AFAC report that these suggestions are not supported. The report concludes:

- With the benefit of hindsight the Gell River fire could have been handled differently, but was managed competently according to accepted industry practice;
- There was no Parks and Wildlife Service ban on using machinery in the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area and the request for a machine on the Great Pine Tier fire never reached them and in any event it is not possible to say with any confidence that it would have made a difference; and
- Any shortcomings in the management of the Riveaux Road fire were not down to interagency rivalry.

Armchair experts who claimed it is simple to put out a bushfire in remote wilderness showed complete disrespect for the fantastic efforts of our firefighters during the campaign to keep Tasmanians safe.

Importantly, I am pleased to report to the House today that the Government accepts in principle all of the nine recommendations. The AFAC report recommendations include that -

1. TFS, PWS and STT initiate a discussion among their Australasian peers about good practice around managing new fire starts in remote terrain ...
2. TFS should pursue the creation of a cadre of volunteer remote area firefighters. ...
3. TFS should initiate a policy review ... to clearly identify what body or agency is responsible for planning, carrying out and enforcing fuel management on private property at a township level. ...
4. TFS, PWS and STT should work with government and each other to continue to pursue a whole-of-state fuel management and burning program that encompasses all land tenures ...
5. TFS, PWS and STT agree to an updated version of the Interagency Fire Management Protocol ...

6. TFS, PWS and STT should establish a State Air Desk, to be staffed by specialist staff year-round with responsibility for managing both preparatory and contractual issues out of season as well as aircraft management when fires or other emergency events are occurring.
7. TFS, PWS and STT should jointly reach a decision on whether a winch-capable remote area firefighting capability should be maintained in Tasmania ...
8. TFS, PWS and STT should jointly carry out work to identify acceptable shift lengths and patterns - including requirements for rest days - for all personnel working on emergency operations. ...
9. TFS should engage in discussions with government about the construction of purpose-built State Control Centre facilities for emergency management in Tasmania.

Work has already begun on a number of the recommendations contained in the AFAC report. The Government will continue with the work necessary to progress all recommendations, noting that some of them will be subject to further discussions and the budget process.

When dealing with a fire season of this size, with decisions made at points in time, you will certainly find areas where there could have been better or more informed decisions, made with the benefit of hindsight. The AFAC report provides invaluable learnings and recommendations that can help enhance the cooperative working partnerships between fire agencies. Each of the fire agencies will work in partnership to implement the measures identified in these recommendations to continue to improve and enhance their bushfire preparedness and response capabilities.

In conclusion, Tasmania's attitude to fire and our planning, management and response framework continues to evolve to meet the challenges of extreme weather, changing climate scenarios, new technology, and changes to land management that have occurred in recent decades. Under this Hodgman majority Liberal Government we have been steadily working to make Tasmanian communities safer, year on year.

As the report notes, as at April 2019 we have a state risk rating of 82 per cent. This has reduced by 4 per cent over the past four years and is at its lowest level for 15 years, and is on track to meet the Government's fuel reduction program 2022-23 target of 80 per cent.

This Government is committed to doing what needs to be done to keep Tasmanians safe, to protect our natural, economic and social values and to support the people who work in our fire and emergency service agencies. We do not agree with criticising individuals after the fact, or assigning blame where there are decisions made under time pressures with imperfect information, under competing priorities in space, time and value, and certainly not where hearsay is involved.

As the AFAC report notes, it is a credit to Tasmanian fire agencies and their staff that the review did not need to deal with fatalities in what were almost unprecedented fires this year. This is testament to the fire management agencies that learned the lessons of 2016 and previous fires, and put those lessons into practice.

The undertaking of the Government is that we will take on board the lessons of this past fire season. We agree that there will always be more to do and we will never stop in our goal of ensuring Tasmania is prepared for the future challenges which we know will come.

I am grateful to the AFAC review team - Deputy Commissioner Mal Cronstedt, Guy Thomas and Paul Considine. I also acknowledge every individual and organisation that made a submission to the review.

I wish to end with a final quote from the review team, that urges the reader of the AFAC report -

... to identify and learn the lessons of the 2018-19 fire season, but not to allow that to detract from the hard and unremitting work - with many excellent outcomes - of the volunteers and staff of the Tasmanian fire agencies, and all those Tasmanian, interstate and international organisations and individuals who supported the firefighting effort.

I too wish to thank each and every person - Tasmanian, interstate and international - who helped Tasmania when we needed it.

[12.15 p.m.]

Dr BROAD (Braddon) - Madam Speaker, I move that the report be noted.

Labor also welcomes this report. It was indeed an unprecedented event last summer. We saw a number of lightning strikes across Tasmania: over 2400 lightning strikes, which resulted in fires of an unprecedented scale, which stretched all resources to the limit, over an extended period of time. It is credit to the volunteer firefighters, the career firefighters and all those associated that there were no lives lost. That is something we should all be very proud of.

The weather was against us, but the weather was with us. There were a number of times when wind changes were of benefit and halted fires, but also the amazing work of the volunteer and career firefighters doing everything they could to keep people safe, keep properties safe and make sure fires did not get any further than they possibly could.

We need to highlight the efforts of people like the police in controlling traffic, the residents, in their willingness to evacuate and also to protect their own property - if they were resourced to do so - the volunteers at the evacuation centres who provided food and comfort, both physically and mentally to the people unfortunate in having to evacuate their homes and the stress associated.

I thank all those people.

We did have a very long fire season with fires burning out of control for long periods of time. We do accept and acknowledge the words of the minister. He says:

Of course, following any major fire incident like the one Tasmania experienced last summer, there are always lessons to be learned, and the best way for that to occur is through a robust, independent review with input of experts.

There are, obviously, armchair experts and people who would criticise after the fact, or indeed not have all the facts in hand.

This report highlights there were times when people were under considerable pressure. They were fatigued. There were competing priorities not everybody was aware of and they did the best they could, with the information they had at the time and we do not doubt this. We are not

questioning that. However, in saying there are always lessons to be learned, what we need also is the principle when lessons are learned, they are actually adopted. It is not a matter of simply having a report that makes recommendations. We need recommendations adopted, and this is the issue Labor has, in terms of some of the issues the AFAC report raises.

These are issues raised by the previous AFAC report after the 2016 fires and indeed the report by Dr Tony Press, which highlighted issues such as the need to properly fund, train and resource remote area teams, including having the ability for helicopter winching in and out of remote locations. This was raised in 2016 and again in this report.

I would like to hear from the minister the time lines or an outline on how those recommendations are actually going to be adopted, rather than accepted in principle. That is the key part of this process. It is not a matter of simply commissioning another report. It is a matter of actually adopting the recommendations of the report. We hear the minister talk about proactively seeking external independent reviews and that has definitely been the case in all forms of government. However, we need to learn the lessons of the past.

The AFAC report notes there are indeed two stories to tell and that was about the significant successes, especially in protecting human life and property. The scale was unprecedented, but the impact meant there were no fatalities and it is of massive credit as I have already highlighted. Our volunteer and career firefighters do amazing things and continue to do so.

There was some conjecture in the report that is not probably highlighted in the minister's response on the issue of the Parks and Wildlife Service and using machinery in the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Report. The report itself highlights that there is some conjecture. Evidence was given that a request was made but it never got through to the Parks and Wildlife Service command. We need to get to the bottom of why that happened. We have had representations from people who were involved who were ready to operate machinery but did not receive permission. The conjecture about the report should definitely be looked at and again go through the recommendations that the Government has accepted in principle, especially recommendation 2 that the TFS should pursue recruiting a cadre of volunteer remote-area firefighters. That was done in 2016 and we really need it to happen for this fire season. We need appropriate resourcing.

We also heard in the recommendation that the Tasmanian Fire Service, the Parks and Wildlife Service and Sustainable Timbers Tasmania agree on an updated version of the Inter-Agency Fire Management protocol. The report said that the protocol is no longer operating as intended; it is dated and in need of renewal. Minister, we need it to be updated as soon as possible before this fire season and I seek your commitment to ensure that happens immediately.

The TFS, PWS and STT should jointly reach a decision on whether winch-capable remote-area firefighting capability should be maintained in Tasmania. We need these decisions to be made. The winching capability was in the 2016 report. It is recommended in this report three years later; it is time to get on with it. You need to make that decision to properly fund it. We know that there will be increased lightning strikes down the track. The idea of controlling those fires very early with remote-area teams is well established as being the appropriate management, but we need to be able to get the crews in and out safely and in a timely manner. That will require a winch-capable remote air service, such as a helicopter.

We also need to consider aerial intelligence gathering capability. There is currently no stationed AIG capability. We need to consider more action. We need these recommendations to be adopted, not simply accepted in principle.

Time expired.

Dr WOODRUFF (Franklin) - Madam Deputy Speaker, on behalf on the Greens, I am glad that the AFAC report has been concluded and has been tabled. I look forward to reading the findings when I have a copy myself. Some copies of that report have been available. I will speak to some of the things that have been raised as well as the minister's comments.

First of all, I was one of the people in Tasmania who observed the lightning strikes in December. I have never seen anything like it before. It was an awesome and frightening experience. I was aware of the potential of what could happen. On behalf of people who experienced the fires that followed - the people of the Huon Valley, the Central Highlands and on the West Coast - I sincerely thank all the people who put their lives on the line to protect rural communities, working for weeks and months putting out fires, cleaning up, doing hard dangerous work. I thank all the people who supported those firefighters; who cooked meals, who made beds, who donated their time and who put their lives on hold for months. People, such as staff and volunteers in the Huon Valley set up an amazing emergency crisis centre. Everyone in those communities put their lives on hold for months and months. All those people should know that there is a deep debt of gratitude from people in the community.

Mr Ferguson - Hear, hear.

Dr WOODRUFF - It is the strength of community that keeps us going through these hard experiences. I acknowledge the hard work of people working in the emergency centre and the conservation movement, and thank them for speaking strongly and so clearly about the risks and their concerns about the potential for great damage in the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area and for other beautiful places that we love and are custodians of on this planet.

What we know is that 210 000 hectares of Tasmanian landscape was burnt. Some of it was the best of Gondwanan forest and paleoendemic flora that will not recover at all or will take decades or centuries to recover. Those fires were truly cataclysmic. They burnt across some 3 per cent of the Tasmanian landscape and the terrible thing is that we can expect more of these sorts of fires to occur in the future. The Bureau of Meteorology and World Meteorological Organisation tell us that this very summer is likely to be a scorcher. We already have a tinderbox on the east coast of Tasmania. It is deeply concerning for people living there; the lack of water and the dryness of that landscape.

In a changing landscape, we know that fires and lightning strikes will happen more frequently. We have to muster ourselves to change our business-as-usual approach and to take this seriously. I am glad the AFAC review has been completed. I listened to the minister's speech and it is pretty clear that the minister is avoiding some uncomfortable truths. That is, there were three serious reviews of previous major fires that have occurred in Tasmania. This Liberal Government came in in 2014 and did not implement major recommendations from those reviews.

The previous police and emergency services minister did not prioritise budgetary resources to remote area teams, did not do what the United Firefighters Union requested and did not prioritise a cost-neutral wildfire response capability in remote areas. The United Firefighters Union Tasmania Branch wrote to the minister. They developed a proposal in 2017 and they wrote a letter in

September 2018, pleading with the minister to put a trial of their proposal in place for last year's fire season. The previous minister, Michael Ferguson, did not take up that work and he did not take up that proposal.

When I, Ms O'Connor, Senator Nick McKim and others - people from the conservation movement, people with great expertise, ecologists, conservationists, foresters, people who understand organic peat soils in Gondwanan landscapes - spoke with people in the fire service, there was a complete disregard for the serious questions raised by those people about the Gell River fire. What we have in front of us does not let the Government off the hook on this at all because, as I understand, although the AFAC review finds that emergency services acted appropriately, the kicker is that they acted appropriately with the resources they had.

Clearly, that is the point. This Government has refused to resource the sorts of human resources, equipment and facilities we know we have to have. It is no longer acceptable to continue not to put the resources into Parks that will provide us with the expertise in remote areas. That is what we must do and that must happen before this summer.

Time expired.

[12.20 p.m.]

Mr ROCKLIFF (Braddon - Minister for Education and Training) - Madam Deputy Speaker, I thank the minister, Mr Shelton, for the ministerial statement today. I pay tribute to the previous minister, Michael Ferguson, who worked very closely alongside emergency personnel throughout an extremely challenging time. I commend Mr Ferguson's leadership through that time.

It is important that we take a moment to appreciate the scale of the bushfires over the 2018-19 summer season, the largest number of hectares burnt in more than 50 years, some 210 000 hectares. Around 2400 dry lightning strikes hit Tasmania in that time, as has been mentioned by previous speakers, starting more than 70 fires across the state. As the minister said, some were detected over a number of days and weeks after the initial lightning. Lightning ignitions do not always appear above the ground until days or weeks after the strikes.

It was very challenging for a number of people in rural and regional communities that had to evacuate; a very traumatic experience. Given the extent of the fires and that there were no lives lost is a credit to the thousands of firefighting personnel and other volunteers and communities who worked tirelessly around the clock to keep Tasmanians safe, protect property and our natural assets. This was a major effort in coordination across government agencies, firefighting personnel, our Tasmania Fire Service, Parks and Wildlife Service, Sustainable Timber Tasmania, our SES volunteers and operational support drawn in from across the public service.

As Education minister I acknowledge the efforts of staff across the Department of Education and other sectors of Education in meeting the needs of our students in bushfire impacted areas such as the Huon Valley. Alternative arrangements were set up for students when it became clear that the start of school year would be disrupted due to the fire risk in that area. I had some conversations with leaders in that community, including the Mayor, Ms Enders, at that time. When it was deemed safe to open schools in the Huon, extra support staff were put in place to support students experiencing a period of heightened stress and trauma. For the first time I can remember, there was an arrangement in place for our students who had temporarily relocated to another area of the state to attend any local Government school.

It is a great example of how agencies across government responded in their own way to help Tasmanians in bushfire areas throughout a very distressing and traumatic period. What was also very clear to me was the community spirit that comes out during these times of hardship. It was very evident in townships that were considered at risk and in the evacuation centres set up around the state there were neighbours helping neighbours, which was very heartening to see. In the community in general, people did not have to know each other personally to dig in and help out.

Our Government has always taken bushfire risk very seriously, which is why we introduced a strategic fuel reduction program back in 2014. Whilst smoke generated from fuel reduction burns is not always welcome, these burns do serve a very important purpose to reduce risk and there were 32 burns across agencies ahead of the 2018-19 season. We will never know what the scale of damage might have been if these fuel reduction burns had not occurred.

There was no doubt that the remote nature of many of the fires made firefighting extremely difficult and also led to some criticism at the time which was very unfortunate and indeed unfair at that time to those who essentially were putting their lives at the front line to protect our community.

I note that the AFAC review makes it very clear the three firefighting agencies - the TFS, the PWS and STT - are experienced in fighting major bushfires and they were not taken unaware. They were able to successfully apply organisational structures and firefighting tactics that had been refined from the past. It is clear that after every major event such as the event in 2018-19, the 2013 bushfires and previously, we always learn each time there is such an event. It is important. On each occasion we learn and we improve. We always learn with a desire to improve the response to the huge array of circumstances that present themselves in such a very challenging and frightening time.

There will always be lessons to be learnt after major events, and we will. As the minister has already indicated the Government accepts, in principle, all the review recommendations. We have also just recently announced the recruitment of new career firefighters, with the latest TFS 15-week trainee course underway. This will see the overall number of career firefighters boosted to 323.

My own electorate of Braddon was one of those areas impacted by the fires including in areas like Lynch Hill, Western Hills, Brittons Link and the Rapid River fire. The smoke seemed never-ending at times and there were road closures for safety reasons. There was a lot of angst and it was a very stressful time for a lot of people which is easy to forget given there was no widespread property damage. I was pleased to attend the thank you event in Zeehan after the fires and to meet firefighters and other volunteers to say thank you personally. I commend all personnel for the work that they did in such a traumatic and stressful time.

[12.37 a.m.]

Ms O'CONNOR (Clark - Leader of the Greens) - Deputy Premier, we support your statement of support for every member of the Tasmanian Fire Service, the Parks and Wildlife Service, Forestry Tasmania and the SES who put everything in to tackling the fires of last summer under really extreme conditions.

What we have had confirmed today as a result of the Cronstedt review is that the response to the 2018-19 summer bushfires was inadequate because we did not equip our firefighters with the equipment that they need to tackle these fires and to hit hard and hit early.

In budget Estimates this year we repeatedly asked questions of the response to the summer bushfires and we were particularly concerned about the fact that firefighters left the Gell River fire before it was put out. As we know from the information that we have received today, there was a view that that fire had been extinguished but within 24 hours of firefighters walking away from the Gell River fire it had flared up. The consequences of that decision for Tasmania's Wilderness World Heritage Area and for communities that were impacted by the summer fires, were profound.

As a Greens member and someone who feels passionately about the protection of environmental values from climate related bushfires, it is deeply frustrating that we are now talking about another review into the response to Tasmania's bushfires when this Government has not even implemented the recommendations of the Tony Press review into the 2016 summer fires.

When is the Government going to wake up? When? We are heading for an El Niño summer. There is every indication this will be a hot, dry, high bushfire risk summer. We have had five years of the Liberals in government and their flagship response to bushfire risk is fire mitigation through controlled burns. Of course, that is an important part of mitigating the risk of bushfires, particularly impacting on communities, but it is not enough. You have to have the equipment there. We cannot run a bushfire response on the cheap but that is what has been happening.

We have had our bushfire response, our firefighters under-resourced sequentially even though in the past few years we have had bushfires created by global heating. This should be a wakeup call to us all and should demand a strong funding response from government.

Instead of Government saying to the United Fire Fighters Union of Australia who put forward a cost-neutral proposal - go away, we do not want to hear from you - we are hoping this time they will call back in the United Fire Fighters Union and take seriously their proposals for better bushfire preparedness. We need to equip our outstanding firefighters with all the equipment and technology they require to tackle these bushfires and make sure we are going in, hitting hard and hitting early.

We cannot have another situation where a decision is made to leave a fire in extreme fire weather, to walk away from that fire and then it gets out of control. We can do so much better.

I hope under the new Minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Management, one of the first things he does is calls in the United Fire Fighters Union of Australia, that he calls in Dr Tony Press to talk about the recommendations he brought down in 2016 and to work through those recommendations which have not been implemented. I do not have time here today to go through those recommendations which have not been implemented from Dr Tony Press' report. We detailed that in Budget Estimates.

Every recommendation Tony Press put forward that related to the need for extra funding has not been implemented. This is intolerable; we cannot be back here this time next year having a debate about yet another report into the response to bushfires. We have to, as a parliament, get serious about making sure government is putting the resources into the bushfire prevention and control efforts they need. We have to when we are given recommendations by people in our community who are highly regarded and who in fact in the case of Dr Press were asked by the Premier himself. We have to listen to those experts if we are going to commission reviews into our response to summer fires, then we have to implement the recommendations. We cannot be fighting global heating on the cheap. We know that.

The summer fires this year - devastating. The summer fires this year were started as a result of dry lightning strikes, according to the parks and wildlife service, increasing in frequency and intensity as a result of global heating. We have a landscape here not like anywhere else on earth. We have Gondwana here - a fragment of an ancient, ancient landscape. It is so vulnerable to fire. We need to be putting every resource we can into protecting Gondwana.

I want to close by acknowledging the work that went into the Constadt review encouraging the new minister not to follow the example set by his predecessor and ignore good proposals put forward, but instead to recommit to resourcing our response to bushfires in the future.

[12.45 p.m.]

Mr BARNETT (Lyons - Minister for Primary Industries) - Madam Speaker, first, as a member of the Hodgman Liberal Government I am delighted to support of the ministerial statement delivered by my colleague, the new Minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Management earlier. I thank him for his leadership in delivering this statement and answering questions today.

The key message following those challenging and difficult circumstances is to say thank you and congratulations. Well done to those professional men and women from the Tasmanian Fire Service, the Parks and Wildlife Service, Sustainable Timber Tasmania and the thousands of volunteers who are involved in supporting and protecting our communities. They protected lives, not one life was lost and we are very grateful for that service they have delivered for and on behalf of the people of Tasmania and the community we live in.

The AFAC report the minister referred to today confirms the difficult and challenging circumstances and the considerable efforts undertaken. There are always lessons to be learned in continually improving our response to emergency situations and we have accepted all nine recommendations in principle. The work is now underway to progress those recommendations.

Ms O'Connor - You haven't implemented them. It was three years ago.

Mr BARNETT - The interjection comes from the member for Clark, the Greens Leader. She was a member of Greens, which did not support and objected to the fuel reduction burn initiatives under the previous government.

Ms O'CONNOR - Point of order, Madam Speaker, the minister has misled the House. We supported the fuel reduction program. This is a constant lie that has been perpetrated by the Liberals in Government.

Madam SPEAKER - That is not a point of order. I will allow the minister to continue.

Mr BARNETT - Thank you, Madam Speaker. The member knows very clearly what was on the public record regarding the leaks in and out of Cabinet under the Labor-Greens government under the proposals put up by the Labor minister at the time and the feedback that was publicly reported. This Government has taken the step to ensure that the funding is there for those fuel reduction burns. There have been difficult and challenging circumstances but we have delivered record spending and record effort with those fuel reduction burns.

Before I go too far in my response, particularly from the primary industries and forestry perspectives and in my role as Minister for Energy, I wanted to respond to the claims by the Labor member with respect to the remote area team funding. The Tasmania Fire Service has a career

remote area team of approximately 80 personnel. The capability is spread across all regions of Tasmania. This Government is delivering on our election commitment. The Government has provided seed funding with the provision of \$500 000 over a four-year period to develop a program to utilise TFS volunteers to enhance remote area team's firefighting capacity. This was provided in the 2018-19 Budget and, sadly, the Opposition, as is their usual form, have no plans or policies and Labor made no such commitment at the last election.

More than 200 000 hectares burnt, which was very drastic indeed. In our production forests, tens of thousands of hectares were adversely impacted. It has been tough, very challenging and I am not going to say it has not had challenges for that sector and that is something we will continue to work on.

I thank the professionals and volunteer firefighters, up to 5000 around the state. Where would we be without our volunteers? They are under-recognised, under-valued across the board but this Government and the parliament acknowledge the work done. We have special awards and recognition and we have special grants available for our volunteers. They are spread all around Tasmania, in all the nooks and crannies and all the towns and cities. It was no more evident for me than when I was involved in the Lyons electorate working with my colleagues, now minister, Mark Shelton and then member, Rene Hidding, and, together with the Premier, we spent many hours and days visiting at Miena in the Central Highlands, a community very seriously affected. Likewise, Bothwell in the Central Highlands. I spent a good while at Maydena in the Derwent Valley. I visited the Huon with my parliamentary colleagues.

The breadth and service of our volunteers cannot be underestimated. For example, at the Great Lake Hotel, they were doing work at the Great Lake Community Hall in a fantastic effort there. The then minister for police, fire and emergency services, Michael Ferguson, outlined the concerns, challenges and the initiatives and thanked those involved, together with the Premier. It was a terrific and special event. There were a number of events up there. Thanks to the Great Lake Community Centre and all the volunteers involved. We were able to get some initiative funding support for the barbeques to say thank you and to help them do their job even better. Special recognition must go to those in local government who were involved in the Central Highlands; Lou Triffitt, the Mayor, and many of the councillors. They played a leadership role to support the community during those tough times. Likewise, in the Derwent Valley, Ben Shaw and many of the councillors did a lot to support those in the Gell River Fire area. I pass on our sincere appreciation to all those involved.

Time expired.

Statement noted.

CIVIL LIABILITY AMENDMENT BILL 2019 (No. 30)

Second Reading

Resumed from 7 August 2019 (page 42)

[12.53 p.m.]

Ms ARCHER (Clark - Minister for Justice) - Madam Deputy Speaker, I spoke before private members' time yesterday and I was thanking members for their considered contributions. I thank the Government members for their considered contributions because, as with all bills throughout this last fortnightly session, Labor has only managed to put up one spokesperson. We saw that you had only one person during the ministerial statement. It is quite extraordinary to see the lack of

scrutiny on Government work. The Leader of Opposition Business had the cheek to complain earlier that we had not tabled bills in the last two days. We have plenty of bills on the paper and we have three bills within the Magistrates Court package, so we will see if you can muster up a bit more scrutiny in the next session.

This is an important reform, as was last week's in our response to the Royal Commission. Ms Standen is over there, cackling away, and has not been able to respond on fires in her electorate, which was deeply impacted by fires during this recent fire season.

Dr Broad - You are being nasty.

Ms ARCHER - No, I am not being nasty. I am responding to the Leader of Opposition Business' earlier submission that we did not have any business. We have been producing business. The Opposition has checked out. Both Greens members were in the House throughout the ministerial statement and for most of the bills. Unless it is something to do with Labor's ideological position, they do not want to know about it. They cannot talk about industry. They cannot talk about other issues. Apart from Ms Haddad on law reform, they have all completely checked out.

I will go back to summing up on this bill.

Dr Broad - Thank goodness.

Ms ARCHER - Thank you, Dr Broad. I note there was no contribution from you, either, in relation to the racing industry, for example; members could have stood up on that like the other member for Braddon. Mrs Rylah, did.

On that point, the beauty of this bill for me is that it has been heavily lobbied for by the Jockeys' Association, particularly Kevin Ring, and I thank him for his advocacy and work in relation to this particular bill.

When I took on the portfolio of Minister for Racing, in my initial meetings with all my racing stakeholders, this issue was raised with me. Because I am Attorney-General, the Civil Liability Act comes within my administrative arrangements, and I have been able to address the issue. Having practised in this area, as I said yesterday, and being very familiar with the Ipp Report and its original intentions and what it was intending to cover, I could see there was a definite anomaly left by this 2017 New South Wales Court of Appeal case, *Goode v Angland*, which we have been referring to. It has created this issue and difficulty in our jurisdiction.

We have a situation now where members in this House have supported this bill, and I hope this passes through the other place as well so we can address this issue. I am sure they will appreciate the jockeys' concerns, but also other professional sports people, because of the obvious intent of the original Civil Liability Act being able to cover those who engage in sport in a professional capacity, in their employment.

I mentioned the importance of the racing industry, in particular, to our state. Members on this side of the House, particularly former racing minister, Mr Rockliff, in his contribution, mentioned how important the industry is to our state, particularly our rural and regional communities. The racing industry supports over 5000 jobs, and participation generally in Tasmania. I know it is deeply entrenched in some family bloodlines - and I am not talking about the horses or greyhounds. I am talking about those who are engaged in the industry. Many times I meet people, and families

in particular, who have been involved in the racing industry across all three codes, and have been involved for generations. It is important to them not only to their livelihood but their enjoyment of life. These people are passionate about what they do. They love what they do, as so many of us do. For those in the racing industry, I think we can all agree they are a particularly passionate bunch.

That brings me back to Kevin Ring, who is exceptionally passionate about what he does and the representation he provides as the head of the Tasmanian Jockeys' Association. Again, I would like to stress, because I know he has an interest in this and was certainly watching yesterday and hopefully watching now, that I do appreciate his passion, his drive, his persistence in having this issue dealt with. I am only too pleased to be able to deliver this on behalf of the Government.

This year's Budget invests a total of \$31.4 million into Tasmania's racing industry. That will ensure our plan for sustainable growth in the industry can be delivered. This funding also means that investment in the state's racing industry has increased by more than \$2 million since we came into government.

It is allowing the industry to grow, while providing enhanced integrity services, and an increased focus on animal welfare, and major improvements to racing infrastructure.

I mention those things because in Mr Rockliff's contribution, he mentioned the Elwick Racecourse - and I am very happy to provide the House with an update shortly during this contribution - and also the increased focus on animal welfare, the increasing penalties that our Government has introduced, and with enhanced integrity services as well.

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

CIVIL LIABILITY AMENDMENT BILL 2019 (No. 30)

Second Reading

Resumed from above.

[2.30 p.m.]

Ms ARCHER (Clark - Minister for Justice) - Madam Deputy Speaker, I was saying how important the racing industry is to our Government and local communities across the state. This bill does not only deal with those within the industry as jockeys but professional sportspeople generally. I want to take the opportunity to mention a few matters to do with racing, as largely this was as a result of lobbying from the jockey association and as well as being the Attorney-General, I also happen to be the Minister for Racing.

There were a few matters raised in relation to animal welfare and I want to inform the House about our increased focus and funding in relation to animal welfare and the improvements that have occurred there in terms of increasing penalties. We also have a strong integrity body which is necessary to ensure the ongoing sustainability of the racing industry in Tasmania because without strong integrity within the industry itself obviously it loses support of the community and so it is incredibly important.

The Office of Racing Integrity plays an important part in the regulation of the racing industry as a whole and this cannot be understated. The Director of Racing is Mr John King, who has been

in that role since April last year. His appointment is for a term of five years which has provided much-needed certainty and sustainability in the state's racing industry and ensures that the Office of Racing Integrity will continue to provide high-quality integrity services across the state. I know he is very engaged with all three codes on a regular basis. Mr King has also worked in senior roles within Tasmania Police for more than two decades so he is highly qualified in relation to matters of integrity. He was most recently a detective inspector of the northern criminal investigation branch. He has also held various positions as a commissioned officer in the state and as a commander and brings a wealth of experience and integrity to the role.

It is also worth noting what we have done on the integrity side of racing. At the last election our Government promised to establish two new steward cadetship positions in the Office of Racing Integrity and in doing so we provided \$550 000 over four years in last year's budget for ORI to create the new positions, with the first two cadets starting in December last year. This is working to further strengthen the integrity functions of ORI whilst encouraging cadets to consider stewarding as a long-term career with clear future pathways in the industry. At the last budget Estimates hearings I was pleased to be able to advise members that one of the cadets had successfully used her training to obtain a full-time stewarding position within ORI and so we now have a vacant role for another steward cadet. That program has been a huge success already and it certainly promotes career pathways and attracts new participants into this important industry to ensure it is sustainable.

I know other members referred to the breeding programs and this year's Budget did include funding of \$350 000 to support both thoroughbred and harness-breeding programs, not only creating jobs in the breeding industry, but also increasing Tasmania's racing presence on the national stage, which is critical to the future of the industry, and we recognise that as well.

In relation to animal welfare, there is more funding for that as well. We have allocated an additional \$30 000 to Brightside Farm Sanctuary. They do a wonderful job rehoming greyhounds. That is in addition to the \$30 000 committed last year. It is, of course, on top of the \$100 000 commitment to expand the Greyhound Adoption Program with Tasracing. I understand Tasracing will be in a position to update in relation to that standalone facility very shortly. That will come to light, as I said, very soon.

There are good things happening within the racing industry to ensure its long-term sustainability. That is good news, particularly in relation to those within the industry, and with this particular bill as well for jockeys. Coupled with the changes in this bill, we want to ensure the rights of jockeys are protected, and although they now have a right to claim workers compensation, which they did not for a very long time, they are treated as employees of Tasracing pursuant to the Workers Rehabilitation and Compensation Act.

In addition, we are protecting the rights of professional sportspeople being able to make claims for breach of duty of care - and indeed the negligence of others who may not have a right to make a workers compensation claim, so it is even more important that they be able to make a claim at common law. If a jockey chooses to make a claim at common law, there is that right of election pursuant, I think, to section 42 of the act, if my memory serves me.

Moving on, most other contributions made observations about the bill, but I know Dr Woodruff asked a particular question relating to whether the Government will issue guidelines or educational materials in relation to these particular changes. In response to that, the need for those sorts of measures is much less, because what we are doing here is reverting to the law that should have been, had it not been for the New South Wales Court of Appeal case, because the earlier Tasmanian

case was quite clear in the interpretation and we are now reverting back to it. Having said that, with these types of law reforms we will certainly let the Law Society of Tasmania know, and they, in the next newsletter or by way of special correspondence, whichever they choose, will inform the profession of the changes that have occurred, so their member lawyers can provide appropriate advice to existing or future clients. The onus is on the lawyer to keep up to date with changes in the law, but the Law Society is very good at communicating with their members. Most, if not all, practising solicitors are members of the Law Society, and indeed the Tasmanian Bar stays abreast of changes in the law as well, so practising barristers will also be aware of this when providing advice to clients.

In addition, Department of Communities Tasmania has databases of many sporting organisations, and my department will advise Department of Communities Tasmania that they may like to issue something to sporting organisations, and can engage with those stakeholders on those matters, because other high-risk sports are skiing, kayaking and mountain-biking. Those types of organisations and groups can be contacted. As Minister for Racing, I will be advising my stakeholders, and Kevin Ring, who heads up the Jockeys' Association, will be making his members aware of these changes as well. Jockeys will be advised of any changes that occur.

Mrs Rylah acknowledged the good work of Tasracing and I thank her for doing so. As minister with responsibility for that government business enterprise, it is pleasing to hear that. We have a new chairman of that board, Gene Phair, and a new CEO. We now have stability within the industry and Tasracing as well. It is a very strong board and it is welcome.

Mr Rockliff mentioned, as well as other matters I have addressed previously, a few trivia matters on the Melbourne Cup. He wondered if I could update the House in relation to the Elwick thoroughbred track redevelopment. I am happy to do so in the context of this debate.

Ms O'Connor - When are you going to upgrade those greyhound tracks that are injuring dogs?

Ms ARCHER - That question, through the Speaker, Ms O'Connor asked during budget Estimates. If you go back to *Hansard*, that was answered in relation to the current review.

Ms O'Connor - We handed down the inquiry findings in 2016, three years ago.

Ms ARCHER - That has been updated and I am sure it is something that can be asked of Tasracing again at GBE hearings.

In relation to the Elwick thoroughbred track, because it was something a member who contributed on this bill asked about, it is on track. It will replace the tracks, which have now been taken up. It will be a single 28-metre-wide track providing first-class facilities and ensuring the long-term future of racing in southern Tasmania. It is expected it will be ready for the summer racing carnival in January and the Hobart Cup. I thank Tasmanian company, StrathAyr. They have recently lost one of their long-term owners -

Dr Broad - The founder.

Ms ARCHER - Yes, founder is a good word, thank you, Dr Broad, Bill Casimaty. My condolences to the family.

StrathAyr is a wonderful Tasmanian company. It was appointed head contractor to the redevelopment of the Elwick thoroughbred track. StrathAyr currently employs 14 people in Tasmania and has employed an additional three Tasmanian staff for the development at Elwick.

This is in line with our Buy Local policy, and Tasracing allocated \$12.5 million to complete this significant project. That will be welcomed by the industry when it is completed. In addition, specialist irrigation, fencing, electrical and other suitably qualified Tasmanian businesses have been engaged to participate in the track redevelopment project. It is exceptionally good for the state's economy and the industry. It is expected to be completed before the 2020 Hobart Cup.

This amendment bill will ensure that professional sportspeople were not included in the bar on civil action. It was never intended that professionals would not be able to seek civil relief for a breach of duty of care due to the Civil Liability Act 2002. The amendment aims to ensure that the Civil Liability Act operates as originally intended by the parliament and was recommended by the Ipp Report 2001 on the law of negligence.

The phrase 'and any sport' is being removed from the definition to ensure the definition only applies to activities being undertaken for recreational purposes and this is in contrast to activities being undertaken in a professional capacity. Although the common usage of the term 'sport' includes recreational sport, in the context of this legislative definition the inclusion of the phrase 'and any sport' opened the definition to include people undertaking dangerous activities as part of their professional duties. This was not the intention of the Ipp Report or the Civil Liability Act 2002. This amendment will rectify matters for jockeys but it is not limited to jockeys. It is all professional sportspeople. The amendment will ensure they are not included in any bar on taking civil proceedings.

I stress that the amendment will not change the legal liability of recreational service providers. Therefore, public liability insurance premiums should not be affected by this change. Although workers compensation proceedings are now open for jockeys, there other professional sportspeople who do not have access to workers compensation because they may not have an employer-employee relationship. This is certainly going to be a welcome relief for them if they find themselves in the unfortunate position of having received injuries as a result of a breach of duty of care.

In closing, I thank my department, all those who have worked on this bill and provided advice, the continued contribution of our draftspeople in the Office of Parliamentary Counsel and others who manage to get these things done in a very timely manner given the incredible work load we have in the Department of Justice. My sincere gratitude and thanks to the staff in my office. I could not get through the work load that we do without their assistance and advice.

Bill read the second time.

Bill read the third time.

**FRUIT AND NUT (RESEARCH, DEVELOPMENT AND EXTENSION TRUST
FUND) REPEAL BILL 2019 (No. 6)**

Second Reading

[2.49 p.m.]

Mr BARNETT (Lyons - Minister for Primary Industries and Water - 2R) - Madam Speaker,
I move -

That the bill be now read the second time.

The purpose of this bill is to repeal the Fruit and Nut (Research Development and Extension Trust Fund) Act 2012. This act was created to continue to distribute residual funds from the Tasmanian Fruit Crop Insurance Scheme to the state's fruit and nut growers. The residual funds from the scheme have been fully dispersed to industry, thereby fulfilling the object of the act. It is a formality to repeal the act and wind up the trust fund.

The Tasmanian Fruit Crop Insurance Scheme was established in 1982 to provide apple and pear growers with crop insurance funded through a compulsory industry levy. In 1999, following a review of the National Competition Policy, the insurance scheme was dismantled. All remaining funds from the insurance scheme were deposited in a statutory trust account to be used on projects of benefit to the apple and pear industry. A board of management comprising of four industry representatives and one government representative was created to oversee distribution of the funds.

In 2012 the current act commenced, allowing the funds to be available to not only apple and pear growers but the broader fruit and nut industry, reflecting how the sector had evolved and expanded. The purpose of the trust fund was to benefit Tasmania's fruit and nut industry by funding activities in research, development, extension, marketing and promotion. The trust fund has been used to finance research scholarships, contributions to Horticulture Australia projects, as well as support the activities of a business development manager for Fruit Growers Tasmania. The Government was regularly updated on expenditure from the trust fund.

In September 2017 the board of management paid out the balance of the trust fund to Fruit Growers Tasmania to develop market opportunities for the Tasmanian fruit and nut industry. The board of management also agreed to cease operation. As the trust fund has been fully expended, it is a formality to wind up operations and repeal the act.

This leads to the detail of the bill. It includes standard provisions to wind up the trust fund and board of management. As the trust fund has been fully distributed and there are no other assets or liabilities, transitional provisions are not required. This is a simple process. The Crown will assume responsibility for any unresolved or future proceedings, legal or otherwise, brought against or initiated by the board of management.

Fruit Growers Tasmania, the state's peak industry body for fruit and nut growers, fully supports the bill and has been consulted on the draft legislation. The Government is continuing to collaborate with Fruit Growers Tasmania to provide support to the state's fruit and nut industry.

Since the Fruit and Nut (Research Development and Extension Trust Fund) Repeal Bill 2109 was tabled, updated values of the sector have become available. The sector is a key contributor to the Tasmanian economy. It had a farm gate value of close to \$154 million in 2016-17 which has grown to \$196.7 million in 2017-18. The expansion of the berry and cherry industries are the main contributing factor to this increase.

The 2017-18 state Budget committed \$1.2 million for a new Strategic Industry Partnerships Program to support regional communities and businesses by investing in peak industry bodies to drive growth and innovation across the Tasmanian agri-food sector. As part of the Strategic Industry Partnerships Program, the Government is providing Fruit Growers Tasmania with \$120 000 over three years to deliver a fruit industry development program that provides on-ground extension support for growers. This includes assisting in grower export preparation and communication around biosecurity and quarantine protocols. In addition, as part of our Taking Agriculture to the Next Level policy, the Government is providing the state's fruit and vegetable

industry with \$550 000 over four years for horticulture market and trade development. I commend the bill to the House.

[2.54 p.m.]

Dr BROAD (Braddon) - Madam Speaker, from the outset I indicate that Labor will be supporting the Fruit and Nut Industry (Research, Development and Extension Trust Fund) Repeal Bill. As the minister said in his second reading speech, and it is definitely in the fact sheet, this is a mere formality to repeal the act and wind up the trust fund. The reason this act was put in place is no longer needed, there is no more money to expend and therefore it is a mere formality in a legislative sense to wind up the trust fund and repeal the act.

Obviously circumstances have changed over time. When the original fruit crop insurance scheme was put in place in 1982 the industry was very different from now and things like industry levies were much different back in 1982. As the minister highlighted in his second reading, things changed under the Australian Competition and Consumer Act and therefore the crop insurance scheme was no longer valid so it was wound up and the funds were to be expended specifically to advantage the apple and pear industry.

The need to come in 2012 to put in place the Fruit and Nut (Research, Development and Extension Trust Fund) Act highlights that even between 1982 and 2012 the industry had changed marketly. Way back in 1982 who would have thought that cherries would be such a big industry? Who would have thought that walnuts would have been such a big industry, or indeed other emerging nut crops such as almonds and hazelnuts? The industry has changed a lot since 1982 and we know now the funds that were available from the 2012 act have been spent. There is no more money coming in because the levy has not been in place for a long time so there is no real need to have this and it is a mere legislative formality to wind it up.

There is not much reason to speak much longer on this except to recognise how innovative the industry is in that they have been willing to change. Anybody who drives down to the Huon or indeed into areas where there was not a fruit and nut industry in the past such as the Derwent Valley will see the cherries and all those sorts of developments. Even in areas like Jericho we are seeing significant investment by SD Reid and Sons in cherries for export to Japan. Back in 1982 I would hazard that most of the fruit would not have gone to Japan. It would probably have gone to Europe and the UK, so the markets have changed a lot over time as well.

The fact is that we no longer need the trust fund or the board to disperse the funds, so Labor supports this bill. It will be interesting to see the backbenchers, who will no doubt get up and talk in glowing terms about all the efforts the current Government is making and the funding et cetera and take credit for all the growth in the industry, but I would be very interested to hear specific to the fruit and nut industry the issues involved around investment because we know to plant and convert land into an orchard of any type costs a considerable amount. We are talking up to \$100 000 per hectare to establish a fruit farm. For example, if you wanted to plant cherries, the technology available now means you can put in place rain shelters as well as netting, irrigation and all those sorts of things. It is very expensive.

We know that there are vast tracts of Tasmania where we can grow more fruit and nut crops; through the Midlands, for example, where there is now irrigation water available thanks to Labor's investment in irrigation, which has been followed by -

Mr Barnett - Come on.

Dr BROAD - Just listen - followed by the current Government continuing that investment in irrigation. We see these areas are now available for conversion from things like sheep grazing land into very high-value crops like fruit and nuts and it is huge opportunity for the state. However, the investments that are required to establish these new industries or to fill new markets are very large and quite often farmers do not have that capital available to them, so what they can do is partner with other investors in joint ventures or in company arrangements and so on. I am interested to hear from the member for Lyons, Mr Tucker, and the member for Braddon, Mrs Rylah - if they get up and comment on this bill - what they think about starting an investment-destroying tax regime that will definitely impact the returns on these sorts of investments if there is an element of international investment.

We know that international investors and sovereign wealth funds are coming to Tasmania to invest. I just wonder what the Government backbenchers will think about the opportunities that may go missing if those foreign investors are put off because of the sovereign risk of the Government slugging them with something like land tax.

Ms O'Connor - It is not a sovereign risk. It is a change of Government policy. They cannot cry sovereign risk if parliament changes its policy.

Dr BROAD - If you are a Canadian or an American super fund looking to invest in Tasmania, you work out what your returns are going to be. Your returns on assets are relying on two things: you are relying on capital growth over time, and you are also relying on annual returns. When you find that your annual returns in an agricultural investment are typically quite low compared to other industries and other sectors like mining, for example - when your average returns are something like 3 per cent to 4 per cent and the Government wants to take 1.5 per cent of that - this will significantly change your investment decisions.

Ms O'Connor - It is not sovereign risk though. You do not understand sovereign risk.

Dr BROAD - It is a sovereign risk. If you have already made decisions based on the current tax regimes, and then the Government unilaterally comes in and changes those without consulting the industry, that is a sovereign risk because the industry will have uncertainty about what is next. Is this the thin end of the wedge? Are we going to have extra policies brought in? Maybe the foreign investors will be seen as a soft target.

Greens members interjecting.

Madam SPEAKER - Order, come on.

Dr BROAD - That is exactly what sovereign risk is. It is when people are worried about decisions that the sovereign, in this case the Government, will make. It is a very serious concern. There are huge amounts of money available from sovereign wealth funds, like the Canadian and the American super funds. They want to come to Australia. They have an appetite. These super funds seem to have a greater appetite for investing in agriculture than Australian super funds, which is probably a topic for another discussion.

They take a long-term view of agriculture as an investment because you need to. Agriculture is not like making Mars Bars or some manufacturing process; it takes a lot of time. You have to build up the value of the property, but you also need steady returns in the meantime.

The last thing we need is international investment being put off, especially when there are such amazing opportunities in Tasmania that will only be unlocked with substantial investment. The fruit and nut industry is a classic example of that, because the costs of establishing even a hectare of cherry orchard are astronomically high, and not all farmers have that opportunity. The expertise required and the access to markets is also hard to come by, so joint venturing with people who may happen to reside overseas is a good way to not only create opportunities for farmers, but create jobs in regional areas - and these are not just picking jobs.

These are jobs about managing the orchards, about providing advice, agronomy, fuelling tractors, servicing equipment and so on. These sorts of industries are not just about the hundreds of jobs that are required right on picking season. They are also about the jobs that are year around, and these are the opportunities that we have. Having magnificent fruit and nut products available in the markets is really good for our brand. We have a good window of access because of where we sit on the globe, in terms of our latitude. We have beautiful cherries available when the market is at its peak. These are the things we need to take advantage of, but we need to have the right incentives to have the investment that the industry needs. We do not need disincentives to put those investors off.

I will be very interested in what the Liberal backbench think about those particular issues, but in terms of this bill before us, it is a legislative formality to wind up the trust fund. The money has been spent, the industry is very supportive of this, and Labor is supportive as well. Thank you.

[3.04 p.m.]

Ms O'CONNOR (Clark - Leader of the Greens) - Madam Speaker, the day has finally arrived. We have been looking at the Notice Paper for months and months, looking at the Fruit and Nut Industry (Research, Development and Extension Trust Fund) Repeal Bill. It sat there for many months, and finally the moment has arrived when we can debate this repeal bill.

The Greens will be supporting the bill, of course. It is, as the previous speakers have indicated, a technical bill really, that repeals the Fruit and Nut Research, Development and Extension Trust Fund, and winds up the fund pool that was established in 1982 to support particularly apple and pear growers, and to assist them in managing threats and risks to their crops. I remember coming here as a young journalist, and the major biosecurity concern at the time was fire blight coming in from New Zealand apples, and finding the space as a small island operating in a national policy context was quite difficult, but we managed to steer our way through that as a state. As far as I know, fire blight has not been established in Tasmania.

Dr Broad - No, never.

Ms O'CONNOR - Thank you, Dr Broad and the minister.

The only question I have for the minister specifically in relation to the repeal bill is, if he could fill the House out on how much funding has been dispersed in total over the life of the fund, and maybe some details on the projects that were supported through that fund. There is only passing mention of it here in the fact sheet and second reading.

I also want to take a moment to talk about the single most pressing challenge confronting our primary producers, this parliament, Government and Tasmanians. It is the challenge that was not mentioned by the minister or Dr Broad, and that is the fact that Tasmania's climate is changing, and it is changing rapidly. We have access to some of world's leading research on projections of climate

impact out to the year 2100 and that work is called Climate Futures. It had scientists working on it from UTAS, IMAS, CSIRO and the Australian Antarctic Division, and it provides quite fine detail of the landscape changes that we can expect to see over the next 100 years. What recent events have taught is that even Climate Futures now is becoming outdated because the effects of global heating are happening at a much faster rate than scientists had projected in the original intergovernmental panel on climate change reports.

Scientists are now saying regarding the rate of global heating that the things what we are seeing now - including the 22.5 billion tonnes of ice that melted off the Greenland ice sheet between 31 July and 1 August this year - were the impacts that scientists were telling us we would not be seeing for another 50 to 60 years.

We need to understand that, while it may be possible right now to grow the world's best apples and cherries and pears in Tasmania, the situation is going to change. There is a range of foreseeable impacts, and there is a large area of unknown about how fast our primary producers will have to adapt. We know that there will be less rain. There is already less rain on the east coast, but when you look at the Climate Futures maps you can see a drying across the centre of Tasmania, through the Midlands, through Gondwana. You can see that there will be a moister area of the state that runs down to the Tasman Peninsula and south-east Tasmania, but there is no question that in broad terms it will be warmer, there will be less rain in areas that have historically been rich farming lands, and there will be fewer frosts. If we do not have those seasonal and regular frosts, there is a range of crops that we are no longer going to be able to grow. Those are the crops that are dependent on the cold snaps in the soil to begin the next phase of their life cycle.

I encourage the minister, in this important portfolio of Primary Industries and Water, working with our primary producers and leveraging off the brand, to take a real interest in some of the Climate Futures work and call in the scientists who contributed to that. We have Professor Nathan Bindoff here at CSIRO. There is a whole cohort of scientists who have contributed to Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change work, including my colleague, Dr Rosalie Woodruff. It would be wise of the minister to start that conversation with those scientists and primary producers, representatives from the Tasmanian Farmers and Graziers Association, TIA at the university, and bring forward some of that important work that needs to be done. Look at those in determining how we support our primary producers to make the shifts they are going to have to make to respond to global heating and how we make sure we are growing enough food on the island to feed our people.

I have two more points to make before I wind up on this momentous bill. To any member who has not read Bruce Pascoe's book, *Dark Emu*, I thoroughly recommend it. It talks about the incredible sophistication and complexity of the agricultural and food production processes of Aboriginal Australians. We could learn a lot about how to manage land from Tasmanian Aboriginal people and First People from around the country. One of the areas of the book I found most interesting was in the description through historical texts of the quality of Australian soils when the first Europeans came here and started to move into the landscape. They found that through the tens of thousands of years of quite sophisticated land management of Aboriginal people and their cropping processes, we had a quality of soil in large parts of Australia that was very fluffy and rich soil. These were soils that had been tilled, worked and used over many generations. It did not take very long -

Mrs Rylah - It is a humus.

Ms O'CONNOR - You are right, Mrs Rylah. It is humus in the soil but it was another quality in the soil that they found. It was not simply the vegetation that had gone into the soil, it was the way Aboriginal people had planted their seeds, the crops and the native grasses they grew. This wonderful book also reveals that Aboriginal Australians were the world's first bakers. We were the world's first known millers of a whole range of grasses and native wheats. There is a lot of knowledge in the book and in Aboriginal people about how to manage the landscape in a hostile climate -

Mr Tucker - Fuel reduction burns.

Ms O'CONNOR - With your inane interjection, Mr Tucker, I do not know what point you are making. We support strategic and scientifically founded fuel reduction burns. What we do not support is Forestry Tasmania torching forests after they have clear-felled them. You interrupted what I thought was a story the House would be interested in about how Aboriginal people managed the land. As a farmer, I thought you would be interested, but I must have been mistaken.

After colonisation and European farming techniques and sheep grazing techniques moved across the country, the incredibly rich, fluffy soils were compacted all over the country, yes, by hooves, and those old ways of carefully and managing the landscape with nature were largely forgotten. The great thing about Bruce Pascoe's book is that it busts and completely does away with the myth that we were dealing with a nomadic, fragmented people when the first Europeans arrived. There was sophisticated agriculture and complex societal and civilisation structures were in place. Every member of this place should read that wonderful book, *Dark Emu* by Bruce Pascoe.

I want to address a matter Dr Broad raised in his contribution and he has raised it before. It relates to the level of foreign ownership of agricultural or production lands in Tasmania. Right now, as far as we know, and these were the figures I saw recently from ABARE, we are sitting at about 25 per cent foreign ownership of agricultural lands in Tasmania.

Dr Broad - That is forestry as well.

Ms O'CONNOR - Production land is what we call it.

Dr Broad - That would be Forico and Norske Skog.

Ms O'CONNOR - Yes, probably. I am not quibbling about the data. We have the highest level of foreign ownership of production lands of any state or territory in the country. We are just a little island so we need to ensure we are protecting Tasmania's interests. I acknowledge the importance of being able to attract foreign investment to Tasmania, but it is the right of government and of sovereign parliaments to adjust policy settings in response to the growing level of foreign ownership in Tasmania and concerns that exist within our community about that. We have not criticised the Government over the levy it has imposed on the purchases of agricultural lands by entities that are based overseas.

Dr Broad - That is the farm tax. That is the land tax that is going to be applied every year, not only on a purchase. There are two issues. There is the FIDS -

Ms O'CONNOR - Yes, I know about the two issues.

Dr Broad - There is also a land tax that is going to apply every year from 1 July, an actual land tax, 1.5 per cent.

Ms O'CONNOR - It is a privilege to come here from other parts of the world and farm Tasmanian soils. I do not understand what the problem is with making foreign investors pay a surcharge. We are talking about multinational corporations that are well aware it is the right of sovereign governments and parliaments to make policy settings, so the argument that this is a sovereign risk situation is garbage.

Dr Broad - It's not garbage.

Ms O'CONNOR - It is garbage because any company or corporation that invests in another country does so knowing that country will have a lawmaking body of some sort and that laws and policies can change. They must change to adapt to different or changing circumstances from time to time. Dr Broad is well out of touch with the community's views on these things. You talk about us setting up straw men and you are doing exactly that with this. Most of the companies coming here from overseas are large multinational corporations well able to pay a bit extra in land tax.

Dr Broad - They will go somewhere else.

Ms O'CONNOR - We know Labor has a problem with China. You cannot adjust -

Dr Broad - We do not. What is the problem?

Ms O'CONNOR - Part of the problem is that, federally, Labor has taken massive donations from Chinese businesspeople who are closely connected to the Chinese government. One of Labor's major donors, dealings with whom led to Senator Sam Dastyari's removal from parliament, has been banished from the country.

Dr Broad - That is my fault, obviously.

Madam SPEAKER - Order, Can I have a little bit of discipline, please.

Ms O'CONNOR - People who work in strategic policy and academia in Australia, respected commentators, will tell you Labor has a problem with its relationship with the Chinese government. They will tell you that because it is a statement of fact.

Of course we will be supporting this legislation. It is technical, it is long awaited and the day has finally come when we can debate the Fruit and Nut (Research, Development and Extension Trust Fund) Repeal Bill 2019. What a day it is.

[3.20 p.m.]

Mr TUCKER (Lyons) - Madam Speaker, I am not going to enter into the foreign tax issue today because we are talking about the fruit and nut repeal bill, but I am more than happy to talk about it another day.

As for the last speaker's comments about the compaction with hooved farming I would like to say that we have introduced into Australia *alfora longi caliginosa* and they deal with that biologically.

I am pleased to stand in support of the Fruit and Nut (Research, Development and Extension Fund) Repeal Bill 2019. The act was created to distribute residual funds from the Tasmanian Fruit Crop Insurance Scheme to the state's fruit and nut growers. Now that all funds have been expended it is only sensible that the act is repealed and the trust fund wound up. The trust fund was established under the Fruit and Nut Industry (Research, Development and Extension Trust Fund) Act 2012 and included a board of management to distribute residual funds from the Tasmanian Fruit Crop Insurance Scheme to fruit and nut growers.

The trust fund has been used to finance research scholarships, contributions to Horticulture Australia projects as well as support the activities of a business development manager for -

Dr Broad - A business development manager for Fruit Growers Tasmania.

Mr TUCKER - Yes, that is correct. New biosecurity legislation which is scheduled for introduction shortly will include provisions for biosecurity-related loss. Currently in Tasmania reimbursement in respect to biosecurity loss is effectively limited to animals or plants destroyed in a biosecurity response when it is covered by one of several national cost-sharing deeds entered into between the states, Commonwealth and relevant industry bodies. National deeds generally only cover biosecurity emergencies that concern pests and disease that are exotic to Australia. The deeds generally do not cover pests and disease that originate within Australia, such as Queensland fruit fly. This shortcoming was evident in recent state-based responses to blueberry rust, where land holders were unable to be directly recompensed for the loss of plants destroyed on their properties. Ex gratia payments were made to two growers impacted by the 2014 outbreak of blueberry rust, with a further settlement to one of these growers as a consequence of non-target species being damaged or destroyed as a result of the eradication activities.

Under the new legislation owners will be entitled to reimbursement for the death or destruction of animals, plants or other property in the following circumstances: where the animal, plant or property is covered by a biosecurity cost-sharing agreement which provides for reimbursement; where it is destroyed under a government biosecurity program which specifically provides for reimbursement; where it is destroyed under an approved industry or community biosecurity program which specifically provides for reimbursement; or otherwise in circumstances that may be described by the regulations.

As is the case now, there will be no statutory entitlement or reimbursement for indirect or consequential losses associated with biosecurity responses such as compensation for loss or potential profits or future income, nor for the death or destruction of an animal, plant or other property that is connected with a breach of the act.

Biosecurity is fundamental to the success of Tasmania's agriculture, aquaculture and tourism industries, as well as the protection of unique island environment and our way of life. Globalisation of trade, internet commerce and the modern ease of travel establishes new pathways for the introduction of pests and disease to the state. We need to be able to deal with biosecurity threats across the biosecurity continuum; that is, before they reach the state border, at the border and after they have passed the border.

Until now, Tasmania's biosecurity has been managed under seven separate acts. While these acts have served us well, they were developed incrementally over three decades and in a piecemeal fashion. Recent experience with Queensland fruit fly and other cases involving the movement of plants and animals across Bass Strait have highlighted the need for Tasmania's biosecurity laws to

cover persons and activities in mainland states. Consolidating Tasmania's biosecurity laws into a single modern statute will ensure they remain fit for purpose and do not become increasingly duplicative and outdated.

Members will be aware that the department has provided a comprehensive response to the blueberry rust inquiry. The department will maintain a regulated containment strategy in response to the detection of blueberry rust in Tasmania. The containment approach is based on evidence and sound biosecurity principles outlined in the Tasmanian Biosecurity Strategy. The current regulated containment strategy involves a suite of measures including property quarantine, property inspection, industry partnership and maintaining market access. The department has already actively engaged with the Tasmanian Institute of Agriculture on research proposals, with a view to commencing consultation with industry in the near future. The department is committed to implementing the other recommendations of the review. Importantly, Biosecurity Tasmania continues to support market access, particularly for blueberry growers.

On 12 July we were pleased to announce the first project from the \$3 million Agriculture Innovation Fund. The first R&D&E project to be supported by the fund involves research to expand the treatments for blueberry rust available to Tasmanian blueberry growers, including our organic producers. The Agriculture Innovation Fund will invest \$300 000 in this research which has been supported by the blueberry industry and will be led by the Tasmanian Institute of Agriculture.

The Queensland fruit fly control area restrictions have been lifted. Flinders Island and northern Tasmania have now returned to pest-free areas. Biosecurity Tasmania will continue with normal fruit fly monitoring and reporting activities, which includes regular checking of the permanent fruit fly trapping network across the state. The 2018-19 Queensland fruit fly response was the largest biosecurity response in Tasmania's history. An independent review into the Tasmanian fruit fly incursion and response has now commenced. The aim of the review is to consider the lessons learnt to ensure that Tasmania is the best place to manage the risk Queensland fruit fly poses to our horticultural industries. Public submissions were called by the end of May and public hearings held midyear. The review will be finalised by the end of the year.

Data recently released by the Australian Bureau of Statistics revealed that while the value of Australia's agricultural production declined, Tasmania's agricultural production increased in value in 2017-18 to \$1.6 billion, an increase of 9.1 per cent. Further analysis and information will be included within the 2017-18 Tasmanian Agri-Food Scorecard which will be released later in the year, with the most current figures available for 2016-17. Expansion in berry production in recent years resulted in berries being the highest value fruit crop category in 2016-17 with a farmgate value of \$80 million.

Rubus, which is raspberries and blackberries, are the highest-value berries, accounting for 59.5 per cent of farm gate value. Strawberries account for 61 per cent of production by volume. Cherries remain the highest-value fruit export at \$29 million in 2016-17. Nuts increased in value by 59.9 per cent to \$8 million in 2016-17. Walnuts contribute about 90 per cent of gross value, with chestnuts and hazelnuts accounting for the remainder.

Despite seasonal fluctuations, Tasmanian berry and cherry production is continuing to expand rapidly. In 1982, the original legislation created an insurance scheme for the apple and pear industry, but this scheme was dismantled in 1999 after a review of the state's national competition policy obligations. Industry participants now purchase specific insurance needed for their business, as well as compulsory insurance such as workers compensation; there are a number of specific

insurance options available for businesses in the agricultural industry. Insurance options vary, depending on the business type. That can include insurance for farm equipment and machinery, property and buildings, vehicles, business interruption and certain crops.

Aligned to the new Tasmanian Trade Strategy, practical support will be provided to producers of fruit, nuts and vegetables, salad greens and other agrifood products, to assist with training workshops and study tours to help grow their businesses, making market connections to help develop and access export market opportunities, undertaking market analysis and developing and launching products. Tasmania's fruit sector has a proven track record of successful market development, and this program builds on that expertise and other current industry initiatives to support agrifood exporters more broadly.

This Government recognises that investment in research, development, extension and innovation are critical to making the farm productivity gains that Tasmania needs to achieve growth across the agricultural sector. It is a key driver of this Government's target to grow the value of Tasmanian agricultural production to \$10 billion by 2050. We have not only increased core funding for the world-leading Tasmanian Institute of Agriculture, but we established the Agricultural Innovation Fund, bringing our total commitment to \$28 million over five years. In addition, we have committed \$7 million in investment to modernise our Crown and TIA research-farm assets. TIA is the Government's preferred supplier of publicly funded agricultural RD&E services, with opportunities established for working in partnership with the private sector and the industry-based research and development corporations.

The Australian Bureau of Statistics 2016 Census showed that agriculture directly employed 7847 people, representing around 3 per cent of the total Tasmanian workforce. Of the agricultural workforce, livestock and broadacre farming accounted around 31 per cent. Dairy farming accounted for around 20 per cent. Perennial horticulture accounted for around 13 per cent. Vegetable production accounted for around 12 per cent.

The Tasmanian Government continues to work closely with Fruit Growers Tasmania and the growers to promote seasonal work opportunities within the fruit and berry sectors, and to ensure Tasmania attracts and retains harvest workers. I commend the bill.

[3.33 p.m.]

Mr BARNETT (Lyons - Minister for Primary Industries and Water) - Madam Speaker, I am pleased to sum up this debate. I thank all members for their contributions, and specifically the member for Lyons for a confident and positive contribution talking about the importance of the fruit and nut sectors in Tasmania. I thank other members for their contributions, and the positive contributions in particular.

I pay tribute to Fruit Growers Tasmania, and Nick Hansen, the president - particularly during the fruit fly concerns. We had a serious problem in January last year, and it went for more than 12 months. It was a big cause for concern. Stuart Burgess, the CEO, did a great job working with our department, Biosecurity Tasmania. They led the way working with the relevant authorities to get the job done to eradicate the fruit fly in Tasmania. We have to do everything possible to increase the resources to combat fruit fly. That job was done, and we must make it clear that there is always a risk, and we need to minimise that risk. We have done everything we can, and in this recent budget we have made considerable investments to increase the level of investment at the border and on-island to ensure that our biosecurity in Tasmania is protected. We are an island state; we want to be pest- and disease-free wherever possible. That is a key objective of this Government, and it

is supported by fruit growers, farmers and graziers, the fishing industry, the tourism industry and the whole community. We are right behind the biosecurity efforts of this Government and indeed the community is as well. I am grateful for the support in that, and acknowledge again that this bill has been passed through both Houses now, and I commend it to the public. It gives us all a lot more confidence moving forward.

We have a long-term plan to increase the value of agriculture to \$10 billion by 2050. That is our aim; we are on track, with a 9 per cent increase in the last figures that were available, and the member for Lyons noted that in particular. There are a lot of good things happening. The Agri-Food ScoreCard has been released, and you will see raspberries and berries are the highest value berries, at more than 60 per cent of the farmgate value. Cherries remain the highest-value fruit to export at \$29 million, and nuts during that year increased in value by nearly 60 per cent, to be worth \$8 million. Walnuts contributed about 90 per cent of the growth value, with chestnuts and hazelnuts accounting for the remainder.

We are certainly on track. We have some strong policies to support agriculture across the board, but specifically the fruit and nut sector. In our budget in the last year we have \$550 000 over four years for a horticulture market and trade development initiative. We have the Tasmanian Trade Strategy and the Premier is leading this; I was at the launch in Launceston. Earlier today I made a contribution about the free trade agreements and how they are benefiting Tasmania. We are being proactive in promoting the Tasmanian brand, and our opportunities, and that is now happening. Today, news of the extension of the GMO-free status for Tasmania for a further 10 years will feed into that brand, our opportunities to market ourselves to be the best that we can be. It is very encouraging.

Dr Woodruff interjecting.

Mr BARNETT - Madam Deputy Speaker, I will endeavour to continue to speak on the topic related to this bill. We have committed \$1.2 million for a new strategic industry partnership program during that 2017-18 budget. That continues on. I was at the Fruit Growers Tasmania annual meeting and annual conference in Hobart less than two months ago. There were very positive vibes. They have confidence looking forward, and at the annual dinner that night there was a lot of positive feedback on the industry, where it is headed, and the Government support for that sector. We have the strategic industry partnership program - \$120 000 over three years for Fruit Growers Tasmania to promote the interests of their growers and their exporters.

Regarding research and development, we are flat-out supporting the Tasmanian Institute of Agriculture: \$28 million over five years. I pay tribute to the Deputy Premier as the former minister. He has led the way in making those decisions on behalf of the Government and laying that foundation. There is a lot of confidence because of the importance of research, extension work, and the development work that is required - a \$7 million investment to modernise our Crown and tier research farms. I visited each of those farms in the last few weeks, and I am pleased to have the opportunity to inspect, review, walk through and get a better feel for those research farms and the important role they have.

Thinking strategically about how we can get a better return on taxpayer funds invested is something we are looking at very carefully, and will continue to do so. I signed a long-term agreement on behalf of the Government, investing with the University of Tasmania into TIA. Professor Rufus Black and I signed that just some weeks ago and it is strategically a very important foundational document that sets the scene for the future.

We have signed up under the white paper and the Government's agricultural research, development and extension principles and investment strategy and that has been agreed. There are six key principles flowing from that. The Agricultural Innovation Fund specifically benefits the fruit and nut industry in Tasmania and the first initiative from that was for blueberry rust, which has been a problem, and to find innovative ways to reduce if not eradicate that burden on the industry is a key objective. Thank you to those researchers and those involved. I was pleased to announce the allocation of \$300 000 for the Agricultural Innovation Fund to commence research to expand the treatments available for blueberry growers including our organic producers. There is a lot of work going on and those innovation funds are available.

I have not mentioned water but I will quickly say that we have a big investment in water. My shadow, Dr Broad, referred to irrigation. It is important. I have said on and off the record that water is liquid gold. Our investment in water is fantastic and is delivering the goods. This public-private partnership is delivering across rural and regional Tasmania and there are jobs there - jobs, jobs, jobs. That is what it means when you see water being used effectively and wisely and that is what is happening. Eight per cent of agricultural land is delivering 52 per cent of Tasmania's annual agricultural production as a result of irrigation - water. Water is liquid gold.

I thank the federal Coalition Government for their commitment of \$100 million to our water infrastructure assets for tranche 3 of Pipeline to Prosperity. We are on track and it is terrific. We have \$70 million in our budget and with that private sector commitment it is very significant. The first five water projects in tranche 3 are progressing through the planning and approvals process - the Don, the Fingal, the Northern Midlands, Sassafras, Wesley Vale and the Tamar. We are all on track there.

Some of those comments respond to the shadow minister's concerns about where we are going and what we are doing. We have a long-term plan and we are backing the industry. There is no better friend of the agricultural sector and the fruit and nut sector than the Hodgman majority Liberal Government and we are delivering.

There was some concern expressed by Dr Broad, and I will not call it scaremongering, but he has certainly raised a very high level of anxiety in the community about the Treasurer's plans for the foreign investment duty and foreign investment land tax. Two things are very clear. First, there needs to be consultation and there is consultation going forward. Two, this needs to be broadly consistent. We need to be fully aware of other jurisdictions across Australia. Why should we not be broadly consistent with other jurisdictions across Australia? All this will be thrashed out in the weeks and months ahead in consultation with those key stakeholders in the agriculture, fruit and nut sector. It is important so let us not scare the horses unnecessarily. We want to be positive. We do not want an Opposition that just goes knock, knock, knock. We want an Opposition that is positive and collaborative in working together for Tasmania's interests. That is what I would say to Dr Broad.

Dr Broad knows about the investments we have; I have outlined many of them and there are many more. I have not talked about the AgriGrowth Loans Scheme that is available for our farmers, I have not talked about the Young Farmer Support Package, which is a new initiative in conjunction with the AgriGrowth Loans Scheme, but there will not be enough time to go through that today.

I would like to respond to the member for Clark, the Greens Leader's contribution, specifically regarding the balance of the funds and the residual balance paid out in 2017 of some \$23 000 to

Fruit Growers Tasmania. The advice I have just received going back to 2012 in terms of the funds available at the time was \$383 976.87, so that is where we are up to.

I have responded to those concerns that have been expressed and queries. It is a very comprehensive effort and, in short, this is all part of our efforts to reduce the red tape and streamline the process. This is a bill to repeal the Fruit and Nut Research, Development and Extension Trust Fund. It is the right thing to do. It is appropriate. It is part of our strategy to cut the red tape, streamline the process and get on with the job. We are out there delivering.

Bill read the second time.

Bill read the third time.

MOTION

Housing and Homelessness

[3.47 p.m.]

Mr JAENSCH (Braddon - Minister for Housing - Motion) - Madam Deputy Speaker, I move -

That the House -

- (1) acknowledges the dedicated work that is being done every day in the community and housing sectors to support Tasmanians experiencing homelessness or who are at risk of homelessness;
- (2) further acknowledges that homelessness is often linked to other challenges such as mental illness, and the Tasmanian Government is focusing on the integration of mental health services to provide more holistic support and greater independence for clients;
- (3) further acknowledges that Tasmania's Affordable Housing Strategy is responding to the current challenges in the housing market by boosting supply across a spectrum of needs;
- (4) further acknowledges that the Affording Housing Action Plan Stage 2 and the additional investment in funding is another positive step towards continuing this momentum;
- (5) recognises that all levels of government have a role to play in addressing the supply and demand in our housing market; and
- (6) calls on all Members to work together to put the needs of Tasmanians above political point scoring.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to speak on this motion during National Homelessness Week.

Mrs Rylah - Hear, hear. Relevant and important.

Mr JAENSCH - It is relevant and important. National Homelessness Week is an important week that helps us to increase community awareness about the challenges faced by people experiencing homelessness in our society and it facilitates a discussion about what actions are needed and underway to support those people. Every case and every person is unique and every story is different. Everyone must be treated with dignity and in accordance with their needs.

The Tasmanian Government and our Housing Connect partners are committed to supporting people into secure, stable, safe and, where required, supported accommodation that meets their needs. From the outset I want to acknowledge the fantastic dedicated work of the people who are out there every day making a difference in the lives of others, and we have spoken about them in this place before. They include our Housing Connect partners and the networks they work with to reach out to house, home, support and refer the people in their care.

They are people like a bloke called Garry who I met this morning at about sunrise near the Cenotaph. I was going for my walk and he was arriving with his ute and Salvation Army trailer because this was part of his routine. This is the time of the week he turns up and there are people he meets there each week, who he provides a warm breakfast to and makes sure they are okay. He checks in on them and helps them to access other supports and services. His thing is helping other people. I am glad he is out there and there are hundreds like him.

This week I say to those people, because the spotlight is on them and we have a chance to say so, thank you for our contribution to our state and its people. It is immense, it is inspiring and your dedication makes Tasmania a better place. I hope that you feel recognised during weeks like this Homelessness Week. As we all in this Chamber should know, the homelessness situation that Garry and others like him are addressing is a complex problem and one that needs to be addressed with compassion and sensitivity.

Unfortunately, homelessness often comes wrapped up in other challenges that individuals face including addiction, relationship break down and mental illness. My colleague, the Minister for Mental Health and Wellbeing, will have some more to say on that in his contribution on this motion. This second stage of the Government's Affordable Housing Action Plan includes specific actions to address these sorts of challenges as well as providing a roof over people's heads. This includes identifying the housing and support needs for people with mental illness in inpatient care, delivering new homes specifically for this cohort and working with existing community housing providers to deliver more rapid re-housing solutions.

The work that we are doing under AHAP2 right now includes providing an informed response to these complex circumstances of people who find themselves facing homelessness. It is not only about a place to put people who are homeless or building more houses, because houses may not be all that they need, but a far more nuanced and informed approach. This is informed by the sector that works with people in the homelessness and social services sector every day to provide safety, security and support. We are doing that through expansion of the outreach service that started last winter and has continued as a permanent component of our Affordable Housing Action Plan, more resources and people on the ground to reach out to those sleeping rough or facing homelessness, to take their stories, to direct them and help them to access the services they need.

Added to this more recently is an extra \$5 million announced by our Government, a work plan that has been developed and is now being deployed: 18 new units are to be based at Bethlehem House under a contract for management with them. They are single bedroom units for single people who find themselves homeless or sleeping rough; 10 new units associated with the Hobart Women's

Shelter, two-bedroom units in this case for women with or without children, significantly expanding the capacity of that service and that facility to take more people as we bring them in through our expanded outreach service. We need somewhere to direct them to. These shelters are there to deal with people with higher needs, who need a supported environment in which to get themselves settled, get their lives together and take their next steps.

We have also provided more resources in the form of brokerage to assist our service providers to secure emergency accommodation for lower-needs people who simply need somewhere to stay while they sort themselves out but they do not have additional complexities to deal with. These are cabins in caravan parks, motel rooms and the like. We have provided uncapped funding to our Housing Connect partners around Tasmania to ensure they will never find themselves picking people up and unable to find a secure, safe and warm place for them for the night.

We also announced an expo that will provide, in one place at one time, a version of Housing Connect that people can visit and see the range of services available and speak to the people who provide them. We are hoping that there may be people who need homelessness services and housing who may come along to this expo and learn about the services available to them. It is also for the rest of the population, to draw people in and remind them these services exist, which may help next time you meet someone on the street. We often get the call - there is a bloke down at Salamanca who looks a bit rough, or there is somebody sleeping in the park near me. If we can inform the broader community more generally about the types of services available, how to get them and how to refer people to them then, we are doing a service and we are better off as a community and better able to help out fellow Tasmanians. I am looking forward to delivering on that commitment in October.

Today, we announced that the Government has entered an agreement to purchase the Waratah Hotel on Murray Street in Hobart. With some preliminary work to convert it from a working hotel into a supported accommodation facility, it should provide 24 ensuite units for single men and women. That is the cohort being looked at, those who need longer-term supported accommodation and not only the shelter. It may not be for people who are able to maintain their own tenancy in the private rental market or in social housing. The cohort this is aimed toward need something a little different, where there is food, services and security and other supports available to them.

We currently fund a number of supported accommodation facilities like this around Tasmania. We have some experienced organisations that are good at looking after people, managing their interests and keeping them safe in facilities like this. We will be going to market to secure a partner who will be the operator of a new supported accommodation facility based at the site of the Waratah Hotel. I thank the Housing Tasmania crew who have been able to move quickly on an opportunity to secure a strategic asset, which has immediate benefits for our capacity and will give us rooms to put people in that we do not have right now. Longer-term, this is a site that can stand more development. It has been a great one to secure in the interest of housing Tasmanians into the future.

As the theme of Homelessness Week reminds us, we know that housing ends homelessness better than anything. Our overarching aim, while we are dealing with the individuals and their needs, is to provide more housing for all Tasmanians and more supply in the market. Our Government is committed to doing all we can to deliver new homes; more houses for Tasmanians across the spectrum of need. Through our action plan 1, our first action plan under the Affordable Housing Strategy, the Hodgman Government has assisted a total of 1605 additional households into safe and secure accommodation that meets their needs, delivering a total of 984 affordable lots and

homes and significantly boosting our supply of social housing with 453 new dwellings delivered. There is some argy bargy and some cynicism about numbers reported and targets, et cetera, but those homes are out there. Those ones have delivered. You can count them. I do not think there is anybody in Tasmania, when they are driving around their neighbourhood of Greater Hobart, Launceston, Devonport, Burnie and other centres, that does not see the amount of work that is underway, and so much of that at the moment.

Someone quoted to me last year, and I have not been able to check it, that one in six new homes built in Tasmania was public and community housing. That is massive. That is a high level of delivery of housing for Tasmanians. We are proud to have put houses on the ground when Tasmanians needed them and we will keep going. We have the machinery to build houses, working at a high level. We are going to keep on doing that. We are bringing money forward from the out years into this year and next year to boost that effort and keep that peak build rolling for longer and maintaining that momentum. The 984 figure we used for affordable lots and homes has many parts to it.

Ms O'Connor - It was homes once. It was 900 new homes.

Mr JAENSCH - It also includes 174 new homes that were built under our HomeShare mortgage equity scheme. A further 177 homes were purchased by Housing Tasmania tenants with help from the Tasmanian Government. Together this means a total of 351 low-income households were assisted into home ownership for the first time under our plan. I am really proud of those initiatives too, because affordable housing does not just mean social housing for everyone forever.

Everyone's needs, aspirations and capabilities are different and what we are finding is there is a cohort of people in Tasmania at the moment who are in housing stress, or coming out of housing stress and the requirement for social housing, who are ready to take on their own home. We are finding ways to do that in a very hot market to allow low- and moderate-income households to take control of their future, be their own landlord and take advantage of low interest rates in the market, with our assistance, to own their own home. It makes a difference. When we visit some of those suburbs that have traditionally been broadacre public housing suburbs from previous episodes of housing investment where that was seen to be the best way of doing it, you can pick the ones that people own. They stand out. It is fantastic to see those suburbs starting to transform. The gardens are better kept and the maintenance, which is not just the landlord's responsibility, is starting to happen. It is tremendous to see those neighbourhoods transforming.

As part of stage 2 of our Affordable Housing Strategy, our second Affordable Housing Action Plan, we are investing an additional \$125 million, bringing the Hodgman Government's investment to almost \$200 million of state money over eight years, the largest state government investment into affordable housing in Tasmania's history. Separately, we have targeted initiatives to boost home ownership and we have seen 1584 first home owners take up the \$20 000 First Home Owners Grant since 1 July 2016 and a further 1522 Tasmanians who have accessed the Government's first home owner's duty concession of up to \$7000 on the purchase of an established home. The statistics clearly show that our plan to increase the supply of housing in the social housing sector as well as in the broader market, the private sector, is having an effect and is working.

Ms O'Connor - Just for clarification, when you say your statistics confirm it is having an effect, how do you know? Is it because the public housing waiting list has fallen marginally, or what?

Mr JAENSCH - The recent ABS data shows that in the 2018-19 financial year 3121 dwellings were approved, which is the strongest growth of any state and 9.5 per cent higher than approvals for 2017-18.

Ms O'Connor - That's a non-sequitur statistically.

Mr JAENSCH - No, I think you walked in off the back of something. I was talking about how we are increasing the supply of housing in Tasmania. The supply of housing in Tasmania is growing and there is lots of building happening. Approvals, commencements and completions are up.

Ms O'Connor - How many of them are affordable?

Mr JAENSCH - Again, this is the issue. The situation that Tasmania faces at the moment, particularly the challenges for those on lower incomes of affordability, are driven by an overall lower than needed supply of houses in the market. The solution to that ultimately is to provide more houses in the whole market. That will change the cost of getting into the market for those at all levels as well and enable people on lower incomes to better compete in the market for a home of their own, be they renting or building or buying homes. The only solution to a lack of houses is more houses and you cannot build houses without land that is zoned in the right places where people want to be and where the services and infrastructure are.

In this discussion about addressing Tasmania's housing shortage, although my responsibilities as minister are predominantly for the social housing sector and homelessness and the services we provide to people who are not in the market, the problem is that too many people are being squeezed out of the market and becoming reliant on government services. We need to face up to that. Part of that is building more capacity in the social housing sector and services to support those who find themselves homeless. The cause of them being homeless or in housing stress must also be addressed. That is about stimulating the broader market, getting more investment happening and doing everything we can to encourage, facilitate and support more investment in more houses for Tasmanians, because that is what is going to give us the supply to meet the demand that is going to cool the market and allow prices to stabilise and give lower-income Tasmanians a better shot at competing in the market.

In the meantime we have to assist them to have a house when they cannot afford one, to subsidise their rent, and in some cases to go into the market and rent houses from the private sector and head lease them and make them available to people on lower incomes who could not have afforded them on their own, and that is through our Private Rental Incentives scheme. We need to pull all these levers. There is not just one silver bullet solution to the complex housing shortage situation we face. The solutions exist in the private market, the supply of land and the investment conditions we provide for people who are going to be the ones who put their money down and build new houses for Tasmanians to live in, as well as in the social housing sector. We need to work across that spectrum. That is what I mean when we talk about working across the spectrum of need. The ABS data is showing us that there has been rapid growth in the number of new starts and completions in Tasmania compared to other jurisdictions. While they are going backwards, we are going forwards, and we need to keep that pressure on. We need to keep that confidence up and do what we can to encourage anyone who is able, to be investing in residential development in Tasmania because we need more houses.

Part of that is initiative to see the fast-tracked rezoning of surplus government land in areas of demand that are suitable for the development of residential accommodation, including social and

affordable housing to meet that demand. So far through that rezoning process we have made available around 200 dwelling lots in Rokeby, Moonah, Devonport and Newnham, some of which might have the capacity to take multiple dwellings as smaller units in a strata title arrangement. In different parts of our state we have made more land available that was not available before to build houses on in areas where housing is in demand. I will have a little more to say about Huntingfield, the newest, latest and largest of those housing land supply orders, in a moment.

These are examples of the action our Government is taking to build more houses. In the bit over a year that I have been Minister for Housing it has been invigorating to be part of that and to have support for the plans that were started before I took up the ministry, with a Cabinet, a party and a government that recognises the urgency and importance of investing in more housing. We have been able to get our programs underway on so many fronts and I am proud to be able to report in National Homelessness Week on the suite of actions underway right now and the ones that are still coming.

As we know, while we are leading the way in some ways on these sorts of actions and working with others, we are not the only ones who can assist. We cannot do it by ourselves so we work with a range of partners across the sectors and I have mentioned some of them already - the community housing providers, our Housing Connect partners and others - but we know also that all tiers of government have a role to play. We are pleased to have hosted representatives of our federal Morrison Coalition Government here since before the federal election, when we had a magnificent visit and a commitment from the Prime Minister to \$30 million as part of the City Deal to contribute to the provision of social and affordable housing in the Greater Hobart area, equivalent to the delivery of around 100 homes, we understand, over this year and next year. That work is being contracted now with community housing providers, and getting underway - a fantastic boost and support to our efforts. We are very glad we have been able to negotiate that with the federal government, in addition to our \$125 million investment in Action Plan Number 2.

All of those houses, as they are built, will be tenanted by allocation, so people from the social housing register - people we know have made their application and been assessed and assigned priority, and have been waiting sometimes for too long - will be in line for these new houses as they become available, thanks to that excellent partnership with the Commonwealth under the City Deal.

In terms of the Commonwealth as well, we have been able to host meetings and visits from our new federal Minister for Housing, and the assistant minister for housing and homelessness, over the past couple of months, so they can see firsthand, and hear firsthand from Tasmanians, about the priorities here, and the things that are driving the demand for housing, and the issues associated with meeting their requirements on the ground. I am pleased to say they have kept the door open to us, and they are actively listening - them, as well as our federal Liberal team, Tasmanian Liberal team in the Senate, and now in the lower House as well. We have been taking up to them our Government's, and our state's, firm intent to see our historical Commonwealth housing debt erased. We believe we are closer than we have been before, and we are working at the highest level with the Morrison Government to ensure we can negotiate the best deal for Tasmania, which would see, if successful, \$15 million that is currently going out of our housing budget on principal and interest payments back to the Commonwealth each year, retained in Tasmania and put to work building more houses for Tasmanians to live in as well.

We need to be sure that does not come at the expense of GST payments or other funds being diverted that we would otherwise have received. There is much work through there, but we have been very grateful for the ear of the Morrison Government to have those discussions continuing, so

we will keep pushing that barrow. We know it has been an issue for Tasmania for a very long time. We know there have been times when there has been a Labor government here, and a Labor housing minister from Tasmania in Canberra, and it has not been able to be resolved as an issue, but I believe we are closer than we have been before, the Hodgman Government working with the Morrison Government. I look forward to seeing where those negotiations go next, and making the case as strongly as we can for retirement of that debt.

All tiers of government have a contribution to make. I talked briefly there about the work that has gone on with the federal government, but local government also has a very important role to play, as the local planning authorities who assess and provide their support for development applications when these come up to develop new residential areas. They are also involved in the planning for land release, and the infrastructure to support it in their local areas, as part of their regional land use strategies, and development of things like urban growth boundaries as well.

They are participants in programs like our regional supply program; part of our Affordable Housing Action Plan Number 2, one round of which has just closed, where we have promoted to local governments right around Tasmania the opportunity to partner with the Government in investing in housing - maybe on land that they own, where they can contribute the land, we can contribute the funds for the building of a home, and a third party such as a community housing provider can manage the tenancies for people in those homes. There have been excellent examples of that in places like Latrobe - in our electorate of Braddon, Mrs Rylah - most recently. We have been very grateful and very pleased to see local government around the state stepping up to play its part in solving the issues of lack of housing supply, particularly for low-income Tasmanians at a very local level.

We have also had good cooperation with the Hobart City Council on a couple of key projects, most recently and currently regarding the siting of some of the temporary accommodation we are bringing in to put alongside the existing specialist homelessness shelters at Bethlehem House and the Hobart Women's Shelter. The cooperation of the council has been very important. We have a draft planning directive in front of the Tasmanian Planning Commission at the moment which, if it is approved, will give those councils the tools they need to provide a temporary accommodation permit to allow this expansion to happen without undue delay. We are looking forward to that happening, and continuing a strong relationship with Hobart City Council on that.

We have also been working with Hobart City Council on the development of new planning rules for medium rise in-fill developments in our cities. Hobart has a particular need and interest for these types of development, and we are partnering with them under the umbrella of the City Deal projects as well, to develop a new suite of planning rules - zones that can be applied in our urban areas across the state, where previously there has not been a zoning or planning provision for residential development, and therefore there has been a requirement to go through lengthy and expensive re-zoning before even getting into the development assessment processes for new types of apartment developments and the like.

We are hoping we will be able to provide a permitted pathway that means we can clearly identify in certain areas of the city - and along strategic corridors like transit corridors - zones where this sort of development and investment is welcome and made easier, and has a clearer pathway through the planning approvals process to get underway.

Everyone has a role to play: all levels of government. We are grateful for the assistance and cooperation that we have had so far. Everybody needs to be aboard this mission of solving homelessness in Tasmania - including everybody in this House, in this parliament, from all parties.

I do not intend to create political points out of this, but I want to make the point -

Members interjecting.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER - Order.

Mr JAENSCH - I need to draw attention to the habits that are developing, particularly from Labor, around point scoring and politics on this very sensitive, complex matter for Tasmanians where the people who are out there, this Homelessness Week that we are speaking about and trying to help, want us to put the politics aside and get on with the job. They want us to deliver housing. They do not like the grandstanding. They do not see where it fits in the task -

Ms O'Connor - You are grandstanding now and political point scoring.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER - Order, Ms O'Connor.

Mr JAENSCH - of everybody getting on with the job of delivering more housing for Tasmanians.

I note that this week, in Homelessness Week, I received one question from the Opposition on housing and homelessness, and was it about how we as parliamentarians together are meeting and getting on with the challenge and the opportunities to deliver more housing for Tasmanians who are in need? No, it was not. It was about historical data. It was looking for a 'gotcha': a way to catch a minister out, and again and again and again, on this matter of importance for Tasmanians, Labor has been playing the man and not the ball each time it happens.

Ms Standen - If you answered the question.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER - Order, Ms Standen.

Mr JAENSCH - The Greens are different. I sense in the Greens a deeper care for this area, and a better understanding of what is required to deal with it. They have been bringing ideas, sometimes wrongheaded ones, but contributing to the discussion about what we are doing, what we are doing next, what we need to do more of and better. That is what the people who put us here expect us to be doing.

One question this week from Labor, and it was about trying to catch us out on a matter of numbers and reports and whether we were being tricky and somehow trying to con people or steal their money or hide houses. A couple of weeks ago we saw the unedifying spectacle of the Opposition spokesman and her Leader staging a press conference -

Ms Standen - But we're all above political point-scoring here.

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

Mr JAENSCH - in front of a house in Clarendon Vale that they were claiming was a government house that had not been maintained properly.

Ms O'Connor - Minister, why would you do this if you want cooperation?

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER - Order.

Mr JAENSCH - The point is that they reached for a stunt on this important and sensitive matter and that is regrettable. It is dumbfounding as well that they had so much trouble finding a government-owned house in Clarendon Vale. It is hardly a needle in a haystack challenge but it made them look silly and it made this look like a silly political issue for parliamentarians when it is not. It is a fundamentally important thing for Tasmanians. It is a very complex human story and it deserves better than political stunts. We all need to be focused on playing the ball and not the man on this. I am deeply disappointed in the way the Opposition in particular has approached this area of policy and scrutiny and political argument. I invite them again to stop and focus on what we are meant to be doing.

In relation to the Huntingfield housing land supply order, we have been out as government - Housing Tasmania - and our planning unit with a draft: a housing land supply order. We have followed the steps that were agreed in the legislation about who and how would be consulted on the proposal for the rezoning of that land to make it available for residential development. It was earmarked for development in the Regional Land Use Strategy under Kingborough Council's own land use plan and we specifically developed legislation and unanimously voted on it in this House. We have taken it out there. One of the things that happened right at the outset in the early days was that we had a press release from Labor in which Ms Standen says that this development will not deliver socially affordable housing. She was feeding on misinterpretation and maybe fears in the local community and running out a line about -

Ms O'Connor - It was the fact that you hadn't made any commitment to a percentage of social housing.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER - Order.

Mr JAENSCH - how this development will not deliver social or affordable housing. Ms Standen was one of the members of this House who voted for the legislation which said that with the powers we are talking about under the Housing Land Supply Act this land only exists in order to be able to provide housing for Tasmanians, including social and affordable housing.

Ms Standen - Why haven't you tabled the order?

Mr JAENSCH - Why have we not tabled the order? Because we are listening to what people have said through consultation, which is why you do consultation. You take the information in and then you take a draft housing loan supply order to finalise it before submitting it for a disallowance motion in both Houses of parliament. That is what you do. If I had brought it in last week you would say I was rushing it.

Ms O'Connor - Well, you would have been.

Mr JAENSCH - You see, I would have been rushing it, but now I am dragging my heels. What I am seeing at the moment is again -

Ms O'Connor - Hang on, you're talking to two different members and you should make that clear. I didn't accuse you of dragging your heels.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER - Order.

Mr JAENSCH - There was a bit of scaring regarding a process which was always going to be tricky and difficult, which was always going to have challenges and which was always going to need to work hard to bring people with it and have the support of everyone in the parliament. That is why there had to be special legislation designed and delivered for doing just this.

Ms O'Connor - You've more than doubled the density on the master plan and that is why people are upset.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER - Order, Ms O'Connor - your first warning.

Mr JAENSCH - In March last year at the housing summit where representatives of all parties here were in attendance, the very clear message was that as part of addressing this housing supply shortage in Tasmania the Government should identify and then fast-track the rezoning of government-owned land to make it available to build housing for Tasmanians, and to be able to do it as expeditiously and efficiently as possible without compromising the fundamentals of the planning process on land that was suitable for developing housing and where housing was needed.

We have done that. We are going through the steps of that and using a process designed specifically to enable that to happen more quickly. We have gone out and consulted and we have listened to the people in the Kingborough area and the concerns they have raised, which are legitimate, and we are working hard right now on the draft order to respond to those issues where it is appropriate to do so in the order and to ensure we are doing what we can to ensure that the order, once tabled, accommodates their needs. We are not just listening to the residents of Kingborough. We are also listening to the residents of no fixed address, the residents of the shelters, the people whose names are on the social housing register who have been waiting for housing to become available. We built these special powers into legislation in this parliament to do this for those people as well.

Ms Butler - It's been five years. You'd better get a wriggle on. When are you going to do it?

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER - Order, Ms Butler.

Mr JAENSCH - We need to ensure that we are going to deliver on what we told them we would do and what we discussed in here at length when we debated the bill in this House and in the upper House, because there was an emergency at that time and everyone was committed to doing something, which required sometimes some extraordinary powers and provisions so we built legislation to make that happen.

The Hodgman Liberal Government is going to stick to what it said it would do. We are going to follow through. We are going to use that legislation, follow the process and deliver a housing land supply order which takes account of the matters raised by the local community but also takes account of the fact that this area has been earmarked for residential development for many years as part of the Regional Land Use Strategy and Kingborough Council's own land use plan -

Time expired.

[4.27 p.m.]

Ms STANDEN (Franklin) - Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to speak on this motion on affordable housing. It touches on homelessness and calls on all members to work together to put the needs of Tasmanians above political point-scoring. On behalf of the people in this state - around 120 000 who are experiencing poverty, 80 000 who are experiencing housing stress and 3300 who are on the public housing priority wait list who are waiting nearly a year to be housed - I apologise to them for the woeful and embarrassing display of partisan politics that was blatantly on display just now in the contribution of the Minister for Housing, Roger Jaensch. He should be ashamed to stand up and speak to his own motion calling on members to work together to put the needs of Tasmanians above political point-scoring and spend at least half of his contribution doing exactly that.

Let me start at the beginning in relation a bipartisan approach. Labor has called for a bipartisan approach for as long as I have been in this shadow portfolio and long before that, and we are still waiting. I am aware that my predecessor, Josh Willie, as shadow minister for housing extended the hand for a bipartisan approach and sought to work with this minister since his appointment replacing the former minister, Jacqui Petrusma, but despite that, the hand was never taken up.

I too have extended the hand for a bipartisan approach and I am still waiting. I requested a briefing through the minister's office on the Affordable Housing Action Plan stage 2 when it was released and the minister's own chief of staff denied that request. She said that in fact it would only be appropriate for briefings to be offered in relation to bills. No opening the door: not once has he phoned me to say we should sit down and discuss my ideas. He knows of my experience in relation to human and community services. I respect the minister's background. He comes from a different background from me but I believe we are both focused on assisting the people in Tasmania to better housing and homelessness outcomes. Not once has he called or written to me to invite me to a meeting to discuss ideas. I wrote to the minister as recently as a couple of weeks ago to ask for a briefing on the Affordable Housing Action Plan stage 2 and I am still waiting for a response.

I find it laughable that this Minister for Housing has the cheek to come into this House and call on all members to work together to put the needs of Tasmanians above political point scoring. He knows that, on the one occasion we have come together to discuss possible policy ideas, he was forced, shamed almost, by the member for Clark when he talked against a motion to extending the sitting at the last sitting period before the winter recess. This would have been to talk specifically about his promised homelessness package. He did not take the opportunity of a bipartisan approach, again extended by the Leader of the Opposition, Rebecca White, to change the rules to sit for another day, on the Friday, to talk in committee-style like they do in the other place, for us to invite some of the experts from the community sector and discuss the ideas he had. He subsequently convened a meeting but it was not in that style. He and the Government voted against that motion for the whole of parliament to consider the homelessness package.

It would have been an opportunity for all members in this place to bring their experience, their perspectives from their electorate, toward a truly bipartisan approach above political point scoring, to this deepening crisis of housing and homelessness within this state. No, that motion was denied and, reluctantly, the minister sat down with me, the Leader of the Greens, and the Liberal member for Clark, together with some leaders from the community sector and outlined his plan for homelessness. He invited some comment but it was clear he was holding court and these were his ideas. We were not given an agenda until the morning of the meeting. We were not even told the time of the meeting.

Fair go. This minister pretends he is dedicated to a bipartisan approach but I am still waiting. I will continue to extend that offer to this minister and I will give him a fair go to. He sees that it is important to take the politics out of the housing crisis. My responsibility is to the people of Franklin who elected me and the people of Tasmania in my capacity as shadow minister for Housing. I will always speak up for those people who are hit hardest by this housing and homelessness crisis. If I have ideas to put on the table I welcome the opportunity to share them with the minister but he will not play ball. We have consistently put ideas on the table and we have called on the minister to adopt them. He is pretending in this place this week that Labor has no policies and no ideas but he knows that is not true. We are working hard with stakeholders and the community to further develop our housing policies to ensure we meet the future needs of Tasmanians and they are no secret. They are on our website for people to refer to. For the benefit of *Hansard* and those in this place today I will briefly read them out, so that people understand that Labor is committed to a comprehensive approach and we are deeply committed to shifting the dial to improve the lot of those hit hardest by this housing and homelessness crisis. We say -

What will Labor do?

It's time to explore new and innovative opportunities for getting people housed, and keeping them housed. Labor is committed to expanding the Affordable Housing Strategy to develop an innovative housing action plan that will make a real, and sustainable difference to Tasmanians who are experiencing housing distress now and into the future.

Key policy elements:

- Reinstating the Reintegrating Ex-Offenders (REO) Program. Labor understands the value of the REO program and the opportunity it provides for ex-offenders to reintegrate into the community.
- Roll out a pilot program to deliver individual small homes statewide for people suffering mental ill-health.

On that point, Labor held mental health round tables last week and it was strongly acknowledged that housing affordability and housing stress is a contributing factor in Tasmanians' mental wellbeing. Labor is the party that deeply understands the interaction between these challenges, as the minister calls it, mental health, alcohol and other drugs, returning citizens from incarceration. There are a range of challenging needs and we have a comprehensive set of policies to address those. We are working, in the case of the mental health round tables and in other ways, to build on these policies I am reading now. The remaining elements of our policy are that -

- Home Share will be enhanced by dropping the deposit to \$2000 from \$3000 to assist more people into home ownership.
- Streets Ahead - currently only applies to Housing Tasmania properties. Labor will expand this to include new builds assisting more people into home ownership.
- Invest in programs to help young people leaving the Out of Home Care system to transition to independence. Labor's investment will deliver new units for young people, supported by a specialist coordinator.

- Employ an additional child safety officers to bolster the child protection system so vulnerable children don't fall through the cracks.
- Build multi residential developments providing more people with safe and secure housing - targeted to people living with a disability, young people aged 18-25 and people over 55 years.
- Roll out Energy Efficient programs to more low income Tasmanians statewide saving people approximately \$400 pa.
- Deliver heat pump upgrades - target over 55's and oldest public housing properties.
- Invest in more supported accommodation facilities targeting 16-20 year olds based on a model similar to Mara House.
- Labor is committed to research, investigating and further consultation into options such as inclusionary zoning -

We have talked about that in this term of government as well, which has been adopted in South Australia, New South Wales and the ACT. I recently visited South Australia, where I saw some of this in action. This point continues, with one following -

- Inclusion rezoning is a land use planning intervention by government that either mandates or creates incentives so that a proportion of a residential development includes as number of affordable housing dwellings.
- Labor will make it easier for people with a range of disabilities and impairments to have improved access for assistance dogs.

Labor is proud of this suite of initiatives under its housing and human services policy platform. We understand that housing is a basic human right and that access to stable, safe and affordable housing is a vital first step toward personal health and wellbeing. Having a home is not only about having a roof over your head: it is essential to everything we value in life; the foundation that provides a base on which to build or rebuild our lives. Labor has ideas and we are willing to share them. They are out there for the Government to consider. Our door is open, we are happy to take a phone call to discuss ideas and explore bipartisan approaches but we are waiting on the minister to adopt them. That is why Labor initiated the formal process of a housing affordability inquiry. We are looking forward to next week's hearings and the recommendations of the inquiry because we know there are people in the community, whether they be individuals or experts in human service delivery or in the private sector, with a range of interests right across the housing and homelessness conundrum. We have 12 terms of reference, a comprehensive and well-consulted approach, and we are looking forward to hearing the input of a range of people.

We very much hope to invite and receive the voice of homeless Tasmanians or those most at risk of homelessness, right through to academics and heads of community sector organisations, property developers and the like, because we are open to ideas. It was Labor who moved the process for this housing affordability inquiry and we are proud of that. It will be reporting mid-October and I am pleased to say there is a lot of goodwill around the table of that select committee and I am optimistic that we can work in a bipartisan way.

Ms O'Connor - Even tripartisan.

Ms STANDEN - I am happy to be corrected on my language there; I almost came out with multipartisan but tripartisan will do. I am very happy to work right across the range of political views to hear the ideas of people who are most affected by the housing and homelessness crisis in this state. The short time frame is ambitious but we have had some terrific input already. I do not think it is going outside the bounds of confidentiality to say that we are very pleased about the number of submissions received. I am very confident we will get some terrific results, with a strong report for the Government's consideration and for all parties to this process in order to move forward. The minister should take note of his own motion. In calling for bipartisan approaches, he could go a long way to taking account of that himself.

I move to a couple of things. We have the homelessness package with an announcement about the Waratah Hotel and the Housing Connect expo which will support people and connect them to services if they happen to live in or travel to the south of the state. There is crisis accommodation for some 70 units but that is only in Hobart. I note in the spirit of offering ideas and suggestions that there are some gaps in relation to the homelessness package. Since the minister has not reconvened the tripartisan group to show us his work plan, his time frame and his deliverables, I have not had the opportunity to talk to him about this before now.

I note there are several gaps in relation to responding to families, to regional Tasmania and to under-18s in particular. The brokerage service, for instance, at the Waratah Hotel, as I understand it, means that if you are under 18, forget it. There is also no guarantee for recurrent funding for services, as I understand it. I have reached out to the specialist homelessness services providers that are expecting a finalised agreement around this and there are significant questions around the terms of that agreement. I urge the minister to finalise those negotiations as quickly as possible and get that work underway.

He must also recognise that homelessness is a statewide issue. There are 1600 people across this state, not just in the Greater Hobart area, experiencing homelessness on any given night. About 25 per cent of those are aged 12 to 24. Where is his focus on youth, on regional Tasmania and on families? Winter is almost over and the reality is that this minister has had two winters now to respond to this issue. He is working with an Affordable Housing Strategy that was set under old settings. He has the stage 1 plan and he resolutely claims he has met targets but he knows he has not. He has failed to meet his targets and if he was just able to accept that homes means homes, not lots and homes; 900 new homes is what he promised and he has delivered just less than half of that.

Minister, we understand that you are playing catch-up. We understand that the former minister let you down and that there was very little investment in social and affordable housing in the first term of this Government. We understand that you are dedicated and committed and doing your best to play catch-up, but if you do not play catch-up you will set the agenda back for a decade or more. You will not be doing what you are hoping to do and that is to make a positive contribution in this state in relation to housing and homelessness.

I acknowledge that the Government is trying hard, as Labor has in the past. On multiple occasions we have written to the commonwealth government and tried to work with governments of all colours in Canberra in order to relieve this terrible housing debt of \$157 million, an historic housing debt that means that roughly half the operating budget for Housing Tasmania is returned the very next day. A cheque for some \$30 million is received and that -

Mr Jaensch - It is not the operating budget.

Ms STANDEN - The Minister for Housing is muttering away but I am quoting from him when he said he is trying to ensure that the \$15 million that is returned to Canberra is retained in Tasmania. I am backing you up, minister, so let us not be nasty about this.

Ms O'Connor - Stop trying to score points, minister.

Ms STANDEN - You are trying to score points - political point-scoring. I thought we were above all that. I agree with the minister when he says it is important that we ensure there is no giving with one hand and taking with the other, but it is also important that he uses his influences in Canberra because on two occasions recently there have been opportunities for federal Minister for Housing, Michael Sukkar, and assistant minister, Luke Howarth, to make announcements in relation to the housing debt, but it has not been the federal government that is leading in this regard. In fact, Senator Abetz has been the chief cheerleader in saying that would be an irresponsible thing to do. He said the \$15 million would be falling upon the pockets of all Tasmanian ratepayers whereas he knows very well that that \$15 million is a hit to the pockets of those who can least afford it: the 3300 people on the public housing wait list and those who are homeless and so on.

Where is the leadership? Where is the goodwill to turn around and look at the Affordable Housing Strategy and admit that it is set on old settings? He has had an incremental approach around budget management but really the Affordable Housing Action Plan stage 2 has no detailed implementation plan either and I know from meeting with players in the community sector that they have significant concerns they do not have the green light to go ahead. There are targets and so on that are within the plan but it is not an implementation plan.

He says there is one but there is none publicly available and he is not sharing it with those in the community sector who are charged with delivering it, so fair go. He wants a bipartisan approach. He says he is willing to work with the sector but he is not giving them a hand and he is not willing to admit that there needs to be significant revisions in relation to his Affordable Housing Action Plan.

The minister has accused me of playing politics around his lots and homes but the fact is that the social housing target, even taking account of the 900 or something that was promised and certainly the peak body, Shelter Tasmania, were expecting 900 new homes by 30 June 2019. The minister committed in parliament to delivering 900 new homes by the end of June, so I do not know what the hoo-haa is about. He said half of that was to be delivered in the greater Hobart region, too. In fact he knows that 453 new social housing dwellings is what has been delivered - 447 short, or less than 50 per cent of the target of 900.

How are we supposed to believe him when he says the Affordable Housing Strategy will take us further, with an additional 1500 more affordable homes, to increase the number of new affordable homes to 2400 over eight years? How can Tasmanians believe that, particularly when I wrote to the minister and asked him, very pleasantly, to explain to me what the situation is in relation to housing stock, and I have not had a response to that question. Very reasonably, this week, today in fact, I asked a question of the minister to give him an opportunity to put on the record what the situation is in terms of the number of new homes, because it is homes that people are looking for. The definition of a home is 'the place where one lives permanently, especially as the member of a family or a household'. That is an accepted definition within the sector. Emergency

accommodation is not included. Measures like Streets Ahead, though we welcome them, are not new supply.

I have no problem with the initiative around the Waratah Hotel, provided we can see some detail about what the safety and security arrangements will be, who will be assisted and what additional services will be provided. I am a reasonable person, and I am prepared to stand in this place, or in public, to congratulate this minister where congratulations are due. Unfortunately, he has adopted a sneaky disposition around hiding and trying to change the figures for his own ends.

It is worth looking back at what has happened over the last little while since this Government came to power. I have said there has been under-investment in relation to housing supply - in particular social and affordable housing - in this state. There has been \$45.6 million less funding and 506 fewer houses available in the period 2013-17. That goes a long way to explaining why this minister is trying to play catch-up. He must be well into his first year, perhaps second year as housing minister now. He knows that the wait lists have tripled to over 3300, from just 2400 in 2014. This Government was handed a gift, because in the period of 2009-15, thanks to tripartisan approaches here in Tasmania and in Canberra, it saw the completion of 2217 new affordable and social homes in Tasmania. Not lots and homes; these were new affordable and social homes.

My understanding, coming into this role, trying to get an historical perspective on this, I freely admit that the 2217 was a high bar. It was an acceleration of the social and affordable housing building in this state, from around about 800 to 900 or so in a term of government. Imagine my surprise when I looked, then, at the record in the first term of this Government. It was less than 50 new social and affordable homes delivered in that four-year period of government, which is a disgraceful blight on this Government's record, and a terrible legacy for the former housing minister to pass on to her successor.

As I said, wait lists at that time of change of government were just 2400, and they have now increased by about 30 per cent or so, if my maths is right, to 3300. Wait lists were the lowest in a decade at that point; a 20.6 week waiting list to be housed in 2013-14 has now grown to 40 weeks. Over the past 12 months, nearly, that figure has flipped around a little, and it has come back a little in the last quarterly report, but it is pretty stubborn. It got just above a year, but it is still around about a year - and that is just the average time to house priority applicants.

I have spoken with a number of people. If one was to talk with the people who coordinate the Hobartians Facing Homelessness social media page, I know they ask the question: how long have you been on the wait list? Let me tell you, the response is often more than 50 weeks. From the interactions I have had with many constituents through my office, I can tell you that people are in the most desperate of circumstances, people escaping domestic violence, people with very complex and challenging circumstances at home for a range of reasons, who have been sleeping in the cars, sleeping in garages. I tried to help a family: a bloke who was in his thirties whose brother had been living with his mum, who had a chronic alcohol problem, and in public housing. The boyfriend had become more and more violent and it became clear to the first brother that he needed to get his brother out. Despite the fact that he and his wife had just had twins, he had invited his brother to come and stay with him. They were stretched in terms of their resources within their own home. It was clear that not one home, but more than one home, was being torn apart by this situation of not being able to house a minor, even with a guarantor of the brother. There are very significant gaps in the system.

I have talked with families that have been pushed out of the private rental market, living on the outskirts of Hobart, in insecure, temporary, casual employment, working sometimes a couple of shifts in order to make ends meet, because of time and because of money - petrol was expensive, car costs and all of the rest of it. I have talked with people who have lived in cars to try to make ends meet, and manage their time as well as their money. I have talked with families; women who have escaped domestic violence and have felt they have no option except to live in their cars with their kids. They are trying to carry out their lives day to day, getting their kids off to school without a shower, much less a proper meal in their bellies. The stories go on and on in relation to the gaps in the system.

When the Housing minister says we should not put the needs of Tasmanians above political point scoring, I ask him, what does he expect me to do? What would he do in my place as opposition spokesperson for housing? Should I sit back and not point out the inadequacies of a system that is so obviously failing so many people affected by the housing and homelessness crisis in this state? Is it not my responsibility to come into this place and point out that the facts show from the RoGS data, *Report on Government Services* data, in 2014 to the end of May 2019, his own figures provided in Estimates show that there is a net decrease in housing stock of 617?

Mrs Rylah - That's disingenuous and you know it.

Ms STANDEN - The member for Braddon accuses me of being disingenuous when I have quoted figures provided by the Productivity Commission in relation to the first figure and the minister's own data provided in Estimates in this place.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I have been asked to put the needs of Tasmanians, those homeless and at risk of homelessness, above political point scoring. I am pointing out to this minister that there is an apparent net decrease in public and community housing stock in this place of 617. Let him refute the figure. If that is not the case, I will be the first to publicly congratulate him on a job well done. I do not think that is the case and I think he knows it.

In contextualising this problem, there has been a chronic underinvestment in social and affordable housing in this state. Experts estimate there is a need to build as many as 18 000 new social and affordable homes by 2036. If nothing else, that ought to be a call to action to the Government and the private sector to show significant leadership in order to boost the supply of new housing. As we have heard on a number of occasions today, housing ends homelessness.

While we are on good ideas, I wanted to mention the Salvos Street to Home program. The minister and I are both sleeping out with the Salvos tonight and doing our bit to raise funds for this worthwhile cause. That program receives no government funding assistance, yet it costs around \$100 000 per annum. That must be a drop in the ocean of his \$5 million homelessness crisis package. Why does he not start there? Why does he not fund that program? It is a vital outreach service that does the rounds of the well-known places every week to support those living on the streets in highest need. These people's very lives are at risk from sleeping in the cold, dark Hobart winter.

I will move onto Huntingfield because the minister accused me of playing politics a moment ago, when all I did was stand with the mayor of Kingborough and a Huntingfield resident and call for greater community consultation. The minister was running roughshod over the needs of this community by sticking to the letter of his own bill in relation to fast-track rezoning, at significant risk of putting the community significantly offside. This is a wonderful opportunity for this

Government to show leadership, to set ambitious targets, to ensure there is adequate infrastructure and services, and that he listens to the school communities when they say they need a buffer from commercial zones and so on. If he is taking the time to take on board those considerations, good on him.

The master plan and the draft supply order I saw did not have any guarantee of social and affordable housing. The minister said he hopes to see 15 per cent but that would be a low bar. The mayor is hoping for more than that. He is hoping for 15 per cent social and as much as 45 per cent community housing. I hope the minister is taking his time to ensure he consults with the council, the people in Huntingfield and the broader Kingsborough community to get the balance right. I visited South Australia recently and had the good fortune of looking at some wonderful developments that are higher density. Density is part of the contention here. The minister knows that with a stroke of a pen he could make that right. It is on him. It is the Government's mess.

The thousands of concerned emails all members in this place have been receiving over the past few weeks stating concern about the lack of consultation are all on him. He could make it right, I hope he does and, when he does, I will be standing with the community and the mayor saying, 'Good on you, Mr Jaensch', but we will believe it when we see it. He knows that he is using this legislation in an attempt to drive a wedge with that political point-scoring he says he does not want to see. He knows that he is trying to cut this corner a bit tight. He knows that land has been in government hands for 42 years and the people of Huntingfield and in the Kingborough community have been expecting development on that land. He knows the former Labor government had a master plan to deliver social and affordable housing on that site but it is about half the density of what he is proposing at the moment.

It should come as no surprise to him that the community is outraged. He provided one or two days more than the statutory period of time for consultation to the 15 people living directly around that site and the school community. It is no wonder there was a community meeting, which he and the member for Franklin failed to attend. It should come as no surprise that about 300 people attended that community meeting. In talking with the mayor about that, he feels that was broadly representative of the views of the community. They were not anti-development. They were not saying no, government, do not develop that land; they were saying that they understand the need for social and affordable housing in this state and that the government wants to develop this site. They just want you to do it right. Minister, show some leadership and put the needs of Tasmanians above political point scoring, yourself.

Time expired.

Ms O'Connor - You are going to have a crack on housing? How cute is that?

[5.07 p.m.]

Mr ROCKLIFF (Braddon - Minister for Education and Training) - Yes, Mr Deputy Speaker, I will have a crack on housing. I will commend our minister, too, for the very good work Mr Jaensch is doing with respect to a very challenging issue. It is an issue of strategic growth within Tasmania. We have a growing economy that many people share the benefits of. We recognise that also brings some challenges for our community and its important social services. Mr Jaensch is genuine and is doing a very good job addressing the challenges facing many Tasmanians with respect to housing and homelessness. A motion such as this is important to discuss during Homelessness Week. The way Mr Jaensch has framed the motion in a very apolitical -

Ms O'Connor - Designed to score political points.

Mr ROCKLIFF - I would say a very apolitical way, in fact.

Ms O'Connor - Congratulating the Government.

Mr ROCKLIFF - No. The first point of the motion acknowledges the dedicated work being done in the community and housing sectors every day to support Tasmanians experiencing homelessness or who are at risk of homelessness. That is acknowledging -

Ms Standen - That is not contested.

Mr ROCKLIFF - Good. That is what I am saying. It is acknowledging the very good work of many people within the sector, and their vigilance in the work they are doing every single day. It acknowledges that homelessness is often linked to other challenges such as mental illness and the Tasmanian Government is focusing on the integration of mental health services to provide more holistic support and greater independence for clients. That will form some of my contribution. The motion acknowledges that Tasmania's Affordable Housing Strategy is responding to the current challenges in the housing market by boosting supply across a spectrum of need and that is evidenced -

Ms O'CONNOR - Point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker. It is now 5.10 p.m. and we have three more speakers, arguably, on this motion. I note that there are Heritage Tasmania bureaucrats in the Chamber waiting for the next item of business to be brought on. Is it the Government's intention to have that legislation debated today, or should we let the Heritage Tasmania staff go home? I am conscious that they have been sitting there for about an hour.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER - I thank the member for her contribution, but it is not a point of order.

Mr ROCKLIFF - I note the member's point, which was not a point of order, but I will talk through what is an important motion with respect to Homelessness Week.

We acknowledge that the Affordable Housing Action Plan stage 2 and the additional investment in funding is another positive step towards continuing this momentum, and we recognise that all levels of government have a role to play in addressing supply and demand in our housing market and call on all members to work together to put the needs of Tasmanians above political point-scoring. It is a very balanced apolitical motion.

Our Government has set ambitious housing targets that have now been met or exceeded. The first Affordable Housing Action Plan set four-year targets to assist an additional 1600 households with their housing needs, including supply of 941 affordable land lots and homes, 372 of which were to be new social housing dwellings. We have now assisted a total of over 1600 additional households into safe, secure accommodation that meets their needs, delivered a total of 984 affordable lots and homes and significantly boosted our supply of social housing with 453 new dwellings delivered. The 984 figure also includes 174 new homes built under the HomeShare mortgage equity scheme and a further 177 homes were purchased by Housing Tasmania tenants with help from the Tasmanian Government. This means that a total of 351 low-income households have been assisted into home ownership for the first time, which is great news for them, great news

for Tasmanians in need and we will continue to do everything we can to boost supply of affordable homes.

We know there is still much more to do to respond to the unprecedented demand. We have a significant number of homes already under construction that will continue as we move into our second Affordable Housing Action Plan. Safe and secure housing is a fundamental need and Tasmanians who need more intensive support to meet their needs, such as those living with mental illness, can benefit from supported accommodation, and this is the reason I would like to make a contribution today. The second Affordable Housing Action Plan contains important actions in this regard, including identifying housing and support needs for people with mental illness in inpatient care, planning for more suitable accommodation and constructing community homes to provide people with chronic mental illness with a secure lease and support.

As Minister for Mental Health and Wellbeing, I am very pleased our Government is investing \$1 million over two years for the trial of the Housing and Accommodation Support Initiative, based on the program that has been very successful in New South Wales. This initiative is being progressed to provide Tasmanians living with mental illness with better clinical and psychological rehabilitation supports, links with stable housing and supported accommodation. The HASI project is currently at the detailed co-design stage of the service model to ensure the program meets the needs of consumers. The second Affordable Housing Action Plan will complement the HASI trial by delivering rapid rehousing for people with mental illness and inpatient care who have lower support needs to transition into independent living, with the appropriate supports in place.

This is a clear acknowledgment that mental health cannot be viewed in isolation and that Tasmanians struggling with their mental health are often also dealing with other major issues such as housing stress where support is also required. Mental health is important to any discussion on homelessness as it is one factor that may trigger homelessness, just as homelessness may trigger mental health issues itself. We know that the transition from acute facilities like inpatient services is a critical time where people may be at risk of being discharged into homelessness. That is why it is so important that mental health consumers can be connected with social housing, education, employment and physical health supports to allow them to recover from or successfully manage their mental illness.

Continuing to integrate mental health services and buoying the capacity of primary and community-based services to respond so that support is there for people is a priority of this Government. Last week, our members would be well aware that I released the Government's response to the Southern Mental Health Integration Taskforce report and recommendations, which we have accepted in full. We have a plan to build a better mental health system with an increasing focus on early intervention, community and wraparound support options and a reduced reliance on hospital emergency departments. We will revise the adult community health model to develop part of the service to specialise in providing the best evidence-based care and treatment for people living with dual disabilities, complex PTSD and, importantly, Tasmanians who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless. This will reduce excess bed days at the Royal Hobart Hospital which lead to bed block and an excess in emergency department wait times, and ensure these Tasmanians receive the right care in the right place, as they can rightly expect and deserve.

We will also use our existing investment in St Johns Park and redevelopment of the Peacock Centre to establish integration hubs which will provide a mental health short-term recovery beds, as well as opportunities for co-location of social housing employment disability and health services, all of which play a role in linking people into appropriate supports, help build individual capacity

and avoid escalation of mental illness or the likelihood of relapse. It is a very important project for the Mental Health Integration Taskforce. The Government has accepted all those recommendations and I want to commend once again all the people involved in that and also the leadership of Chief Psychiatrist Dr Aaron Groves for this considerable amount of work which has taken some 18 months. We and many people in the mental health sector look forward now to the implementation of what has been an extraordinary amount of work. This work, together with the continued rollout of our second Affordable Housing Action Plan, will result in better outcomes for vulnerable Tasmanians.

I wanted to briefly give a perspective to this motion as it relates to my portfolio responsibility of Mental Health and Wellbeing and also commend the minister for what is a very factual and apolitical motion to discuss in this House what is a very important week for many Tasmanians.

[5.19 p.m.]

Ms O'CONNOR (Clark - Leader of the Greens) - Mr Deputy Speaker, I am quite pleased to see that the Heritage Tasmania staff are no longer in the Chamber being forced to sit here and listen to this debate instead of providing advice to the minister for Heritage on the bill that was to be debated at this point but has been bumped off so the Minister for Housing can score some political points.

The first thing I want to say, having listening to the Minister for Housing, the shadow minister and the Deputy Premier is that no-one has a mandate on compassion in this place. I am certain that every person here wants to see more good homes built for Tasmanians who need them, but you do not achieve it by pulling this sort of manoeuvre on a sitting day when it is not private member's time. We are supposed to be dealing with legislation, the Historic Cultural Heritage Amendment Bill 2019 rather than this motion. When the Order of Business came through last night and I looked at Notice of Motion 144, I could not work out why it would be on the blue today. Then I reminded myself that so little legislation has been tabled by Government ministers this week that there is obviously a problem with the Government's legislative agenda. There is an apparent inability to fill Government business time with debate on legislation.

It is a bit rich, point 6, 'Call on all Members to work together to put the needs of Tasmanians above political point scoring.'. Yesterday, in Government member's time, we had one of the most appalling motions that has been brought before this House, which was purely an exercise in political point scoring. You cannot have it both ways, minister. You cannot on the one hand have a motion before the House as it relates to mandatory minimum sentences for the vile human beings who abuse children, which is designed to score political points primarily at Labor's expense, and then pretend to be statesman-like on the issue of housing here today. It does not work like that.

Mr Jaensch, you are a good person. I am not taking that away from you and I know you really want to make a difference. I know you want to be a good Housing minister but you should not fall into these sorts of traps. It is not necessary. It is divisive. It does not achieve anything for people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.

Ms Standen - It's disingenuous.

Ms O'CONNOR - It is disingenuous. We can spend our time doing far more interesting and meaningful things for people who are homeless, at risk of homelessness or living in housing stress.

Ms Standen - Imagine if we used this time to sit down in a meeting room and quietly discuss some ideas.

Ms O'CONNOR - That is right, as we did with the sector not more than six weeks ago. Good on you, minister. You involved the shadow spokesperson for Housing, Ms Standen, and you asked me along and we had representatives there from Shelter Tasmania, TasCOSS, Anglicare, Colony 47, and I am sorry if I have left anyone else out. I also note Madam Speaker was at that meeting and it was quite constructive, as these things go. Around the table was a collection of people with social conscience, who wanted to work constructively to provide housing solutions. We helped the minister to decide that he was going to prepare a work plan and work with the sector on some of those initiatives that are part of the Affordable Housing Strategy but, as we know, an emergency response is demanded of government.

Ms Standen - Seven weeks later, we're still waiting for that work plan and another meeting.

Ms O'CONNOR - Has it been prepared, minister, that work plan?

Mr Jaensch - I announced it, with \$5 million to deliver it, and I have announced the elements of it that are now underway.

Ms O'CONNOR - Is the work plan a public document?

Mr Jaensch - It is a media release and it was a statement in this House. The department has a work plan, which it reports to me on.

Ms Standen - You have worked in the private sector. That is a bit scary, isn't it? A work plan is a media release.

Mr Jaensch - It is public information. What we are doing has been announced.

Ms O'CONNOR - I raise a matter with the House relating to evolutions of housing policy. There has been a significant reform in Wales, which is now being trialled in Canada and that is the duty to assist law. The Welsh Parliament moved down this path because homelessness was worsening. Welsh parliamentarians recognised that, for too long, government had only acted once someone reached the point of homelessness and it could be too late. The duty to assist law recently enacted by the Welsh parliament requires governments to help homeless people to find accommodation. It has three steps to it and the first is to help to prevent. That requires local authorities to act and offer resources to people at risk of homelessness. When they went back a year later after this policy had been put in place and they looked at the data, minister, I know you like evidence, 65 per cent of the people who had presented at stage one avoided homelessness. This is because there was that first step in which local authorities - as you know, it is often local authorities who do that frontline service delivery in the United Kingdom - had intervened, 65 per cent of people who had presented avoided homelessness.

Stage two of the duty to assist law is help to secure. This means that local authorities have 56 days to help a person who has not been able to, as a result of the supports that were offered in stage one, find secure housing. This requires local authorities to help to secure housing. There is then point three, the pinch, which is the duty to secure in which, if steps one and two fail, step three places an absolute duty on local authorities to secure housing for those with priority needs and who are unintentionally homeless. When the data was examined a year after these laws came into effect, they found that 80 per cent of people secured housing and avoided homelessness.

We need to be looking at some of these innovative approaches. These approaches also recognise that as it is a community responsibility to look after each other and as government is elected from and is a reflection of the community, it is government's responsibility to ensure housing is available for people who need it, to ensure that services are there and ensure that it is taking direct and well-funded steps to tackling homelessness.

I want us to look at this policy, just as we do need to have a look at the way rents are set. I go back to something the minister said in the debate about adjusting the terms of reference to the housing select inquiry yesterday. He was having a crack at me about the way excessive rents are dealt with in the ACT. As I understand it, the difference between the ACT model and the Tasmanian model is that, in Tasmania, the only explicit measure the residential tenancy commissioner can consider is comparable rents, whereas comparable rents are one of a number of explicit factors the ACT tribunal needs to take into account when it is working to ensure tenants are not being slapped with unreasonable, unaffordable increases in their rents.

We drafted an amendment to this motion. We are hoping the minister will see sense and not bring this on for a vote. I am not wedded to our amendments but I will read them in to make the point that there is a whole lot of fact here that is not being addressed by the minister. Mr Deputy Speaker, I move -

That the motion be amended by deleting clauses 2 to 6, inserting instead -

- (2) Acknowledges that Tasmania's housing crisis has occurred due to the Liberal government;
 - (a) underinvesting in public housing;
 - (b) doing too little, too late to regulate short-stay accommodation;
 - (c) pursuing aggressive population and tourism growth targets without any forward thinking or planning; and
 - (d) refusing to pursue meaningful housing policy reforms, including relevant taxation reforms.
- (3) Calls on the Liberal Government to:
 - (a) significantly increase their investment in public housing,
 - (b) introduce regulations to prevent growth in short stay properties and tight rental markets,
 - (c) begin proper settlement and population planning, and
 - (d) examine taxation reforms to promote housing availability and affordability.
- (4) Calls out the hypocrisy of the Liberal Government in calling for an end to political point scoring by wasting Government business time on a motion patting themselves on the back for a job poorly done.

- (5) Agrees that instead of patting himself on the back, the minister should apologise for evicting public housing tenants into homelessness on the grounds of lease expiration.

Minister, can you indicate to the House whether you will be bringing this notice of motion on for a vote?

Mr JAENSCH - We have about half an hour left. I think we have at least one other speaker who intends to speak, and I will be speaking. I do not need to pursue a vote, though.

Ms O'CONNOR - You do not need to pursue a vote? If you do not need to pursue a vote, I do not need to pursue our amendments, but I wanted that put on the record, because there is another story to be told here. You cannot expect members of the House - whether they be from the Labor Opposition or the crossbench - just to, because you have told us -

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER - The motion will be voted when there are no further speakers.

Ms O'CONNOR - The question is will you call a division, minister? Have a think about it.

It is unreasonable: it is political point scoring, to have a motion like this brought on for debate, which congratulates the Government and the minister for their work. There are points in this notice of motion which, of course, are true and should be supported, but the last point 6 is just layered with hypocrisy, particularly given that we have political point scoring in this place every question time: four Dorothy Dix questions which are all about political point scoring, because the question is invariably, 'Can the minister tell us how terrific he is, and is he aware of any other alternatives?' That is just an invitation to point score.

Is the minister saying that, on the one hand it is okay to spend your entire allocated self-congratulatory period in question time to score points at the expense of other members in this place, but on this issue of housing, because it suits him not to face scrutiny and accountability, he wants to make a point about not scoring points - which of course is just another exercise in point scoring? I feel like I am in an episode of, I do not know -

Mr Jaensch - *Seinfeld*?

Ms O'CONNOR - *Seinfeld*? *Black Adder*? I do not know.

Ms Butler - *Groundhog Day*? Just the same thing time and time again. Same lines.

Ms O'CONNOR - Yes, it is frustrating. It is so frustrating.

We would like to hear from the minister an answer to the question that we put to him on Tuesday, and then again on Wednesday, which is, how many of the 20 tenants who were evicted by Housing Tasmania during the Gregory Parsons Supreme Court case were evicted under section 42(1)(d) of the Residential Tenancy Act, which is the clause that gives landlords the power to evict people on the basis of lease expiration only. The minister came into this place, he talked about the 'three strikes and you are out' policy, but he did not go to the question. That is frustrating and disrespectful to the people of Tasmania, and the principles of the Westminster system, which are that, if you are asked a question, answer it honestly. If you do not have the information, tell the House you will be back and provide the information at the earliest opportunity.

We still do not know how many of those 20 tenants who were evicted in that 2017-18 period were evicted simply because their leases had expired. How many were given the 'three strikes and you are out' opportunities? Housing Tasmania cannot just adhere to lowest-common-denominator provisions in the Residential Tenancy Act; it has to be the best landlord in Tasmania.

It is dealing with some of our most disadvantaged, at-risk people. People who are trying to eke out an existence on Newstart, or a widow's pension, or a single parent payment, or a disability support payment - they are the Tasmanians that Housing Tasmania has a significant responsibility for, Mr Deputy Speaker. People on low incomes are overwhelmingly the cohort who make up Housing Tasmania tenants.

Housing Tasmania cannot just say, 'We are applying the act'. No, that is not the way it is meant to work. As the Supreme Court found, tenants are entitled to natural justice, they are entitled to a statement of reasons for their eviction and they are entitled to internal review. It would be great if the minister in getting up to close off this debate he ill-advisedly brought on could address that question.

In the spirit of tripartisanship, I wish both the minister and Ms Standen well tonight at the Sleepout for the Salvos. This year I cannot attend the sleepout for the Salvos. I have, on many years, so I have made an equal contribution towards your fundraising efforts, and hope that every member of this place who is not attending the Sleepout for the Salvos chips in some money to Mr Jaensch's account and Ms Standen's account.

Ms Standen - It is all money that goes to the Salvos.

Ms O'CONNOR - Exactly. Please, other honourable members in this place, we are not left out in the cold. We have homes and comfortable beds.

Ms Standen - There is only one person in this place who could actually fund the organisation to deliver that service, in a recurrent way, but that would be political point scoring.

Ms O'CONNOR - There is that, Ms Standen. I remind everyone here that every night of the week that we are sleeping cosy in our beds, there are about 1600 Tasmanians who are sleeping on the streets, in the Rivulet, out at the Regatta Grounds, the Coleman Building up on the Domain, and in other places in Tasmania. This weekend is going to be bitterly cold. It is going to pour with rain this weekend. Everyone in this place, probably everyone in this building, will be warm this weekend. But there will be 1600 Tasmanians who are not. Honourable colleagues, get out your credit cards and please contribute towards the Sleepout for the Salvos this year.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER - Before the member sits down, could she please confirm whether she wants to move the amendment.

Ms O'CONNOR - What I said to the minister was that I wanted to make the point about the amendment. I am not going to move this notice of motion. I wanted to make the points that were in it, because I do not want to be accused of political point scoring.

[5.39 p.m.]

Mr FERGUSON (Bass - Leader of Government Business) - Mr Deputy Speaker, on indulgence, I table answers to questions on notice the Premier took at the Estimates Committee, dated 30 July 2019 and was addressed to the former committee chair of Estimates Committee A.

[5.39 p.m.]

Mrs RYLAH (Braddon) - Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise today in support of this important and highly relevant motion in this Homelessness Week. This motion brought on by the Minister for Housing demonstrates the minister's commitment to making a real and lasting difference to the vulnerable Tasmanians in regard to housing.

Many people in the community think of homelessness as referring to those who do not have a roof over their heads or are sleeping rough. The issue is much more complex, as we know here.

While people living on the streets is perhaps the most common visual form of homelessness, the Australian Bureau of Statistics defines a homeless person as someone who does not have suitable long-term accommodation options. This broader definition encompasses a much higher percentage of the population and includes people residing in temporary or emergency accommodation, refuges and boarding houses, as well as people sleeping on couches and in cars. There is no doubt that homelessness is a complex and multifaceted issue with many challenges, but it is an issue that needs to be solved from every angle. There is also no doubt that we are seeing a significant increase in demand for social and affordable housing. We on this side of the House do not accept the current situation is the new normal and we are committed to making a lasting difference.

Whilst this is a whole-of-state issue, as the member for Braddon I particularly want to begin my focus this afternoon on how the Affordable Action Plan delivers for the north-west of Tasmania. The second stage of the Hodgman Liberal Government's Affordable Action Plan sets out clear deliverables for the north-west. With the first stage exceeding its target outlined by the minister earlier this afternoon, I am excited to see these projects delivered. They include the new supply of at least 345 affordable lots and homes across the four years of the strategy. This means more housing across the spectrum and as we have heard so often today, housing ends homelessness.

Stage 2 of the action plan will add the Burnie Youth Foyer, a purpose-built integrated learning and accommodation facility for young people. The new facility represents an investment of around \$10 million and will provide for approximately 25 units for young people experiencing or at risk of homelessness, giving them the prospect of a much brighter future. This will work with Eveline House in Devonport to provide more coverage and support for young people who are at risk of homelessness or who are exiting out-of-home care. As I have mentioned in this House, it is an amazing place and I was impressed when I visited there. We will also work with Youth, Family and Community Connections to relocate their youth shelter to Burnie. The second action plan will also deliver a new men's shelter that will assist single men and dads with kids and is crucial in providing more stable living arrangements.

I am excited about these goals and am proud to be part of a government that delivers for the people of Braddon. This is a bold vision and I commend the minister for his work in putting it in place and delivering what he has delivered today. I know these goals are part of the statewide deliverables of the Affordable Action Plan, including delivering an additional 1500 new affordable lots and homes to assist around 200 households.

Having brought forward funding in this year's Budget has meant we can continue the momentum and deliver more homes and other housing initiatives sooner. A further \$5 million was allocated for immediate action to reduce homelessness and housing stress, as has been mentioned today. The Government's commitment of the \$125 million for stage 2 of our Affordable Action Plan takes our total investment into affordable housing to almost \$200 million over eight years, the largest state investment into affordable housing in Tasmania's history.

The Hodgman Liberal Government has been working with the tourism and hospitality sector to secure more emergency accommodation for people in urgent need. Today it was announced by the Minister for Housing that the Government has purchased the Waratah Hotel on Murray Street, another initiative delivering a further 24 stable and supportable accommodation units to assist Tasmanians at risk of homelessness or who are homeless.

The housing issue is not just about availability of public and community dwellings. There is also a cascade effect from increased rentals which places pressure on low-cost rental property availability and the building sector and furthermore, onto council building approvals, so we must address each and every roadblock in this complex puzzle.

The Hodgman Liberal Government is a strong supporter of our building and construction sector. According to data released by the ABS for June 2019, the Tasmanian housing sector continues to strengthen, with an 11 per cent increase in the last financial year and 1309 financial commitments for construction of owner-occupier dwellings. In 2018-19, 1935 Tasmanians bought their first home. This is good news. It is 13.4 per cent more than the previous year, making Tasmania the strongest state for growth and lending to first home buyers. The recently published HIA Housing Scorecard has confirmed Tasmania has seen the biggest improvement in the nation in terms of building conditions.

I take this opportunity to acknowledge the dedicated work being done every day in the community and in the housing sector to support Tasmanians experiencing homelessness or who are at risk of homelessness. Agreements were met between this Government and Bethlehem House to support 18 new units for men and at the Hobart Women's shelter to support 17 units for women, children and family groups and provide the additional support and services they require. Resulting from discussions with the University of Tasmania, some units are existing houses and the remainder are temporary accommodation being delivered by Royal Wolf.

The Hodgman Liberal Government recognises that all levels of government have a role to play in addressing the supply and demand in our housing market. To effectively combat homelessness we need a whole-of-community approach and action across the spectrum to prevent and respond to domestic and family violence resulting in homelessness. This includes ongoing investment in prevention strategies, integrated services that address the needs of at-risk groups, perpetrator interventions to prevent further violence, therapeutic interventions addressing income support inadequacies, more social and affordable housing and crisis and transitional accommodation. We are continuing to progress our Affordable Housing Strategy and action plans to end homelessness.

The Housing Ends Homelessness Expo to be held in October this year will provide information and raise awareness about the range of services available for Tasmanians experiencing housing stress or who are at risk of homelessness. This is a public awareness campaign. The expo will be held in collaboration with the not-for-profit sector, local government and housing and community sector and will address the full spectrum of housing need, from crisis accommodation to affordable home ownership.

People experiencing homelessness often live with depression and other mental health issues. Many come from domestic violence situations and sometimes have criminal and antisocial behaviour as a complexity added to that. All of this, therefore, results in diminished access to affordable and appropriate housing. A 2019 report from Mission Australia highlighted that -

Domestic and family violence is one of the main reasons women and children become homeless in Australia. More than 121 000 people experiencing domestic violence sought help from specialist homelessness services in 2017-18. Over three out of four people seeking specialist homelessness services due to domestic and family violence-related issues were female.

As with many other social issues, there is no one definitive factor that leads to a person becoming homeless. The data regularly demonstrates a strong link between homelessness and other social vulnerability factors such as domestic and family violence, financial hardship, economic and social exclusion and isolation, housing affordability and availability, unemployment, chronic health including mental health issues, alcohol and other drug-related issues.

The coexistence of these factors often leads to individuals having to deal with a range of complex and persistent challenges, often way beyond the capacity to cope. The complexity of these challenges means we need to take a multi-pronged approach to solving them. Data from the 2018 evaluation of the Kings Cross Medically Supervised Injecting Centre (MSIC) states that roughly 30 per cent of people who use the facility report unstable accommodation, highlighting the over-representation of homelessness in the injecting-drug-use population in New South Wales. This has been further shown in a 2014 survey of 1500 homeless people, which indicates 57 per cent of this population consumed alcohol at risky levels, 39 per cent had used illicit drugs, and 7 per cent had injected drugs.

Similarly, a four-year study conducted by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare between 2011 and 2014 found there were significant crossovers in people with alcohol and other drug-related health services and those using homelessness services. The study also found that 77 per cent of this population were experiencing other vulnerabilities. This includes domestic violence, being underage, being over 66 years of age, or experiencing mental illness; 51 per cent of homeless people in this study also presented with a mental health issue.

While use of alcohol and other drugs has been shown to contribute to homelessness, the reverse is also true. The longer a person is homeless, the more likely they are to use drugs or to consume alcohol at risky levels.

Before I close, I acknowledge the voluntary and all the other organisations outside and inside government that dedicate time and work tirelessly to support vulnerable and homeless Tasmanians. The Hodgman Liberal Government recognises that there is much more to do, and we will continue to focus on helping Tasmanians in need, targeting all the social vulnerability factors, and all the physical and financial roadblocks we know have strong links to homelessness.

I would say on homes and homelessness, that this Government and this minister, and our previous minister, are committed and were committed to enabling more Tasmanians into safe and secure accommodation.

I also wish our members a great night, a comfortable night, in the sleepout tonight. I have already, as you know, given my contribution to your efforts.

[5.53 p.m.]

Mr JAENSCH (Braddon - Minister for Housing) - Unless there is another speaker wishing to contribute, I will take the opportunity to wrap up the debate on this motion.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I thank the members for their contributions and the constructive components of them. I will respond to some of the provocations gently. Certainly, the motion put today was not intended as an exercise in self-congratulation. The parliament that we are part of, the Government that we have, is responding to an issue that is important to Tasmanians at the moment. It is important at a time like this to acknowledge and put on the record how the public's resources are being applied to the matter of housing and homelessness. It is a topical, emotive and important issue.

Tasmanians who pay their taxes, Australians who pay their taxes, are contributing to a response, and we need to acknowledge the resources, investment and efforts that go into that every day. I am not talking about myself as minister, or us as Government. Certainly, everything that has been delivered in terms of the numbers of houses, et cetera, is meeting targets, and is played out here in the political bear pit. The work involved in making it happen and getting things built and delivered and designed and constructed on time at a time of great pressure in the building industry is a massive effort that many hundreds of people are involved with - be they our people in Housing Tasmania, our partners in the community housing sector, builders, contractors and suppliers and employees. I know, as I have visited them and worked with them, talked with them and been out to inspect works on sites, how much effort and work has gone into delivering housing for Tasmanians. People are genuinely motivated to do a good job, deliver a good product and to be part of getting more houses on the ground sooner. I want to acknowledge that. I believe that the Parliament ought to as well.

It also includes acknowledging some of the partners and organisations that have gone to extraordinary lengths to help us, as a state, respond to growing need. I refer to organisations like Bethlehem House and Hobart Women's Shelter, and others we have been negotiating new arrangements with. We know it is important that if we are providing extra shelter for people, we provide the supports that go with that. Putting temporary structures alongside existing permanent dwellings is not a small undertaking. There are risks and complexities involved - planning and governance, management, and the sheer work of servicing them to ensure they can maintain the quality of service they provide at the moment.

I thank those organisations that have gone outside their comfort zone, that have negotiated and are negotiating aspects of those arrangements right now. It is complex work and many people have gone out of their way to be part of this response to their fellow Tasmanians in a time of need. I want to acknowledge that and I believe the parliament ought to as well.

When it comes to the matter of politicisation and bipartisanship, I enjoy those moments in the cycle where we are able to exchange ideas and when, even today, Ms Standen and Ms O'Connor referred to case studies and information they are aware of that can contribute. It is a different tenor and level of conversation than we have in question time and through the media and our press conferences. That is the senseless argy-bargy I would love to be able to move past, which is different from opening the role of being minister and being Government to all play on everything at every point. It is something that we need to strike a balance with. I enjoy the cooperative, constructive discussion that happened around the table with the peaks, with the Premier, with the member for Clark and others. But, when it comes to delivering, I need to be able to, as Government, work with our suppliers, our departments and make it happen, and get it right, and not be bringing

that back to other parties to ensure they are approving of every step of that. That is where separation needs to happen.

Bipartisanship is about support for the mission, and the agreement on where we are headed, and what a good result looks like. It cannot necessarily be as collaborative all the time, as Ms Standen has referred.

Ms Standen - I look forward to an invitation to a meeting, or a phone call, or perhaps just returning my correspondence. That would be a good start.

Mr JAENSCH - We need to be able to get on with the governing. We expect to be scrutinised. We expect that to be in the spirit of the result, and not a political attack.

Quickly in the moments remaining, I do acknowledge Ms Standen referred to South Australia.

Debate adjourned.

ADJOURNMENT

Cameron Barry and Wattle Day - Tribute

[6.00 p.m.]

Mr BACON (Clark) - Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise tonight on the adjournment just to say a few words about a dear friend of mine, Cameron Barry, who also doubles as a volunteer electoral assistant in my office. I have known Cameron for many years now and he is a great fellow. We first met at the Northgate Shopping Centre where he came up to enthusiastically show me the mini AFL figures he had collected. What was a bit of a worry, I think, in terms of our society, when he came back from the shop with his bag full of mini AFL figures he was approached by a security guard who accused him of stealing them from the shop. It was a bit of a sad way to start our association but we have had some many great times since then. He has always been a good friend but also a very valued volunteer for many people in the Labor family through many campaigns and really is a great Labor person and, in my opinion, a great Tasmanian.

In recent years, Cameron has really tried to revive the idea around a significant day known as Wattle Day. It took until 1992 for Wattle Day to become formalised as a national day on 1 September and it is all about celebrating what is unique about Australia. The history of this event is significant in the context of Tasmania as we are remembered as the initiators of Wattle Day. If you speak to older people in Tasmania they will often tell you about what they did and some still celebrate Wattle Day to this day. Cameron has really tried to revive this tradition in Tasmania and the work he has put in is a great credit to him.

Cameron could see Tasmania's role in starting this day and the potential to bring the day back home and he became the official coordinator of Wattle Day Tasmania. Cameron also formed a local committee in Glenorchy that mapped out organisations and events to link to the day. This resulted in a local childcare centre, Be Literate Tasmania, Tasmania Junior Beekeepers, the Australian Republic Movement, the Republic Bar in North Hobart, Fullers Bookshop, interstate visitors and the local community all getting involved.

Cameron also set up his own Facebook page, wrote a media release and had an article printed in the *Glenorchy Gazette* to further promote Wattle Day. He also got in touch with the national

Wattle Day body to let them know what he was doing. This has resulted in a huge connected event that promoted other organisations and brought Wattle Day back to Tasmania.

Cameron's efforts in 2018 have set a very strong platform for 2019. This year Cameron has put together information packs and contacted more organisations so the idea of Wattle Day is pollinating many minds throughout our state. I understand he has also been invited to attend a morning tea at the Karadi Aboriginal Corporation and will be at the Goodwood Wake Up Spring Festival on 30 August. He plans to extend the day into September for the Claremont Flower Show. We know that many Tasmanians celebrate or have memories of celebrating this day and Cameron is very keen to hear from any people with stories to tell or who have plans to celebrate Wattle Day this year. I can attest to Cameron's commitment and dedication to Wattle Day as well as the work and innovative ideas he has been developing to link people to this celebration. It costs nothing and is as simple as handing out a piece of wattle to someone and saying, 'Happy Wattle Day'.

I take this opportunity tonight to commend Cameron's efforts and wish him and everyone celebrating Wattle Day this year every success. Cameron has put in a huge effort over the past 12 months, not only on Wattle Day but on many other activities helping out the Labor family, and I wish him all the best for the future, particularly around his Wattle Day activities.

Combustible Cladding

[6.04 p.m.]

Ms BUTLER (Lyons) - Mr Deputy Speaker, last week I spoke to the House about dangerous combustible cladding. I highlighted that dangerous combustible cladding has been identified on a number of public buildings, including the new Parliament Square building located just behind us. A number of questions remain unanswered by the Government in relation to the use of dangerous combustible cladding. There is no such thing as high- or low-risk combustible cladding; it is all at risk.

The facts are this. The Neo200 building caught fire this January in Spencer Street, Melbourne. The building's dangerous combustible cladding was ignited by a discarded cigarette and it took off like a firecracker. The Victorian state government has taken the steps through the Victorian Cladding Taskforce to reassess all multistorey buildings with dangerous combustible cladding. Initially the taskforce had found the building to be safe to occupy despite the presence of cladding. They were using the same terms of reference as we have used here in Tasmania.

After the public outcry in relation to the presence of dangerous combustible cladding on buildings, the Victorian government developed a new risk assessment method which asks a simple question: why the dangerous combustible cladding should not be removed. We have not even gone down that path yet. Why has the Government not taken any steps to reassess or change assessment tools for monitoring and actioning dangerous combustible cladding? In fact, this Government has allowed dangerous combustible cladding to be used on new buildings even after they were aware of the risks. Just look at the Hedberg building or the new Parliament Square building. The Government has known since 2014 that combustible cladding is highly flammable and dangerous.

The minister must state whether she considers dangerous combustible cladding on the Hedberg building and the Parliament Square building to be safe. The minister must also come clean and tell the people of Tasmania whether she thinks dangerous combustible cladding should be on a 15-storey accommodation site for students. It should be removed as, from reading the report, it is

mainly for decorative purposes and has no structural integrity. Is that really where we want to have our priorities for a 15-storey student accommodation building?

I think it should be removed and replaced and we should apply the same audit terms of reference. Why should it be there? The onus should go back onto the owners of the building, the people who are responsible for the building. Why do you have decoration on your building right up one side which is made of dangerous combustible cladding? Why not remove it? Does it need to be there? None of this has happened. This natural step of solution and minimising risk has not happened here in Tasmania.

What was the follow-up action taken by the minister to ensure that the dangerous combustible cladding should be on that building? Are the students aware it is on their building? I do not think they are. What was the further action that the minister took? On that audit list of buildings, when it comes to the student accommodation building it says follow-up action is required on the cladding situation. Was that action taken? Did the minister take any further action, or has it just sat there in the ground doing nothing, which is what the Government has been doing when it comes to dangerous combustible cladding?

What about the other UTAS building, a seven-story medical science building on the corner of Liverpool and Campbell streets here in Hobart? The dangerous combustible cladding on that building is also purely decorative and no attempt has been made to have it removed. Why has the minister not demanded the building owners to show why the materials should not be removed? I am sure the safety of the students and staff is more important than a dangerous decoration.

Minister, why has your Government implied legal action to people reporting on this topic as well? That is what is going on at the moment as well but apparently we cannot talk about it. It is absolute hogwash. Every other government has been proactive about this in Australia and without threats of potential legal action. Other governments have reassessed buildings with dangerous cladding so I again call on the minister to release the list of buildings with dangerous combustible cladding. It is in the public interest. There are buildings where people sleep, go for medical assistance, to work and even schools on that list. Workers, children, parents, residents, students and first respondents: all Tasmanians need to know. You must remove the dangerous cladding and take matters into hand.

Ten Lives Cat Centre

[6.10 p.m.]

Ms HADDAD (Clark) - Mr Deputy Speaker, I wanted to let everyone in the parliament know that today is International Cat Day. Do not worry, I am not going to go down a wormhole of talking about interesting cat videos but it is the opportune time to talk about responsible cat ownership and to highlight the work of Ten Lives Cat Centre, which is the largest dedicated cat shelter in Tasmania. Ten Lives has a proud history of more than 70 years of caring for unwanted cats and kittens in South Hobart. They started in 1949 as the Tasmanian Animal Protection Society, founded by Joan Allport, and became a dedicated cat centre in 1974 under the leadership of Florence Robson.

Florence Robson had a vision to provide a shelter for all unwanted cats and kittens in Hobart. At that time, the Hobart Cat Centre was located in Strickland Avenue in South Hobart and anyone who visited the cat centre in those days would have seen that it was a very large cat enclosure behind a domestic house. I joined the board of what was then called the Hobart Cat Centre in around

2004. I served on the board for around five years under the leadership of Ingrid Tebb, who was the president of the board for a long time. She had a nice story of how she came to be involved in the cat centre. She is a real estate agent and she was contacted by the people who were running the centre because they were running at a loss and could not afford to keep it going. They contacted a real estate agent to look at putting the place on the market. She was a true cat lover and revived the work of the centre, took on the responsibility of chair of their board and recruited a lot of new members, including myself. During that time, the centre moved to their current location at Selfs Point Road with the generous support of the Hobart City Council and that is where they are today.

In 2017 they went a step further and changed their name to the Ten Lives Cat Centre. The reason was to better reflect the purpose of the organisation and why they do what they do. They talk about doing what they do for cats, for the environment and for the community in Tasmania. The name Ten Lives gives them a voice on a state, national and even an international level as a leading cat management organisation. They represent cats, the environment and the community and their strategic plan focuses on these things as well; the cats, their people, a sustainable organisation, the environment and our community. They have gone from strength to strength since moving to that site and they have built a very healthy and well-run organisation.

There are many ways to support the work of Ten Lives Cat Centre. Adopting a cat is one way and my family and I adopted a cat after Christmas this year, a very cute little kitten called Ivy Haddad and we love her very much. You can also donate money. People bequeath in their wills. You can donate your time to the centre. You can also donate goods and they have a wishlist on their website. You can also foster kittens until they are ready to be adopted. You can assess their temperament and give reports on how they are around kids or other cats, dogs and other pets, whether for short-term or long-term. Getting those kittens ready for adoption is a really important part of their work and training is provided for people who want to foster kittens.

The important point I wanted to focus on today is that all of the cats and kittens who are adopted from the centre are fully vaccinated, microchipped and desexed before adoption. The reason that that is so important is that there are over 10 000 stray animals collected around Australia each year. That is a small sample from the Animal Welfare League of Australia and only about 2 per cent of those animals that are collected are microchipped. Microchipping your pet gives you peace of mind and reduces the feral cat problem we have around Australia, because cats can be returned to their homes rather than going wild. Absolutely important in that recipe is desexing cats, which is the responsible thing to do in reducing the risk of feral cats and it reduces aggressive behaviour in cats and kittens toward other animals and humans. It also reduces the risk of cancer and other diseases in cats, meaning that they will have a longer and happier life.

Desexing and microchipping your cat is the message I want to give to people this International Cat Day and to highlight the important work of Ten Lives Cat Centre.

The House adjourned at 6.15 p.m.