



PARLIAMENT OF TASMANIA

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

REPORT OF DEBATES

Thursday 19 November 2020

REVISED EDITION

Thursday 19 November 2020

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

QUESTIONS

Northern Tasmanian Netball Association - Counselling and Support for Families

Ms WHITE question to MINISTER for SPORT and RECREATION, Ms HOWLETT

[10.02 a.m.]

Since the allegations of horrific crimes perpetrated by former Launceston nurse, Jim Griffin, first came to light it has been established he also had a long affiliation with the Northern Tasmanian Netball Association giving him access to children there. What investigations have been carried out in relation to Jim Griffin's contact with the NTNA? Have you as Sports minister reached out to the association? What counselling and support has been offered to families involved with the NTNA?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the member for her question. My office has reached out to the netball association. This is a matter that is being investigated by the police and I cannot speak any more on that.

Ms WHITE - Point of order, Madam Speaker. The minister just misled the House. Is she going to correct the record or is she just not going to respond to the question?

Madam SPEAKER - I am sorry. Apparently she has answered the question, so next question.

Launceston General Hospital - Commission of Inquiry into Child Abuse Claims

Ms WHITE question to MINISTER for HEALTH, Ms COURTNEY

[10.03 a.m.]

When you were asked yesterday what actions you have taken in relation to supporting the victims of the horrific crimes of Jim Griffin at the Launceston General Hospital you clearly stated and I quote -

I have been advised that appropriate steps were being undertaken when the matters came to light over the past couple of months.

The fact is you were told about these crimes a year ago. Is it not a fact that you did nothing over that period and stuck to this Government's trademark secrecy until this horrendous matter was exposed to Tasmania through a podcast over the past months? Increasingly, this Government's response to the Jim Griffin matter reeks of a cover-up. Why did you do nothing about these allegations for more than a year?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the member for her question.

As I have stated in this place before, I want to be very clear that the Department of Health took immediate action the day that it was notified of the revocation of the Working with Vulnerable People's provision. As members are aware, as I have updated the House before, this was a matter for police investigation. There was also a process of open disclosure that was undertaken.

I have been advised by the Department of Health throughout this period of time, upon notification in the middle of last year of the Working with Vulnerable People revocation and that time when this individual had his access to the systems denied, support has been provided to staff through this process. I previously outlined to this House the support that has been provided to staff since that notification of the revocation of the Working with Vulnerable People.

I have had more recent engagement with staff and, through the secretary of the department, we are ensuring that further support is provided to ensure that our staff members are supported in this very difficult time.

I again advise members of this House, members of this community, and members of the Tasmanian community, we have an independent investigation underway. This is being done independently of Government. I urge anybody who has information to come forward through that process. The Government takes this matter very seriously. We will be making findings of this investigation public and we will ensure that recommendations are acted upon swiftly.

Ashley Youth Detention Centre - Allegations Against Senior Staff Member

Ms O'CONNOR question to MINISTER for HUMAN SERVICES, Mr JAENSCH

[10.06 a.m.]

We have information that a senior staff member at the Ashley Youth Detention Centre has recently been stood down and their Working with Vulnerable People card removed. We understand this individual is facing hundreds of claims against them in a civil action, one of which involves an allegation of rape. I am sure you will agree that these are confronting allegations.

Can you provide the House with any detail on the situation and your response as the minister responsible for Children and Young People? Can you provide the families of detainees a reassurance that the young people incarcerated at Ashley are safe?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the Leader of the Greens for her question on this very serious matter.

The safety of children and young people in Tasmania, in our care and in detention or other care settings, is an absolute priority of our Government. We are committed to responding

appropriately to all and any allegations of child abuse in our government institutions, whether they relate to historical or current-day matters.

I cannot and will not comment in this place on any allegations that may be the subject of legal proceedings or police investigations. The Department of Communities Tasmania takes all allegations of abuse against children and young people very seriously.

I am advised that allegations against current employees that may have occurred a number of years ago are treated by the department the same way as more current-day allegations. The department undertakes careful and detailed assessment with Tasmania Police, if required, to ensure the immediate safety of children and young people in care or in detention.

The Department of Communities has a documented procedure to respond to historical or current allegations of abuse against current employees of the Department of Communities. This includes working with Tasmania Police and the Registrar for Working with Vulnerable People.

I reiterate, we encourage anyone to come forward if they have information relating to the care and wellbeing of a child or young person and report those concerns so that they can be carefully investigated.

Ms O'CONNOR - Point of order, Madam Speaker, and I say this with the greatest of respect to the minister. I understand the constraints on you, but perhaps you could confirm or otherwise, the substance of the question, that a senior manager has been stood down and the Working with Vulnerable People card removed in response to a series of allegations.

Mr JAENSCH - I can confirm that a staff member has been stood down pending allegations being fully investigated. I will not provide any further detail regarding the identity or the nature of the matters.

Budget 2020-21 - Supporting the Tourism Industry

Mr ELLIS question to PREMIER, Mr GUTWEIN

[10.10 a.m.]

Can you update the House on how the Tasmanian State Budget is supporting jobs, supporting our community and rebuilding confidence, particularly in our state's tourism industry?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank Mr Ellis for the question and his interest in this important matter. Tourism plays a very important role in our economy. As 2020 draws to an end it is certainly not a year we will forget. The challenges we faced in Tasmania and across the world will be etched in our hearts and minds for a long time.

Those challenges were hard felt by our tourism industry with travel grinding to a halt earlier this year with national and international borders being impacted. Our unique world-

class tourism industry has shown outstanding resilience and with supports in place we are helping it stand ready for the other side. It is pleasing to see the cautious optimism.

The Government has delivered nation-leading levels of economic support to our small businesses during an incredibly difficult year. As I have said on many occasions, we stood up a social and economic support package of more than \$1 billion to help businesses and our community during the challenging time we have been through.

The Make Yourself At Home voucher scheme and Welcome Back campaign have helped drive visitation within Tasmania. With borders open to low-risk jurisdictions we are seeing early signs of confidence and positive signs of recovery. South Australia will be managed differently for a short period of time.

Tasmanians when encouraged and incentivised to get out and explore their own backyard showed up in spades. The latest national visitor survey demonstrates they turned up in record numbers. I want to thank them for that. The survey shows that during July the number of Tasmanians travelling within their state rose by 13 per cent to 175 000 trips, and the number of nights spent on those trips increased by 28 per cent to 477 000 nights. Tasmanians increased spending on these trips by 34 per cent, up from \$64 million to \$86 million.

Even more pleasing is August, traditionally a colder and quieter month for travel, but Tasmanians showed up. In August, Tasmanians travelling at home increased by 75 per cent to 154 000 overnight trips. The number of nights spent on those trips increased 138 per cent from 176 000 overnight stays in August 2019 to 417 000 nights in August 2020.

Expenditure was up by 54 per cent, from \$44 million to \$68 million compared to August 2019. It was an outstanding effort by Tasmanians. I want to thank them for doing their bit to get out and support businesses and to explore our state.

The \$12.5 million travel voucher initiative which we launched in September kept that momentum going. It is not just accommodation that benefits, it is hospitality, it is local attractions, experiences, retail and other businesses such as coach tours and petrol stations.

There have been nearly 17 000 vouchers claimed or just over 40 per cent of those issued so far, with \$4.4 million being paid back into the pockets of Tasmanians who have holidayed at home. Importantly, based on receipts, it is estimated that there has been more than \$18 million spent across Tasmania as a result of the voucher initiative to date, delivering a multiplier of four times the current investment.

When planning for this initiative we estimated that at least 25 per cent of the total spend would be directed to food and beverage. To date that figure is closer to 30 per cent. If that trend holds we will see a conservative \$12.5 million worth of expenditure on food and beverage through to the end of November, which is also a good result for the tourism and hospitality sector.

With our borders open to low-risk jurisdictions, Tourism Tasmania has re-entered the domestic market with its Come Down for Air campaign, committing around \$8 million over the next few months promoting to Australians what is so special about our state as we move closer to Christmas and the holiday period.

As members would be aware, mandatory recording of contact details came into force around a week ago for cafes, clubs, pubs, restaurants to ensure that we could contact trace should we need to. With more people moving around our beautiful state I can also advise the House that we are working to strengthen our contact tracing efforts and deliver a contact tracing app for venues to be able to use if they wish to move from paper to electronic collection, noting that in many cases the hospitality industry is already using a combination of those options.

The app, which will be free for businesses that wish to use it, will be launched later next week. It will be called the Check-in Tasmania app. It will provide contact details and allow you or a whole group of people to check into a venue through a QR code linked to the app. There will be a history of check-ins against venues which allows for swift and accurate contact tracing to occur. There will be stringent data and security protocols and data history will be deleted after 28 days.

The app is based on the app that is being used in the Australian Capital Territory. I want to thank ACT Health for their support in working with our Public Health and the Department of Health here as we pull that together. It has been tried and tested in the Australian Capital Territory. It works well and I am sure it will add to the contact tracing efforts of our businesses in the coming weeks.

***Spirits of Tasmania* - Task Force into Options for Rebuilds**

Ms OGILVIE question to PREMIER, Mr GUTWEIN

[10.16 a.m.]

I have made no apology about working hard to secure jobs for the people of my electorate. With the severe impact on employment from the coronavirus it is more important than ever that there is a clear pathway for jobs. The opportunity presented to build the new *Spirits* in Clark is quite phenomenal. The Glenorchy Jobs Hub will be able to connect jobseekers with this exciting opportunity. When can Tasmanians expect to hear the successful proponent so that work can begin in Clark with as much work as possible in Clark on this important project?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the member for Clark for her question and her interest both in the Jobs Hub and also in jobs more broadly in Tasmania. It is pleasing that there is interest in looking at how many jobs we can get from the *Spirits'* rebuild in Tasmania from at least some members in this place. It surprised me when I looked at the little red debt booklet that there were not pictures of Finnish workers in there. I note that there were some stock pictures in there which could have been Finnish workers. We will not waste any more time on that.

Treasury is running the task force, looking at those options. The task force will provide a report early in the new year. They are looking at all options, from one end of the spectrum of steel hulls built overseas, which would be my least preferred option, to an option to look at and build catamarans here. The task force will work through that process and we will receive a report early next year. That is not a request for tender. This is the task force looking at providing advice to Government as to what options we could consider to ensure there are more jobs in Tasmania. That is what we want to try to do. If ever there were a time that we should

be looking at how we can get a better spend out of nearly \$1 billion on the biggest purchase that the state will make, right now is it.

It surprised me that the Labor Party wanted to play politics with this when our aim has been to ensure that we can get the best bang for our buck in Tasmania, but more importantly more jobs. That is what we are interested in. The task force will continue its work. I expect we will receive the task force's report in the new year.

Northern Tasmanian Netball Association - Counselling and Support for Families

Ms WHITE question to MINISTER for SPORT and RECREATION, Ms HOWLETT

[10.19 a.m.]

What investigations have been carried out in relation to Jim Griffins' contact with the Northern Tasmanian Netball Association? Have you as Sport minister reached out to the association? What counselling and support has been offered to families involved with the NTNA? Can you explain what police investigation involving James Griffin or NTNA is currently under way?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the Leader of the Opposition for her question. I wish to add to my earlier answer before I answer the member's question. In my earlier answer I misspoke; I meant to say, 'was the subject of a police investigation', not an ongoing one. This is now the subject of an independent investigation.

In answer to the member's question, while the criminal investigation into Mr Griffin was concluded, Tasmania Police are continuing to gather information relating to the matter and where victims come forward with new information, that information is investigated. While charges against Mr Griffin cannot be added to or pursued through the courts, the matter is not closed and it is inappropriate to run commentary on police activity and what is initially a conversation between victims who have the courage to come forward and the police -

Opposition members interjecting.

Madam SPEAKER - Order, please.

Ms HOWLETT - We want victims to feel safe and supported in coming forward to police, so I urge caution in speculating on matters that police are investigating.

Ashley Youth Detention Centre - Calls for Closure

Ms O'CONNOR question to MINISTER for HUMAN SERVICES, Mr JAENSCH

[10.22 a.m.]

Despite growing evidence that it is a failed model, your Government ignored the advice in the independent expert Noetic report to close Ashley Youth Detention Centre in the interests of children and young people. Instead you chose to placate a township in Lyons in the lead-up

to the 2018 state election. This political decision has placed young people in the state's care at risk.

Will you today correct the mistake you have made? Will you argue to divert the \$6 million budgeted to rebuild this failing child prison into therapeutic rehabilitation, remove the children and close the Ashley Youth Detention Centre? Given the information disclosed today, will you also acknowledge there is potentially a wider problem in state-run institutions including Ashley and the LGH and commit to a commission of inquiry into allegations of abuse?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the member for Clark for her question and start by confirming that the Ashley Youth Detention Centre is not a prison. It is a detention centre for a very small proportion of Tasmanian children and young people in the youth justice system who the courts have determined need a period of custodial detention as part of their rehabilitation and therapeutic treatment.

It is important to note for the record and those listening that the average number of young people in the Ashley Youth Detention Centre is between around 10 and 15 on any given day but there are around 200 young people in community youth justice settings and wherever possible that is the pathway chosen for those young people to assist them to reconcile the crimes they have committed and to rehabilitate and be able to re-enter normal living, taking responsibility for their actions.

The Noetic report referred to laid out a range of options and we have chosen one of them. We have allocated \$7.3 million to the redesign and redevelopment of the Ashley Detention Centre as a therapeutic facility as part of a statewide therapeutic youth justice system. Included in the redesign, which is now well advanced and a preferred contractor for the construction phase has been selected, are things like the development of a step-down facility inside the Ashley Youth Detention Centre where young people who are approaching the end of their period of detention will receive additional support, mentoring and services, life skills, in a different setting where they can learn to live more independently and take responsibility for looking after themselves in preparation for their release and living independently out in the community.

That is just one of the changes being made to the old Ashley Youth Detention Centre to ensure it is providing a rehabilitative and therapeutic setting for those young people who the courts have determined need to be in a detention facility. We remain committed to delivering a statewide integrated therapeutic youth justice system. Where courts have determined that a period of detention is required, we will make the Ashley Youth Detention Centre a fit-for-purpose facility -

Ms O'Byrne - Right now, how many staff have had to be stood down?

Madam SPEAKER - Ms O'Byrne, you will get a turn later.

Mr JAENSCH - that is focused on the best interests of those kids and their successful reintegration into the community.

Budget 2020-21 - Assistance for Community Sport

Mr STREET question to MINISTER for SPORT and RECREATION, Ms HOWLETT

[10.26 a.m.]

Can you update the House on details of the Government's assistance to community sport in the Budget and how this investment will improve sporting facilities, stimulate the economy and improve sporting participation levels?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, the Budget handed down by my colleague, the Treasurer, was about jobs, confidence and the community. The Budget was framed amid the shock to our economy of the pandemic which has affected virtually every sector, and community sport was not immune. Sporting clubs and organisations play very important and positive roles in our community and, in many ways, they are the very foundation of our communities. As a government we responded quickly to keep competitions alive where possible and sporting administrators in their jobs so that participation levels could be maintained when a return to play became possible.

I am pleased to confirm that we met our objectives, with 187 Tasmanians kept in work while their revenues dried up. Then we turned our attention to a safe return to play. We assisted more than 431 clubs around Tasmania with equipment to get back on the field in a COVID-safe environment. Nearly \$3 million was invested over these two tranches of assistance.

Then we boosted assistance to those young people who may otherwise be unavailable to participate in sport due to their financial circumstances. Assistance to our Ticket to Play program was doubled, with eligible young Tasmanians receiving up to \$200 for the current financial year and we expanded eligibility to include 18 year olds.

The largest single investment in the Budget to boost community sport was the Government's \$10 million Improving the Playing Field grants program which will provide support for a range of capital investments by sporting clubs and associations over this year and next year.

I am pleased to advise the House that the first tranche of grants has been assessed by the Division of Sport and Recreation, with 31 projects around Tasmania supported with \$1.2 million for projects with a value up to \$50 000. This was a highly competitive process and while not all projects were able to be supported within our funding envelope, I am pleased to advise that \$515 000 will be made available in the northern region and more than \$340 000 each for projects in the north-west and southern regions of the state.

Projects supported include \$44 000 to fund drainage works at Bridport Football Club; a \$50 000 upgrade of the Deloraine Pony Club, a \$35 000 refurbishment of the Devonport City Soccer Club, \$50 000 for a heating system for the Hobart Gymnastics Centre at Bridgewater and \$48 000 for improvements to cricket wickets across Hobart. These projects will not only improve the amenity for participants, officials and spectators, they will also boost the local economy, for the plumbers, builders, electricians and other tradespeople and suppliers who will be engaged by the applicants.

I am also pleased to advise that the second tranche of grants for larger projects with a value of between \$50 000 and \$250 000 has now closed. I expect that around \$3.8 million will be made available under this tranche -

Mr O'Byrne - In a public release who gets them, or is that a secret?

Ms HOWLETT - and I am also advised that applicants under this tranche went through the roof -

Mr O'Byrne - Probably not, oh no, you will need the photos.

Madam SPEAKER - Excuse me.

Ms HOWLETT - and I expect that this tranche will be many times over-subscribed. We can be very pleased and proud of these -

Ms O'Byrne - Any idea how bad it looks? How long you are spending on this and how little time you spent on NTNA.

Madam SPEAKER - Order, Ms O'Byrne.

Ms HOWLETT - carefully targeted Government initiatives for our sporting sector. I look forward to making further announcements in the new year about more capital investment projects to be funded under the Improving the Playing Field grants program.

Launceston General Hospital - Commission of Inquiry into Child Abuse Claims

Ms WHITE question to PREMIER, Mr GUTWEIN

[10.31 a.m.]

The investigation into the reprehensible crimes of former nurse Jim Griffin is not only limited to Health and the Launceston General Hospital, but stretches across several areas of responsibility of your Government, including Human Services, Youth and Sport.

Concerningly, some ministers in your Cabinet appear unaware of how serious this is, or even the fact that an investigation is under way. However, your investigation is extremely limited and does not go nearly far enough. It cannot compel evidence from witnesses and lacks the powers of a commission of inquiry. Will you now concede that this matter involves crimes that were potentially very widespread and expand this investigation to establish a commission of inquiry?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the Leader of the Opposition for that question on what is a very important matter.

It would be fair to say that over the last period, I have had contact from a number of people and some of them who have been linked to the NTNA, in fact in the club that Jim was involved in. The concerns that have been raised with me by parents do not go to where you

want to get to, regarding a broad commission of inquiry. I make the point, as a former health minister, you seem to be protesting a little too much at times.

Mr O'Byrne - So it is our fault. This is disgraceful. Every time you get questioned on stuff like this, this is your strategy.

Madam SPEAKER - Order, please.

Mr GUTWEIN - Let me make this point. I am a parent, my children spent time in that ward, and I can assure you what I have heard is abhorrent.

Ms O'Byrne - Why do you need to assure anybody of that? It is obvious.

Madam SPEAKER - Order, Ms O'Byrne.

Mr GUTWEIN - What we need to do is get to the bottom of it. An investigation is occurring, an independent broad-ranging investigation.

Ms O'Byrne - You sat on it for months.

Madam SPEAKER - Ms O'Byrne, please. I urge you to use restraint.

Mr GUTWEIN - Madam Speaker, this was happening on the watch of the former health minister as well. Let us be clear about that.

Members interjecting.

Madam SPEAKER - Order. This is a very sensitive matter. I ask that you hear the Premier in silence.

Ms O'BYRNE - Point of order, Madam Speaker. I will be seeking to make a personal explanation at the end of that appalling accusation.

Madam SPEAKER - Okay, thank you.

Mr GUTWEIN - Madam Speaker, that is the member's choice. As has been explained in this place, a police investigation occurred, then Mr Griffin took his own life. That police investigation and that report was then provided to the coroner. As a former health minister, you would understand that it is not appropriate for ministers to reach into operational matters of a police investigation firstly, and then secondly to reach into the coroner's processes. To reach into the process and so quite properly those two processes have run their course.

The Health minister and I, along with the secretary, after being made aware of other matters, moved swiftly and put in place an independent inquiry. That independent inquiry is broad and far-reaching. I make this point: if a recommendation from that investigation is that a commission of inquiry is required, the Government will take those steps.

I say to anyone in the community who is concerned by this, and I make the point, I know that as parents in this place we are all concerned by this. There have been supports that have

been put in place by THS, and there are avenues where members of the community can reach out for support as well. If anyone needs those supports I encourage them to do so.

I believe the steps that have been outlined are appropriate. We will have an independent investigation. If that independent investigation finds that there are further actions that the Government should take, then the Government will take them in a heartbeat. We want to get on top of this. We want to ensure that we understand exactly what was occurring and if there are further recommendations then we will act on them.

Budget 2020-21 - Advanced Manufacturing

Mr ELLIS question to MINISTER for ADVANCED MANUFACTURING and DEFENCE INDUSTRIES, Mr ROCKLIFF

[10.37 a.m.]

Can you update the House on how the Tasmanian Government is ensuring that we maintain the momentum and innovation in our world-class advanced manufacturing sector?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank Mr Ellis for the question. He is well accustomed to the capability of the advanced manufacturing in and around Tasmania, and particularly within his electorate of Braddon.

As we have said and demonstrated, this State Budget is about supporting jobs. Importantly, it includes funding to commence the implementation of a new advanced manufacturing plan. The Tasmanian manufacturing sector is critical to Tasmania's economic recovery, not just in bringing export dollars into the economy but in sustaining local jobs across all regions across our state. Mike Cruse of Definium Technologies, the Tasmanian winner of the Pearcey Awards Entrepreneur of the Year recently stated that he hoped that Tasmania would undergo an advanced manufacturing revolution, seizing the opportunities in a post-COVID environment. We share that vision and conviction with Mike.

A new Advanced Manufacturing Action Plan has been developed to support Tasmanian manufacturers to build resilience and capability that will ensure that they are competitive and innovative into the future. The plan will also contribute to the Tasmanian Government's efforts to support businesses to recover from and adjust to the immediate and ongoing impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The plan has been developed in very close consultation with industry and has been informed by the findings of the review of the previous advanced manufacturing plan. The Department of State Growth has coordinated direct consultation with a significant number of businesses, industry representatives and stakeholders. This was achieved through one-on-one consultation, regional forums and a statewide workshop designed to refine industry priorities for government. Research into the value of manufacturing to the state was commissioned from SGS Economics and Planning.

I have held two roundtables with the sector, pre and post- COVID-19, so that we can understand the initial impacts of the pandemic and adjust the plan to reflect the concerns and

also opportunities in the new manufacturing environment. While I fully appreciate that this sector has not been immune to the impacts of the pandemic, many companies have been able to continue production and a number have also shown initiative and courage in diversifying their operations.

Government support under the plan will be delivered through actions centred on four priority areas: the development and attraction of a highly skilled workforce; supporting the adoption of leading-edge design, innovation technologies, practices to deliver growth and improved business capability; supporting increased collaboration and advocacy for the sector; and supporting greater market identification and access and industry promotion.

Initial actions under the plan will be to develop a workforce development plan, fund a workforce development coordinator for the sector, initiate membership of the Industry Capability Network for Tasmania, and begin efforts to promote careers in the manufacturing sector. Outcomes of actions during the first phase of the plan will also inform a level of future funding to deliver the action plan which will be included in the 2021-22 State Budget. Additionally, we will monitor the outcomes of the next PESRAC report to understand whether there are any recommendations pertaining to the advanced manufacturing sector.

As I mentioned, one of the first actions under the new plan will be for the Tasmanian Government to join the Industry Capability Network. The ICN is a network of industry procurement and supply chain specialists who introduce businesses to projects right across Australia and New Zealand. The ICN helps bring supplies and project owners together with a powerful database and an extensive network. By becoming a member of the ICN the Tasmanian Government will be able to share information about opportunities from government and the private sector and work with Tasmanian manufacturers to tender for work individually or collectively.

I am very excited to see the implementation of the next iteration of the Advanced Manufacturing Plan. I applaud the sector for their remarkable commitment through difficult times to be innovative, world-class and a very modern manufacturing sector.

Austal - Australian Commission for Law Enforcement Integrity Investigation

**Dr BROAD question to MINISTER for INFRASTRUCTURE and TRANSPORT,
Mr FERGUSON**

[10.41 a.m.]

The *Sydney Morning Herald* has detailed investigations by the Australian Commission for Law Enforcement Integrity into allegations of corruption involving Australian Border Force and your preferred *Spirit of Tasmania* shipbuilder. The allegation is that internal Border Force advice was disregarded and improper payments of \$39 million were made to Austal to prop up its financial position. The *Sydney Morning Herald* article describes how internal Border Force advice recommended a \$44.6 million so-called success fee should not be paid because Austal failed to meet milestones and because the boats were, and I quote, 'plagued with problems'. Three years after this payment the Cape-class patrol boats are still facing 'capability and support system deficiencies'. Why are you seriously considering awarding Austal \$850 million to build two new *Spirit of Tasmania* vessels in light of these allegations of corruptions and concerns about capability and quality issues?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the member for Braddon for his question. I will take the question on notice in relation to his claims about illegality and other claims that he levies against Austal. If there is ever a conversation in this place about illegal activity I will always take advice before chancing an answer. I will say that the member has totally misrepresented the Government because the task force is currently looking for any and all ways we can find to create jobs in this country and in Tasmania.

While I am on my feet I will also say that this Government and the Budget we are currently working through is all about jobs in Tasmania because we have seen a big economic shock in our community. We have seen men, women and young people lose their jobs or have their hours reduced. This Government wants to focus on improving job prospects for Tasmanians.

What we are witnessing is a desperate attempt by the Opposition, which has painted itself into a corner on this ship procurement process. They only want one option and it has to be European. That is an absurd proposition for the party that was once the worker's party. They want to exclude all other possibilities. Their only interest is in European fully-built overseas vessels.

Ms White - Our interest is the Tasmanian economy and the taxpayer and the businesses that rely on reliable vessels.

Madam SPEAKER - Order, please.

Mr FERGUSON - This is the great policy failure of the Leader of the Opposition and the member who would call himself the shadow minister.

We have been very clear that no contracts have been entered into. I noted that the member used the word 'preferred' in relation to Austal. Again he is wrong. There is no preferred company because the task force is currently doing its work and has not yet provided advice to the Government. It is for the Labor Party to go back out to the workers of Tasmania and explain to them why they should not have a chance at helping us to build the new *Spirits*. He shakes his head, Madam Speaker, but he has to go back to Braddon tomorrow and explain to the people on the north-west coast why they are no good, why they cannot be allowed to be involved in the procurement of the *Spirits of Tasmania*.

The Labor Party is no longer the party of the worker. It is the Liberal Party that is now the party for working people in this state. This Government has a plan, it is this Government that has the Budget and, unlike the Labor Party, our Budget does not have a jobs black hole. The Labor Party, with their little red book of debt and their big black hole, need to have a good look at themselves.

As to legal matters, I will take advice and if there is anything further to add to my answer I will return.

Budget 2020-21 - Community Health Support

Mr STREET question to MINISTER for HEALTH, Ms COURTNEY

[10.46 a.m.]

Can you provide an update on the Government's plans to deliver more community-based care and how this Budget invests in community health support?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the member for his question. It has been said in here before and it will be said again that this Budget is about creating jobs, providing certainty and confidence for a better Tasmanian future. We are investing in our communities.

This Budget is a testament to this Government's strong commitment to Tasmanians receiving more care and support out in the community, because we know the more we support Tasmanians to access healthcare outside the hospitals the less chance there is that they are going to need that care within hospitals.

We have a proven record of investing in community-based care. Take the Community Rapid Response Service first initiated in Launceston and now with pilot services expanded statewide; the Hospital in the Home trial in the south where appropriate patients are receiving acute level hospital services in the comfort of their own home; our investments in telehealth in the wake of COVID-19 which have bolstered the number of connections we are able to facilitate from 20 virtual rooms pre-COVID to now culminating up to 5000 bookings; and the Mental Health Hospital in the Home services being delivered by the Royal Hobart Hospital and Mental Health Services.

This Budget invests in the organisations that support Tasmanians. There is nearly \$4 million for community health providers to keep doing their important work, including Epilepsy Tasmania, the Stroke Foundation, Hobart District Nurses and Palliative Care Tasmania. I know that members of the House will join me as supporters of Palliative Care Tasmania. They do incredible advocacy and work to improve access to palliative care as well as their end-of-life care training programs which are invaluable and irreplaceable. We are very proud to be backing them with \$1 million.

With regard to the delivery of cancer-related services and programs during COVID-19, \$500 000 has also been provided to the Cancer Council of Tasmania. I would like to thank all the volunteers and staff at the Cancer Council. It has been an incredibly difficult for them and we really appreciate the work they do supporting Tasmanians. These organisations are delivering important healthcare and support services right across Tasmania and we thank them.

Furthermore, I was delighted to recently launch Our Healthcare Future, a hugely exciting program that is charting the path for our next stage of our health service reform agenda. This Government is focused on looking at how we can get our services better integrated across the acute and primary health sectors so that patients are getting the best possible care where they need it. Immediate actions include a new initiative in the north and north-west to provide GPs and other primary healthcare professionals with rapid access to non-GP specialists, as well as a \$23 million health technology package funded in this Budget. This system will reduce paper-backed systems for our hardworking staff so they can spend more time with patients. It will

also provide better workforce information as we plan for the future. There is also the 10-year health digital transformation plan which will lay out the pathway to ensure we are putting improved use of technology at the centre of delivering better patient care.

Our healthcare future contains a range of actions over the short, medium and longer term to ensure that we are working with our community, our clinicians, our key stakeholders to make sure that we are delivering a shared vision. These investments and this Budget are clear demonstrations of this Government's commitment to strong communities and the health of our communities.

This is in stark contrast to what we have seen on the other side. We know that previously health was the number one priority of those on the other side yet, I think I counted correctly, there are 126 words within this document about the health care of Tasmanians. What little they are putting out there we are already doing. There has been an increase of more than 600 permanent positions in the last financial year alone. A formal mechanism to convert staff to permanent positions was included in last year's EBA. This is clear demonstration that Labor is lazy, Labor does not have a plan, Labor clearly is not committed to the health care of Tasmanians, unlike this side - record investment and a clear plan to deliver health care for Tasmania.

Austal - Claims made regarding Building the *Spirits of Tasmania*

**Dr BROAD question to MINISTER for INFRASTRUCTURE and TRANSPORT,
Mr FERGUSON**

[10.52 a.m.]

Western Australian shipbuilder Austal has been in the media recently for all the wrong reasons. The *Sydney Morning Herald* alleges that intense lobbying by Austal resulted in Australian Border Force paying \$39 million of a \$44.6 million success fee despite its Cape-class patrol boats being plagued by problems including capability and quality issues.

At the same time Austal is getting cosier and cosier with your Government as it pitches to build the new *Spirit of Tasmania* vessels in the Philippines.

Austal popped up as one of the major sponsors of the Premier's Budget breakfast in Hobart last week as part of its none-too-subtle lobbying efforts. Austal has claimed in promotional material distributed at that event that it would build the new vessels using designs from RMC - European boat builders - or FSG, and even implied that it would use rival ship builder Incat's Tasmanian facilities.

Have you attempted to verify whether these claims being made are true and supported by third parties referenced in its promotional document? Is Austal's intense lobbying ability the real reason your Government is contemplating awarding it the \$850 million contract for the new *Spirit of Tasmania* vessels against the recommendations of the TT-Line board?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the member for Braddon for his question. I can add to my earlier answer and I can answer the question he has just posed.

In relation Dr Broad's question on Austal and Incat and any other Australian business that wants to compete and put forward their proposals, we welcome their proposals. If there are others, including component suppliers and manufacturers of parts of the vessels, they are welcome and invited to approach the task force and let it know what industry capability they might wish to bring to bear. If we know what capacity they have, we know what the job prospects could be for Tasmanians, for the people in our responsibility, the Tasmanian workforce. That is what this is all about.

It is regrettable that the Leader of the Opposition is allowing this rudderless policy to go on the way it is from Dr Broad. They do not care about Tasmanian jobs. The only jobs they are interested in in relation to this massive investment that the Tasmanian Government and TT-Line will be making are in Europe. The Europeans, of course, will be very pleased with your response, Dr Broad, Ms White. They will be very pleased with you. Without a doubt, they make good ships too, but they do not employ in Australia and they do not employ in Tasmania. Is that not what this is really about?

It barely deserves a response, but Dr Broad continues to refer to Austal as a Philippines shipbuilder. We all know that it is an Australian company. It is not for me to defend Austal nor to give Dr Broad a geography lesson on these matters, but it shines a light on where the Labor Party is trying to come from. They are trying to suggest there is something wrong with that. That is very spurious and weak-minded indeed.

In relation to the Budget breakfast, what a good Budget breakfast it was. The Premier did an outstanding job. For any who were there, it was a very warmly received Budget because it is a real budget, a real plan for jobs. It is an authentic jobs plan and it is all about the people of this state.

I continue to be pleased to see that there is a strong appetite from Australian and Tasmanian interests in the shipbuilding industry. They want to be considered for the new *Spirits*. The member for Clark was exiled by the Labor Party because she is pro-jobs in the Clark electorate and forever talking about Incat, a proud Tasmanian business.

I am not sure if Dr Broad is supporting Incat, but we do. It is a fine Tasmanian business. Without wanting to make any promises, it is exciting that one of the nation's iconic shipbuilder's based here in Tasmania could be given the opportunity to tell the task force what they could do. You are against that because you have locked them out. You have shut the border to them. You have said, 'Europeans only, Tasmanians are out. Tasmanians are out, only Europeans can build the *Spirits*'.

I am passionate about this, as you might be able to tell. This side of the House is passionate about jobs in Tasmania. We want the best out of this nearly \$1 billion asset.

I need to let the member recover. In relation to the earlier question from Dr Broad, I have had some advice. I understand that Austal has already provided a public response to the news article to which Dr Broad has referred. He is famous for his Googling. If Dr Broad went a bit further with his Googling, he would have learned that Austal advised the next day that the investigation referred to has been discontinued and has further provided correction and clarification on the matter.

Opposition members interjecting.

Madam SPEAKER - Order.

Mr FERGUSON - The European trade ambassadors do not want to listen to this answer. It is not for me to defend or explain this matter so I direct Dr Broad to the statement from Austal which is available online.

I will table what I believe is the company announcement provided to the ASX the very next day. We are for jobs in Tasmania.

Austal - Reports of Multiple Investigations by Corporate Regulators

Dr BROAD question to MINISTER for INFRASTRUCTURE and TRANSPORT, Mr FERGUSON

[10.59 a.m.]

Minister, previously -

Government members interjecting.

Dr BROAD - You do not get how serious this is. This is the biggest investment decision this century and you are stuffing it up.

Members interjecting.

Madam SPEAKER - Order. That is enough, please. It has been a good morning and I would like to keep the rhythm, thank you.

Dr BROAD - Minister, previously in parliament, Labor has highlighted that Austal is currently under investigation by Fair Work Australia for paying 30 Filipino workers in its Western Australian shipyard as little as \$9 an hour. We have asked you this morning about the Border Force investigation involving their Cape-class patrol vessels which you were oblivious to.

It is also alleged that Austal has misled markets, resulting in US authorities raiding Austal's American shipyard and the Australian Securities and Investment Commission has also opened an investigation into Austal.

Minister, does it concern the Government that your preferred shipbuilder is facing multiple investigations by corporate regulators in Australia and the US alleging that Austal misled markets?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I barely know how to answer this question because the choice is so very clear. The choice is not between Austal or an RMC. The choice is not between Austal and Incat. The choice has been between what jobs can we create in our state of Tasmania and what jobs Labor wants to create in Europe. That is the choice. It is a very simple clear difference that has emerged between the parties on this one.

I am not sure where the Greens are at but between the major parties on this one it has become extremely crystal clear. The member has already been corrected once. I will now have to do it again: Austal is not the Government's preferred builder because in this process we do not yet have any advice. Dr Broad seems to be hell-bent on viciously attacking one company that he has decided he does not like. Why does he not like Austal? It is because they are not European.

Austal has put forward one exciting proposal. I have described it as exciting because they want to put forward to the task force a potential model and Dr Broad and his Leader are saying we should not look at it. Unbelievably, once the workers' party, the Labor Party is saying that a company that wants to build a hull in the Philippines and have the fit-out in Australia between Perth and Tasmania, in places where people do not get paid \$9 an hour -

Members interjecting.

Madam SPEAKER - Order, please.

Ms White - They did in Australia. That is the point of the investigation. They were paid \$9 an hour. It was a Fair Work Australia investigation.

Mr FERGUSON - They are not paid \$9 an hour. They are probably paid somewhere more like \$90 an hour.

I will not be distracted. The fact is that one interest has put forward a proposal to build hulls in the Philippines, float them to Australia and fit-out in this country. There is even a conversation occurring that they have been publicly saying that they would like to engage with Incat. Now, Incat is one of ours. I have to tell you, Dr Broad, unlike you I am for Incat. Unlike Ms White, the Premier is for Incat. This side of the House is for Incat.

Mr O'Byrne - So are we.

Mr FERGUSON - And you are saying no. You are saying Europe, Europe, Europe.

I will allow the authorities to do their good work in relation to the claims that Dr Broad has made. We do not have a preferred builder because we do not have the advice but I will stand my ground on this, Dr Broad and Ms White, because this side the Gutwein Liberal Government wants to maximise jobs in the new *Spirits of Tasmania* because we are for the worker.

We are for the unemployed worker who wants a job. We are for the trades. We are for the apprentices. We are for the trainees who want a shot. As you reflect, Dr Broad, on what you have done, you have taken away the opportunity of bipartisanship on maximising jobs in the *Spirits of Tasmania* -

Ms White - You did that when you canned the advice of the expert board. You did that when you tore up the contract.

Mr FERGUSON - The Government has not torn up the contract. The Leader of the Opposition has misled the House with that interjection.

Ms White - Three days away from signing the contract, you tore it up. You had the contract and you tore it up.

Mr FERGUSON - Three days away from signing now she says. This is the slippery sneaky behaviour of the Opposition. It is beneath contempt. I brought the little red book of debt up and I want to read from it and it will expose the hypocrisy. Yes, you are pleading for the Speaker to sit me down because you know I am about to read to you as I conclude what the Labor Party say is their misleading of Tasmanians. They say, big quote, big block of red in their little book of debt:

We've got to put Tasmania first and make sure our jobs, our contracts and our profits stay here.

Well, Madam Speaker, that is actually what this side of the House is doing, not Labor.

Time expired.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

Member for Bass - Ms O'Byrne

[11.05 a.m.]

Ms O'BYRNE (Bass) - Madam Speaker, under Standing Order 127, I wish to raise that in question time today the Premier attempted to allege that I was aware and therefore responsible for the crimes committed by James Griffin during the four years that I was minister -

Members interjecting.

Madam SPEAKER - Order, please.

Ms O'BYRNE - Madam Speaker, I find that deeply offensive and note it is not an allegation he laid at the feet of his minister for six years.

Allow me to assure the House that if I had been made aware of the circumstance I would not have sat on it like the minister, Ms Courtney, for a year.

TABLED PAPERS

Joint Standing Committee on Integrity - Annual Report 2020

Mrs Petrusma presented the Annual Report 2020 of the Parliamentary Joint Standing Committee on Integrity.

SITTING DATES

[11.09 a.m.]

Mr FERGUSON (Bass - Leader of Government Business - Motion) (by leave) - Madam Speaker, I move -

That the House at its rising today adjourn until Tuesday 1 December next at 10 a.m.

Motion agreed to.

MATTER OF PUBLIC IMPORTANCE

Safety of Children

[11.09 a.m.]

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

That the House take note of the following matter: Safety of Children.

I believe there is something both rotten and wrong with the way at-risk children and young people are dealt with in Tasmania. This morning we had it confirmed by the minister that a senior staff member at the Ashley Youth Detention Centre has been stood down, their Working with Vulnerable People card taken away from them and that there are hundreds of allegations made against this person, including one of rape.

We also have information that other staff at Ashley have been stood down. Perhaps in his response on the matter of public importance debate, the minister, Mr Jaensch, could provide more details to the House about how many staff are potentially implicated, how many staff have been stood down, how many staff have had their Working with Vulnerable People registration cancelled, and whether or not there are still staff at Ashley working today who have serious allegations pending against them? Our information is that the senior is not the only staff member at Ashley who has been stood down and that other staff may also have been stood down but there may be staff still working at Ashley today who have had allegations of a serious nature made against them.

We are talking about Tasmania's most at-risk young people, voiceless young people who have been detained inside the Ashley Youth Detention Centre, a manifestly failed model that is failing young people in Tasmania and failing to keep our community safer. When we are talking about children and young people in the care of the state, while we understand the need to protect the identity of these children and young people, maximum transparency is required. Maximum transparency from the minister on this matter in this debate today is also required.

I do not doubt for a second that Mr Jaensch cares deeply about the welfare of children and young people, but we are also dealing with a child safety system and juvenile justice system which has been politicised. The decision to keep open the Ashley Youth Detention Centre was made on a political basis.

We need to hear from the minister today exactly what is happening at the Ashley Youth Detention Centre. Tasmanians need reassurance that those children and young people are safe. Members of this House will recall that last year the Custodial Inspector released a report into Ashley which was heavily but unsuccessfully redacted. The youth justice Custodial Inspector's reports were tabled in parliament a bit over a year ago. There was an attempt to redact those reports which failed and the minister never adequately answered questions we asked about who tried to cover up what was happening at Ashley by so heavily redacting the Custodial Inspector's report.

The report showed that children and young people in Ashley Youth Detention Centre are not safe. There are abject failures to have systems in place to protect them, to prevent bullying and intimidation of young detainees, or to prevent the potential for abuse, with contractors who come onto the site not subject to searches or background checks. I remind the House that was a section of the youth justice Custodial Inspector's report that the Government tried to hide through an unsuccessful attempt at redaction.

One of the most concerning findings of the report is that witness reports to incidents involving the use of force or isolation are copied and pasted by staff, meaning they are not genuine witness reports to these events. Monthly assessments on the use of force and isolation are not conducted despite there being a requirement for this to occur. Perhaps in his contribution on this debate the minister could update the House on what measures have been taken to address those very serious issues that were raised and attempted to be concealed in the Custodial Inspector's report.

The options presented to Government in 2016 were very clear. A number of options were put forward in the Noetic report and the Government took the least-favoured option and the one least likely to lead to beneficial outcomes for young people who end up in the youth justice system.

There is absolutely no question in my mind, or in Dr Woodruff's mind, that the decision to keep the Ashley Youth Detention Centre was made because the March 2018 state election was looming. The only reason you would keep open a centre which is so clearly failing young people at such a massive annual cost of around \$10 million would be in order to placate a constituency in and around Deloraine.

We know there are far, far better options than the Ashley Youth Detention Centre. The evidence from interstate and overseas is clear, and in fact Noetic made the same recommendation, which is Greens policy, that we close the Ashley Youth Detention Centre, construct two smaller therapeutic facilities in the north and south, and make sure that when those young people leave the youth justice system they are much better equipped for a good life and are much more able to avoid entering a life of crime and therefore the Risdon Prison system. The minister has some very serious questions again to answer in this debate.

Time expired.

[11.17 a.m.]

Ms O'BYRNE (Bass) - Madam Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to speak on this and I am very pleased that the member has brought it on today.

I will start with Ms O'Connor's comment about the minister deeply caring about this. I genuinely believe everyone in this House deeply cares. I support that, but there is a difference between deeply caring and taking the appropriate action to make sure children are safe. What we have heard and seen in question time and over the last few years is a deliberate hiding of information. The only way we can ensure that children are protected is if we are transparent, if we are open, if we are able to say, 'These are our concerns, these are our risks, and these are the ways we are dealing with it'.

Time and time again we have ministers standing up saying just how much they care and their colleagues stand up and talk about what a caring person they are. I do not doubt that but there is a difference between that and keeping people safe. When we raise this issue it is not because we dislike you as humans, it is because we are genuinely concerned about the children who are in care.

Ashley is a very expensive and ineffective model. It is not a contemporary therapeutic model. I have been a minister in this space as well. We do not provide the best pathway for children, and there is a better way to do it. The Noetic report gave a number of examples of how that might be done and the minister and the Government chose the least successful of those options.

I am concerned that we have had to come to question time to discuss the standing down of staff at Ashley which is not related, as I understand, to the offences by Mr James Griffin. They are other offences that people have been stood down for. The minister spoke of a senior person who has been stood down and had their Working with Vulnerable Children card removed. I understand that those approvals have not been removed for other staff who have been stood down. The minister might be able to update the House on whether that is the case and how extensive that is.

While I am on my feet, given that the subject is about children, I was horrified by the way in which the minister, Ms Howlett, responded to questions today. It is a genuinely concerning aspect - and I have been sports minister before - to not recognise that the NTNA would be feeling significant distress. I have spoken to a number of parents and people involved in different clubs and the organisation itself. They have been deeply affected by the allegations and the concerns. They have of course, as all of us have, been looking back to see what they might have known and what they could have done.

We asked the minister whether she had reached out to support those people. It was a question about support for families and staff at NTNA. What the minister did was make up some reference to a police investigation which is not under way. When people have gone, and people from netball have gone to police, they have been told that Mr Griffin died and therefore there is nothing that can be done. They suggested that they go to counselling if they have gone to the police. There is no existing police investigation that would prevent ministers in this House taking action or would prevent ministers in this House from being transparent and accountable.

We asked Ms Howlett those questions. She failed to answer them and she failed to understand the concerns of people in NTNA. Your role as Sports minister is not just to dole out some money. Your role as Sports minister is the health and wellbeing of those sporting organisations. This is a fundamental problem for this series of clubs. They are deeply distressed. We should have done more than when you turn up to police somebody might tell

you where to go for counselling. We should be reaching out to them as organisations to ensure they have the best support.

That leads me to the way the matter around James Griffin has been dealt with. I was deeply offended that the Premier wanted to allege that as health minister for four years and it happened on my watch then I was responsible. There have been a number of health ministers. I genuinely believe, and Mr Ferguson is in the room, that given my own experience none of these issues were raised at a ministerial level. I genuinely believe that because I cannot imagine a minister covering this sort of thing up if it had been raised with them.

However, from the allegations being made, the police reports being made in May, to the minister being advised in July, to the death of Mr Griffin in October, there is one series of events that were covered within that period by police investigations. From the moment Mr Griffin took his own life the police investigation ended. From then until the decision to have an internal inquiry, not so much independent, it is a Government-led inquiry, until that decision, it is the actions that had been taken in that period of time that are of most concern to us.

The minister had said before that the reason the investigation was launched was new information had come to light. Yesterday she said that she had been aware of other things for the last few months. What is clear is that the minister was aware, she was no longer bound by a police investigation, and she chose to do nothing. That in itself might be bad enough, but at the same time staff were told, and they have said this publicly, to shut up. Staff were told not to say anything, staff were told that if they did say anything, if they raised their concerns, that they would be subject to the punitive actions that are outlined in the State Service Act.

The State Service Act was written to protect the inappropriate release of information about people's conditions. It meant that I could not say that Mrs X in hospital has this condition, because that would not be my information to share. The State Service Act is not designed to stop people raising genuine concerns that require action. No one should use that as a threat that meant that those staff on that ward felt they could not say anything about the things they had seen, the things they had feared. Right now, those staff have people coming into the hospital and they do not feel that they can provide them with the appropriate support. They feel exposed, they feel damaged, they feel a lot of pain. That is why they are calling for a commission of inquiry.

This commission of inquiry is needed because we are not just talking about 4K, we are not even just talking about Health, we are not even just talking about Health and Human Services, we are talking about the university, we are talking about the *Spirits* and we are talking about NTNA.

Time expired.

[11.24 a.m.]

Mr JAENSCH (Braddon - Minister for Human Services) - Madam Deputy Speaker, I welcome the opportunity to speak on this matter of public importance brought by the Leader of the Greens today. I will respond to issues that were raised earlier in our question time debate to confirm, again, I am not able to comment here on allegations that may be the subject of legal or police proceedings at this stage. It is inappropriate to do that.

I can reassure the House and anyone listening or reading this that the Department of Communities Tasmania takes all allegations of abuse against children and young people very seriously. Allegations made against current employees that may have occurred a number of years ago are treated by the department the same way as current day allegations are. The department undertakes careful and detailed assessment with Tasmania Police if that is appropriate to ensure the immediate safety of children and young people in care or in detention.

The Department of Communities Tasmania has a documented procedure to respond to historical or current allegations of abuse -

Dr Woodruff - You are just reading the same speech notes you read in answer to the question the first time.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER - Order, the member is replying at the moment.

Mr JAENSCH - and this includes working with Tasmania Police and the registrar for working with vulnerable people.

We encourage anyone who has information relating to the care and wellbeing of children and young people to report their concerns. We can assure them that they will be taken seriously, promptly and dealt with through these processes. I also reiterate that we have previously sought to redress historical injustices through the Abuse in State Care redress scheme and more recently through our participation in the National Redress Scheme. As part of our response to the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse we are also progressing initiatives to improve pathways for survivors to access civil justice.

Ms O'Connor - Are you able to tell the House about the response to the Custodial Inspector's report?

Mr JAENSCH - I will come to that. I want to speak about the Ashley Youth Detention Centre again as it was raised in the opening contribution.

We are committed to ensuring the best possible outcomes for young people who, through the courts, are determined to be best placed in youth justice detention. I reiterate that a vanishingly small proportion of young people who enter the youth justice system find themselves spending time in detention at Ashley Youth Detention Centre. It is not a prison; it is a product of another era. It is being redesigned and rebuilt to ensure it is fit for purpose and reflects our contemporary commitment to therapeutic care and treatment of young people. The model of care operating in Ashley that will continue to be evolved and reinforced is trauma-informed and consistent with national and international best practice.

Our approach to the redevelopment has been informed by various custodial facility reviews conducted nationally and at state level and recommendations made by the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse. A comprehensive redevelopment planning phase is now complete. We are ready to bring the project forward as part of our economic recovery program. A preferred contractor has been secured for the site and we expect that construction will start soon.

Key infrastructure changes to the centre, which is to parallel the adoption of the therapeutic model of care in Ashley, include softening the entrance into the centre with a new

gate house, a visitors' reception area and a secure entrance point, refurbishing or replacing the Bronte wing into independent and semi-independent living, which will encourage and develop key life skills for residents as they transition out of the centre, new recreation yards off the main accommodation units which will also act as de-escalation spaces for residents when required and therapeutic changes to other accommodation and key communal areas.

Our DA for the works has been approved by the Meander Valley Council and a major works tender process is being completed. We expect to begin works on site this month. We expect they will take 12 months to complete.

Along with physical infrastructure, the work on making a more therapeutic environment at Ashley is progressing well. The work has included a new learning and development framework to ensure all staff are trained to deliver a therapeutic model of care at Ashley, the appointment of a clinical practice adviser to provide therapeutic and clinical advice to Ashley Youth Detention Centre staff, a new model of care which includes practice frameworks describing how and what services are delivered and implementing the Safe Centre framework, which is an adaptation of the safe wards model used in mental health facilities. Safe Centre aims to reduce conflict and ensure greater safety for staff and residents.

In line with the changes at Ashley, the Department of Communities and the Department of Justice are partnering to redevelop an area of the Hobart Reception Prison also, to make it more therapeutically friendly for juvenile people on remand.

Reference was made in the opening contribution to custodial inspectors' reports and Ms O'Connor's interpretation of what information was provided and what it meant there. I note that amongst the matters raised in that report and amongst the reasons given at the time for there being redaction, was that sometimes those reports are undertaken in order to -

Time expired.

[11.31 a.m.]

Dr WOODRUFF (Franklin) - Madam Deputy Speaker, Tasmanians and people everywhere who heard the podcast of Camille Bianchi when it came out starting last month and she is now up to episode 6, have been really shaken at the horrific stories of sexual abuse that occurred over an alleged 18 years at the Launceston General Hospital paediatric ward 4K.

It seems that the man, the nurse who was that abuser, we also found out subsequently had also worked at the Ashley Youth Detention Centre for a period from 2017 for about five months and at the *Spirit of Tasmania*.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER - Sorry, Dr Woodruff, can I remind members that if there is court action involved, we have to be careful here of sub judice. I ask members to be careful of what is said today on the record.

Dr WOODRUFF - Yes, thank you. I appreciate that which is why I have used the word 'alleged' advisedly and that man is no longer alive.

This morning, the Greens asked the minister about a separate fact that a senior staff member has been stood down at Ashley Youth Detention Centre following hundreds of allegations of abuse, one of which was an allegation of rape.

The investigation that the Government has established into what happened over an 18-year period in the paediatric ward at the LGH is manifestly inadequate. According to the podcast, comments have been alleged that written complaints were made to management in 2009, 2010 and 2017. Spoken complaints were made as early back as 2002 and 2003 by staff on the ward, to hospital management.

What has happened has been an ongoing ignoring or covering-up of information that was made in complaint forms and allegations include that reports that were written on paper prior to electronic reporting were found subsequently ripped up in a rubbish bin. The allegations are not of passive negligence or incompetence. The allegations are of a cover-up and they are for multiple people operating over nearly two decades.

It has also been alleged the electronic reports of complaints were edited and the severity of the complaints that had been made were downgraded. It is alleged that these things happened after that man, Mr Griffin, was charged for his sexual abuse of young children on the ward.

By 2019, it is pretty clear that there were heaps of people, staff who had made complaints over nearly 18 years, including a graduate nurse, about Mr Griffin and abuse that occurred to her.

The terms of reference that have been established look at policies and the systems in place at the Launceston General Hospital but they do not look at individual cases and they do not look at whether any ignoring or covering-up has happened of policies that were in place. They may find that a policy existed but they will not be investigating whether that policy was actively covered-up or ignored. The findings are limited specifically, it seems, to a level of finding and recommendations below what would show specific cultural cover-ups, or individual cover-ups, which is what is alleged.

Departmental staff and management are not being investigated. It looks instead with a focus at medical staff and nurses, and whether they were effective at doing their job in implementing policies that might have been in place. Staff and nurses are very concerned at the potential that they will face blame for not having reported something on their ward to a manager or to AHPRA when their managers were possibly discouraging them from speaking up in the first place.

As they stand, the terms of reference limit the investigations or findings to determine whether the management did stop reports. We also question why the terms of reference specifically do not allow any investigation into compensation that has been paid out in regards to the Griffin case. For example, compensation may have been paid to staff who have been on stress leave. We need to have that information.

We have to have a far wider commission of inquiry that includes not just what happened at the Launceston General Hospital, but what has happened at Ashley, and what has happened at other state agencies. It is alleged that there was a letter written to the Premier and shadow ministers and other members of parliament from a person whose identity cannot be mentioned, who draws the attention of the Premier and others to the improbability that that man, Mr Griffin, acted on his own. This person talks about a group of medical professionals in Launceston who have historically used medical examinations as cover for sexual abuse for children.

Two prominent members of the medical community in Launceston have been charged, convicted and sentenced for their crimes against young children, one for four years jail for sexual abuse who was a medical scientist, and another one who worked in northern schools for decades and who was also charged, convicted and sentenced to six months jail.

The concern is that there is talk of a circle of these men meeting regularly with Griffin in the Launceston General Hospital cafeteria. I stress this is talk but there is a real stench here. It is very important that we have a full commission of inquiry to thoroughly examine whether there was any possible cover-up.

Time expired.

[11.38 a.m.]

Mr TUCKER (Lyons) - Madam Deputy Speaker, the Tasmanian Government is committed to improving the lives of children and young people who come into contact with the Child, Youth and Family Services system. We are continuing our ambitious re-design of child safety to keep families together where it is safe to do so and to ensure that young Tasmanians who do enter out-of-home care get the best possible start in life. Protecting the health, safety and wellbeing of Tasmania's vulnerable children and young people, especially those in out-of-home care, is a key priority of this government in the 2020-21 State Budget.

We continue to provide significant investment in out-of-home care with an additional \$55 million provided in the Budget and over the forward Estimates. We want to ensure that all children and young people who need out-of-home care have the support they need to be safe and to thrive. This will also include development work regarding a therapeutic, residential on-country program for young people here in Tasmania.

We are also contributing an extra \$2.1 million over the next two years into child safety initiatives as part of the COVID-19 response, which includes a one-off \$200 payment to Foster and Kinship Carers Association Tasmania for essential cleaning and hygiene products; a one-off \$200 for children and young people in care to ensure they have internet access and are provided with mobile technology; up to \$1.2 million for an enhanced after-hours response service to deliver additional after-hours support for children and families at risk; \$480 000 to enable the Therapeutic Residential Care Program to keep one additional house open for a six-month period; \$50 000 to create, enable and enhance engagement and advocacy for children and young people in foster care, kinship care and residential care; \$200 000 to establish an informal kinship carer liaison and support function; \$53 000 to extend the Carer Support Hotline; and \$70 000 Flexible Active Families Fund to support children and families receiving family preservation or restoration services or intensive family engagement services to access essential cleaning and hygiene products and mobile communication technologies.

These initiatives were critical in enhancing the services and systems that support and safeguard children during COVID-19 and the continuing recovery phases.

The Budget also locks in funding for the redevelopment of the Ashley Youth Detention Centre. Over \$6 million is provided to make Ashley Youth Detention Centre fit for purpose and part of a modern, integrated, statewide therapeutic youth justice model that will help young people in detention turn their lives around. The redevelopment will include improvements to

both the physical infrastructure and the model of care, and capital upgrades are expected to begin on site in the coming weeks.

Importantly, the Budget also includes a \$4 million investment into the reform of Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services announced by the minister, Mr Rockliff. This includes \$1.8 million for a dedicated and highly specialised Child and Adolescent and Mental Health Service for children in out-of-home care.

We are also providing additional support for young people under 16 who are at risk of homelessness. We have provided \$513 000 to increase the capacity of the community services organisations to provide intensive case management, outreach support, mediation and family reunification. This is supported by continuing investment into youth foyers in Hobart and Burnie and delivers almost \$5 million for a new Launceston Youth at Risk Centre. This Budget delivers more than \$25 million for new youth foyers in Hobart and Burnie and to expand the services at Thyne House in Launceston. The Tasmanian Government continues to deliver on our commitment to children and young people and their families who are in need.

The Greens budget papers also referred to staffing levels in the Child Safety system. The Tasmanian Liberal Government is committed to the safety and wellbeing of Tasmanian children and ensuring that the Child Safety Service is staffed at full establishment remains a top priority for the Government. Since the beginning of this Government in 2014 our frontline staff establishment has increased by 20 per cent and we are working steadily to strengthen the capability of our Child Safety staff and provide better structures and supports. Child Safety Service staff have one of the hardest jobs, which is why we are committed to our significant redesign of our Child Safety Service, Strong Families, Safe Kids, to better support staff, families, children and young people.

The recruitment of 25 additional Child Safety officers and other frontline staff over recent years has brought our Child Safety Service establishment to almost 250 full-time equivalent frontline staff. This represents a 20 per cent increase since the beginning of this Government in 2014. All these staff are either working on the front line or directly supporting Child Safety officers.

Time expired.

Matter noted.

GAS INDUSTRY AMENDMENT BILL 2020 (No. 32)

ELECTRICITY, WATER AND SEWERAGE PRICING (MISCELLANEOUS AMENDMENTS) BILL 2020 (No. 40)

ENERGY CO-ORDINATION AND PLANNING AMENDMENT (TASMANIAN RENEWABLE ENERGY TARGET) BILL 2020 (No. 43)

Bills agreed to by the Legislative Council without amendment.

APPROPRIATION BILL (No. 1) 2020 (No. 46)

Second Reading

Resumed from 18 November 2010 (page 115)

[11.46 a.m.]

Mr GUTWEIN (Bass - Treasurer) - Madam Speaker, I thank all members for their contributions on the second reading debate on the Budget this year. Broadly speaking, it was a relatively positive endorsement of support from the Labor Party with 99.7-odd per cent of the Budget being supported, which is pleasing. It was another solid effort at an alternative budget from the Greens, although we do not agree with a lot of your priorities.

Ms O'Connor - As one of your ministers said, it is a genuinely alternative vision.

Mr GUTWEIN - It is certainly alternative, I will give you that. I liked the headline that was in the *Mercury* today, 'Dogs and chooks big winners'.

Ms O'Connor - The headline was actually 'Jobs, homes and dogs' in the print version.

Mr GUTWEIN - Sorry, I might be paraphrasing that.

Ms O'Connor - It's very easy to laugh at us.

Mr GUTWEIN - Madam Speaker, I do not intend to speak for a long time today concerning this Budget. All members on this side of the House are very clear with the set-out at the back of the Budget speech that I provided regarding the intent and the initiatives that are included in the Budget and we have provided a significant amount of information regarding what is included.

An important point to make is that this Budget is framed around jobs, confidence and the community and is a very important budget as we move forward. We received a stark reminder with regard to South Australia in recent days that we will be living with COVID-19 for some period of time. There are advancements being made regarding vaccines and final trials, especially the two that are out there at the moment, and I hope we can see a positive result. The Australian Government has a number of horses running in this with four targeted investments ensuring that when a vaccine is available we will have sufficient in this country to roll out and that will be a significant matter that the Government will deal with in the new year, all things running to plan.

Importantly, it demonstrates with regard to South Australia how quickly this thing can pivot. I watched on the news last night and I have to say, with some distress myself, a business in South Australia that was now being shut again and the owner was at the end of his tether. It was sad and a poignant reminder of the reasons why, even in this place, we use wipes when we come to stand at the lectern, we socially distance and we do the right thing. This virus is deadly; this virus travels with people. I know, especially for our young people, it is difficult at the moment to continue with that discipline. I was walking home last night and passed a number of hotels. Whilst everyone I saw was sitting down having a drink, there were people moving around and congregating. It is challenging. For publicans, for those who operate in the hospitality sector it is a challenging period. If ever you needed a stark reminder of why we do

this it was that gentleman on the television last night whose business was being closed and going back through that period of a harsh lockdown.

I hope we can all continue to do the right thing, continue to take the small steps, each of us individually, ensure that we wash our hands and that we maintain a level of cleanliness. As I have said, certainly in my circumstance, I have never been cleaner in my life. It is something I am going to continue with because at the end of the day it is helping us. As individuals if we do those small things, cover our coughs and colds, socially distance and just be sensible and responsible and accept that the world has not returned to what it was and it will not for some time. We need to all continue to work together.

The other thing I wanted to say about COVID-19 was that all of us, as we move around our communities after we leave this place for Christmas, we should acknowledge and thank Tasmanians right across the state for the work that they have done. I have seen examples of people sitting there in the cold outside at football matches on a Sunday morning taking down details as people come into the ground. Marshalls at sporting events who are doing the right thing, as difficult as it is to ask people to separate and to move in an appropriate way, but doing it in a way that is largely being accepted by our community as being a matter of life. It is a fact of life that we have to operate that way and I could not be prouder.

Ms O'Connor - Contrast that with what we are seeing in some other jurisdictions like the United States. The way people follow the rules and have done the right thing has been very impressive.

Mr GUTWEIN - It has. It saddens me to watch what is occurring there. I make the point that the death toll continues to mount and, unfortunately, more Americans have died than should have. There are many challenges for a country that has been a world leader in so many forums. There is not any doubt at all about that.

You look at the United Kingdom as well, and the challenges they have had and the second wave and across Europe. We are in a good place and as I say, as members take the opportunity to get around their communities in a COVID-19 safe way over Christmas, that they thank Tasmanians, who in the main, the vast majority have done the right thing. They should be acknowledged. The reason that we are in such a good spot is because of them.

I have made this point on a number of occasions. We entered the pandemic from a position of strength. That is unarguable. Our balance sheet holding net cash and investments compared to every other jurisdiction in this country holding net debt put us in a position where when we had to, we were able to spend and provide a package that was in percentage terms, the largest package as a share of any state's or territory's economy in the country.

Members interjecting.

Mr GUTWEIN - The point that I made earlier in this was that it wasn't about money; it was about saving peoples lives and that's where our focus had to be. The support that we had across this chamber early on also gave great heart to Tasmanians.

There is no doubt at all about that in my mind about that that they saw the parliamentary body here in Tasmania, both the upper and the lower Houses, united as one, that we just had to get on top of this. That helped us very much in being able to deliver the message to Tasmanians

about the strict restrictions through that difficult period in March, April and May and Tasmanians did the right thing.

I will just mention the north-west coast through that period and the challenges they faced in respect of that outbreak. That was the first major outbreak that we had seen in the country and the north-west coast under the direction of Health and Public Health, with the support of the federal government, AUSMAT and the ADF, got the job done. It demonstrated as a community what we can do when we put our mind to something. We delivered what was described by the then CMO, Dr Brendan Murphy, as an exemplary result in terms of the management of that outbreak.

We began and entered the pandemic from a position of strength and that assisted us to ensure that we were in a position where we could spend when we needed to spend. Importantly as well, our economy was one of the fastest growing in the country at that time. Whilst growth in the March quarter was not of a significant size - it was at 0.9 per cent in seasonally adjusted terms, which in a seasonally adjusted fashion put Tasmania as being one of just two jurisdictions in that quarter to see growth. We came into this with a strongly growing economy and a strong balance sheet.

Importantly, following on from what was a great result in the 2018-19 year, we have, for the first time in 30 years, at 3.6 per cent, we had the fastest rate of growth in 15 years, and the highest economic growth rate in the country for the first time in 30 years.

Labor, in making their point, and I have pointed this out on a number of occasions to the shadow treasurer, he can come across as being quite pessimistic and a little bit negative - I think I have said relentlessly negative on many occasions; I see him steeling himself there to jump in with another negative comment and I hope that he does not. The facts are that in the year to March 2020 employment grew by 4.4 per cent, the fastest growth rate of any state. Since 2014, we went into this with over 23 200 jobs created, and importantly around 12 300 more women employed, 3500 more young people. It is interesting if you contrast it back to the last four years of the Labor-Greens government, Tasmania had the highest unemployment rate in the country for 30 months in a row -

Ms O'Connor - There was a global recession, but you be you.

Mr O'Byrne - Are you going to acknowledge the exchange rate? The terms of trade? Come on.

Mr GUTWEIN - The global financial crisis actually hit us in 2008.

Mr O'Byrne - Yes, but did you not understand the concept of a stimulus?

Ms O'Connor - And lasted how long? You are a financial guru.

Mr GUTWEIN - For a number of countries, including most states of Australia and our country broadly, not as long as it lasted here. That is a statement of fact.

Members interjecting.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER - Order. The Premier is summing-up. I ask members to show respect, please.

Mr GUTWEIN - I will try not to incite. I will stop inciting. I was trying not to incite, but I obviously was. I will resist inciting the other side of the House.

Our budget was strong. We held net cash investments of \$175.5 million at the end of the 2019-20 year and had delivered four surpluses in a row. That strength before the pandemic was a key enabler for the magnitude of our response to the coronavirus. As I said, more than \$1 billion worth of social and economic support was provided: \$150 million to support health. We supported our community with millions more for mental health, child safety, family violence services, emergency accommodation and supported our community organisations to support vulnerable Tasmanians.

I am pleased that we were the first state, in fact one of only two states, to support temporary visa holders. While it was not what you would consider it to be a significant package at \$250 for a pandemic assistance grant or up to \$1000 for a family, it was something. With the other supports we provided through the NGOs such as food packages, it provided a level of support not available in other jurisdictions.

Having spoken over the last months to a number of temporary visa holders who benefited, it surprised me just how important that was for them. I am pleased that the Government took that opportunity to do so.

Ms Standen - They are grateful and they do not want to complain because they do not want to jeopardise their visa status.

Mr GUTWEIN - Ms Standen, unlike other states and jurisdictions, at least we did something.

Ms Standen - I will give you that, but as you acknowledged it was not much.

Mr GUTWEIN - At least we took a step and we provided support.

We also then provided a range of waivers and relief on payroll tax, land tax, motor tax, fees, leases, licences and provided other supports to businesses such as zero interest loans. We also announced our \$3.1 billion construction blitz to quickly reboot our economy. The blitz included 2300 new houses and brought funding for shovel-ready, screwdriver- and paint brush-ready essential community infrastructure statewide over four years.

I think it was *The Advocate* I was reading this morning that made the point that the construction sector on the north-west coast is flat-out at the moment. Articles like that give me great heart because if our trades and construction sectors are busy then aggregate demand across our economy is rising. That will provide an opportunity for all industries to benefit.

Regarding the Make Yourself at Home travel voucher campaign, nearly 17 000 vouchers have been put in for claims, just over 40 per cent of those issued. We saw a significant increase in the number of nights spent on trips by Tasmanians taking up the opportunity for intrastate travel, especially during July and August. Many businesses I have spoken to have said that August, normally their quietest month, had been their best trading month ever. While the travel vouchers have helped to underpin that, it is simply about Tasmanians who took the opportunity

to get around their state and support businesses, to support jobs and, for many people, to do something that in many cases they have not done for 40-odd years.

I went to the top of Mount Wellington with my kids -

Ms O'Connor - kunanyi.

Mr GUTWEIN - kunanyi - for the first time in 40 years.

Members interjecting.

Mr GUTWEIN - I live in the north. How often have you been to the top of Mount Barrow? Probably not as often as me.

And it was fantastic. I introduced myself to a couple up there and took a photo of them with their children, and they took one of me and our kids. It turned out that they were from Hillwood, just down the road from where we live. They were here doing exactly the same thing - travelling around the state and allowing their children to experience some of the fantastic sites and locations that all of us have enjoyed at a particular time in our life.

What is pleasing about the travel voucher scheme is that the Northern Territory is running one and running it again. Victoria has now announced a similar scheme to ours in its budget. New South Wales again has done something as well. For a small state, taking the initiative, supporting its population to get out and about can make a real impact. That is exactly what occurred.

We are seeing signs of recovery. By the work we have done, the investments we have made, the support we have provided, we are now seeing a cautious level of optimism. I believe a significant level of hope is being seen right across our community. We have to make certain that we do the small things so that we do not put ourselves into a position where we have to go backwards. It is going to be important that we all remain disciplined and we all do the right things.

Our construction blitz, HomeBuilder, is delivering confidence in the building industry. As of yesterday, I understand there are around 650 applications for new home builds, 105 applications for substantial renovations, more than 250 applications conditionally approved. These initiatives are generating results. In September, building approvals grew nearly 19 per cent, sitting higher than growth nationally. Construction loans grew nearly 22 per cent. Home loans in September were 35.5 per cent higher than this time last year.

There is cautious optimism. Construction work is lifting incomes and opportunities statewide. Retail trade is now at 14.1 per cent higher than at the same time last year, the second highest growth rate in the country. The stimulus is working to support employment. We are seeing jobs being created, jobs coming back. There is still more to be done. I understand that. That is why in our Budget we have rolled out a \$5 billion infrastructure program over the next five years to ensure that we can provide that necessary investment that will create confidence for the private sector to invest. That investment will assist in growing confidence. Through confidence we will see more jobs being created.

We are seeing job vacancies increase, which is good. The number of vacancies increased by 7.5 per cent, the second highest growth rate in vacancies in the country. Over the year to

October the number of vacancies increased by nearly 18 per cent, the second highest growth rate in the country. If you contrast this strong local result with what is happening nationally, job vacancies nationally contracted by 2.3 per cent. We are well and truly out in front in positivity and confidence, which is what this Budget is designed to do.

For a Treasurer to hand down a Budget that has significant net debt and significant deficits is challenging, but it was important that we provided a pathway back to surplus. It was important that we quickly returned to a cash surplus in our operating expenditures. We do so next year. It is only a small cash surplus, but the following year we grow to between \$300 million to \$400 million and the year after that a similar number. We will still need to borrow for our infrastructure program. I make no apologies for that but there is a pathway back.

With the \$5 billion infrastructure investment our economy, based on the Treasury forecasts, will return to growth of 3.75 per cent in the 2021-22 financial year, so a pretty quick snap back. As a result, as I have said, our net operating balance improves significantly over the forward Estimates with a return to surplus in 2022-23 and 2023-24, albeit very modest surpluses.

I see the wry smile from the shadow treasurer but he did use the same numbers in his own budget.

Mr O'Byrne - Because they are all the numbers you give us. You will not give us the research that underpins it so we have to.

Mr GUTWEIN - Again, thank you for supporting nearly 100 per cent of the Budget.

As I have said in terms of net debt we entered the pandemic with a strong balance sheet of around \$175.5 million in net cash and investments, a higher number than that if you wind out the accounting treatment of leases and certainly not having a cash impact but an accounting impact, it would have been significantly higher than that.

The Budget unashamedly leverages our strong balance sheet to stimulate the economy, support our community, attract investment and, importantly, support jobs, through targeted initiatives and record infrastructure investment.

The opposition parties have both brought forward their alternative budgets.

Ms O'Connor - Would you call Labor's an alternative budget?

Mr GUTWEIN - Actually, I was going to say their attempted alternative budgets.

Mr O'Byrne - I'm not going to cop that from you. Come on.

Ms O'Connor - Have you had a look at your climate jobs numbers? It is hilarious.

Mr GUTWEIN - I knew if I did that we would start a small internal debate. The little red debt booklet -

Mr O'Byrne - You've got to workshop that one. That's shocking.

Mr GUTWEIN - It works pretty well for me. I like it. The little red debt booklet demonstrates that you will keep the budget in deficit longer taking us deeper into net debt.

Ms O'Connor - An argument over net debt at this point is not helpful - no-one has the higher ground here.

Mr O'Byrne - Exactly, and they are using that argument to defend their Budget.

Mr GUTWEIN - I make no apologies for borrowing to build stuff we need and people want.

Ms O'Connor - And we don't judge you for it.

Mr GUTWEIN - It is a statement of fact that Labor would remain in deficit and go deeper into net debt.

As to the Greens' alternative budget, they have put a fair bit of work into it.

Ms O'Connor - Always.

Mr GUTWEIN - I know how hard they are to pull together. As I said yesterday, Labor hardly raised a sweat on the little red debt booklet and the Greens have obviously worked for some time.

Mr Ferguson - The Greens have no photos in theirs.

Ms O'Connor - One photo on the cover, that's it. We didn't pad it out.

Mr GUTWEIN - The one thing we are all agreed upon here is that we will need to carry a significant level of debt. With regard to the messaging we have heard both nationally from the secretary of the federal Treasury and Philip Lowe from the Reserve Bank, now is the time that we use our budgets as economic stabilisers.

The public balance sheets are the only balance sheets that can withstand this and we need to ensure that we invest. Without getting into debate, the view of this side of the House is that we invest, we grow the economy, we generate the revenues we need and then we will start the process of budget repair. At the moment it is about community repair and business repair and we need to ensure that we get that sorted.

There is some common ground between all three parties to some degree here, but regarding the electric vehicle strategy -

Ms O'Connor - Hear, hear. That was 'kooky Greens policy' a couple of years ago.

Mr O'Byrne - It was Labor's policy; Bryan Green announced it.

Mr GUTWEIN - over 10 years, moving to 100 per cent EV and zero emissions fleet, we have already made significant investments into charging infrastructure. I am pleased we will make those investments into energy efficiency, public housing, schools and mental health.

One program I want to mention again today for anyone who is listening, and it is one that flies below the radar, is the HomeShare program. It is a great program where the Government will take up to a 30 per cent share in the value of a home to share the cost of home ownership. We have increased the income and assets test levels, so that is a real opportunity for people. I hope to be in a position where we get to look at extending that and providing more equity into a scheme like that over time because it is an important scheme which has flown below the radar for too long.

Mr O'Byrne - I'm trying not to say it but it is Labor policy. It has been around for a while.

Mr GUTWEIN - It has been around for a while but it has flown below the radar for a long period of time and I think it is a really important option.

The Budget included, along with the \$5 billion infrastructure program, \$7.5 billion into education, skills, schools and TAFE; more than \$300 million into social and affordable housing projects; and \$9.8 billion for hospitals and health services to build a better health system for Tasmania. There is funding for the northern regional prison and the South East Traffic Solution which are important and key investments.

In terms of jobs, as I have made clear with regard to the \$5 billion worth of infrastructure, we have used a simple multiplier. I note that federal Treasury has provided advice to Senate committees over the years that if you are building a house you can normally apply six direct and then three-and-a-half indirect jobs so you count nine and a half per house. On infrastructure it is somewhere between three and a half and five; we have used a multiplier of five across the board, which I think is fair and reasonable.

Over the period with around \$1.25 billion worth of infrastructure across government and government businesses each year making up the \$5 billion worth of spend, that should support around 6000 direct jobs. We will see a multiplier effect over and above that, but for the purposes of the Budget we have used a relatively conservative multiplier in terms of that investment.

The other aspects I wanted to touch on today include the \$10 million for a building project support program that will deliver a competitive brand arrangement. There is no doubt that for commercial builders or developers at the moment who were looking to do anything that might have supported the international visitation area, or looking to leverage off increasing visitor numbers and build anything that was going to provide any level of support or leverage off that sector, they are probably not going to invest at the moment. There are other major projects where, just because of the uncertainty, people may decide not to proceed. It is important that we provide some level of stimulus so the Budget includes a \$10 million building project support program with funding of up to 25 per cent available for projects over \$2 million up to a maximum of \$1 million worth of assistance.

We know that the residential construction area is flat-out and we know there will be some migration from the commercial sector into that as well. Around the state there will be handfuls of projects where people have got to a point where they have planning approval if they need it, or it may be a major renovation where they have the necessary building permits but do not have the confidence to take that next step or their bank may not be able to back them. We want to

understand what those projects are and where we can we want to provide a level of stimulus to ensure that they can move forward.

There is a \$10 million fund to support businesses, restaurants, cafes, pubs and clubs with their energy bills up to a capped amount. We will work with the sector to understand this but I think across the Chamber it is well recognised that whilst we have density requirements on these businesses, small cafés cannot turn over the amount that they would have done normally, and nor can pubs, clubs and larger restaurants. Some I have spoken to have pivoted and their businesses are actually doing better. In certain areas they have added additional business streams in takeaway and other options that have proven to be very sensible business investments. In fact, I have had a number of restaurants that are at the top end that have said to me that they cannot understand why for a long period of time they had not provided a home delivery service, which is interesting.

I know some of the very good restaurants in Launceston that now do that that we have on occasions used where it provides another option. We will continue to work with the sector to make certain that we can provide at least some level of support. It is not going to pay a business's full electricity bill but we will work with the industry sector to understand what would be an appropriate level of support and the type of business that should be able to access that.

We obviously have the payroll tax rebate scheme, small business grants schemes that have been provided to enable support through employing young people, employing apprentices and trainees and that has been very well received.

Importantly, the Budget also provides significant capital investment into TAFE with the Trades and Water Centre of Excellence at Clarence which will be a \$21 million investment now. The Budget also includes the jointly funded JobTrainer between the state and federal government which will provide thousands of low and no fee key VET courses and additional funding for specialised teachers in TAFE and \$1 million for a new industry-led hospitality training organisation which the industry has been championing for some years now. As we rebuild out of COVID-19, as there is a need to ensure that our world-class attractions and world-class venues can provide world-class service, this will play an important role.

I want to touch on one other matter that is captured in the budget in terms of its funding but what I thought was a very significant announcement this week was the announcement by the minister for Energy for the hydrogen feasibility studies.

He described hydrogen as Tasmania's superpower and I think there is an opportunity with the businesses we have now that are looking at options here: Origin, Abel, Grange Resources, and Fortescue are looking at options in the state. With our abundance of fresh water and green-based energy we place ourselves in a very strong position. I commend the minister for Infrastructure and the Minister for Energy for that announcement earlier this week because it is very important.

The other matter to finish on is the investment in housing: \$300 million into housing including the \$100 million investment which we announced as part of the construction blitz which will build up to 1000 new homes over three years. The expressions of interest is currently under way. The Budget locks in record state investments at \$300 million and that will be good not just socially for Tasmania and not just for our community, but it will drive

economic growth as well. It is a win-win. It has been well recognised by commentators both in the building trades and more broadly in the housing sector.

I thank members for their contributions on the Budget this year. We designed it to ensure that it underpins and supports jobs, that it will provide confidence to the Tasmanian community and importantly, it is there to support the community as well. A Budget that delivers job and confidence and for the community is what we have set out to do and I firmly believe that that is what we have delivered. I commend the bill to the House.

Members - Hear, hear.

Bill read the second time.

APPROPRIATION BILL (No. 2) 2020 (No. 47)

Second Reading

[12.25 p.m.]

Mr GUTWEIN (Bass - Treasurer) - Madam Deputy Speaker, this second appropriation bill recognises the unique role of parliament and independent statutory authorities in Tasmania's parliamentary and democratic system. It appropriates \$36 214 000 from the public account in 2020-21, \$36 134 000 of this amount is appropriated for operating services and \$80 000 is appropriated for capital services.

I commend the bill to the House.

[12.26 p.m.]

Mr O'BYRNE (Franklin) - Madam Deputy Speaker, I appreciate the call. This is a machinery bill; the second part of substantive debate has taken place in the other bill.

Given your comments in summing-up of the previous bill it is important that we acknowledge that when you look at the job numbers that have come out today, and Tasmania's unemployment rate has now jumped to 8.2 per cent, that is the highest in the country by a fair whack. The national average is 7 per cent. Queensland is the next closest to us at 7.7 per cent.

Whilst it is important that we have a contest of ideas, and hearing some of the comments and the reflections the Premier has made on our alternative budget and our alternative vision for jobs in Tasmania it is clear, by the Premier's comments and his Budget, that he is accepting in one breath that we should use our balance sheet to respond to the economic times that we face to go into further debt to invest in our economy. But that is only for a short period of time and then he reverts to type in an attempt to give the people of Tasmania an impression that there is a plausible pathway to a wafer-thin surplus. Again, we make the point that he has not provided in the Budget documents the underlying economic assumptions that he relies upon to reach that surplus.

In terms of the Labor vision, which is creating jobs - not only indirect jobs and jobs through supporting building and construction and infrastructure projects, but it is direct jobs with our innovation and investment fund that will create direct jobs. There will be a multiplier

on top of those direct jobs. We believe that the task of this Budget over the forward Estimates, should be to respond to the challenge that we face.

The Budget Papers predict an 8.5 per cent unemployment rate next year. Based on the numbers today, you do not have to go too far to think that that will be more than 8.5 per cent next year. That represents an individual and collective tragedy, not only for those individuals who find themselves unemployed, or underemployed, or out of work, but it is a collective tragedy for Tasmania.

We stood up here in March dealing with appropriation bills and supply bills to provide bipartisan support to the Government to spend the money; to get the money out to respond to the immediate needs, the immediate health needs, but also to start to lay a foundation for economic recovery. The Budget bill and the Budget Papers lock in high unemployment. There is a clear choice. The Labor Party believes that we should use the advice of the IMF and the same people who are advising the Treasurer to use that balance sheet to respond. We are using that but we are acknowledging that this is not a short-term problem. We are optimistic about Tasmania's future but we are realistic about the circumstances we face.

Yes, the Labor plan will result in higher borrowings but we have identified savings and the total cost of Labor's additional borrowings is \$15 million over the next four years. We think this is a -

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER - Mr O'Byrne, Appropriation Bill (No. 2) is in regard to specific agencies such as Legislature-General, the DPP and the Office of the Governor. Your comments need to be relevant to the bill we are dealing with. What you are talking about should have been dealt with in Appropriation Bill (No. 1).

Mr O'BYRNE - In context of those small allocations it is important that they are seen in context of the bigger challenge facing our Budget, Madam Deputy Speaker.

We believe the appropriations in this bill are appropriate but in the context of the challenge that Tasmania faces the unemployment stats today are horrific. They are an absolute challenge. We do not blame anyone for that, particularly because these are the economic circumstances we find ourselves in, but we do hold the Government to account for their response and we believe that using the balance sheet across the allocations included in this bill is important in ensuring that we support Tasmanians back into work to build a better future for Tasmania.

[12.31 p.m.]

Ms O'CONNOR (Clark - Leader of the Greens) - Madam Deputy Speaker, on behalf of the Greens I support Appropriation Bill (No. 2). Obviously this is an important appropriation bill so that the machinery of our fragile and beautiful democracy can continue to run as smoothly as possible.

I have a couple of questions in this area of the Budget. In the 2018-19 budget an allocation was made for members of the House of Assembly to receive access to the Office of Parliamentary Counsel to parliamentary drafters. This was a request that we put to the newly elected Madam Speaker not long after parliament returned after the 2018 state election because

we believe it is really important that members of the House of Assembly can present legislation in this place that is robust and well drafted.

I say that with the qualifier that in our office we have some highly talented drafting capacity and members of this place who have looked at the legislation we have brought in would understand that. Nonetheless, it should be available to all members of this place outside government members who already have access to the OPC for us to be able to tap into drafting expertise so that this House's time is not wasted with bad drafting.

I remind the House that members of the Legislative Council have ready and largely unrestrained access to the OPC, which is a privilege not afforded to members of the House of Assembly. An allocation was made in 2018-19 state budget for drafting expertise to be made available to House of Assembly members but there has been no apparent movement on that allocation since it was made in the first budget after the state election. It was a promise not only of the current Speaker but it was a promise contained in the budget papers and yet two years later members of the House of Assembly do not have access to the OPC. That needs to be rectified because an allocation was made and we are still waiting. It is not good enough.

If the Premier and Treasurer could address his mind to that outstanding issue, we would like to know what has happened to that allocation. Has it just been absorbed into Legislature-General? Where has it gone? It was a specific purpose allocation so that members of the House, outside government members, could access the OPC. By my estimation there is now a relatively substantial sum of money that has not been directed towards its intended purpose.

I also want to raise with the House that the parliamentary Select Committee Inquiry into the House of Assembly Restoration Bill overwhelmingly, across all three political parties on hearing the evidence, agreed that the number should be restored in the House of Assembly. We are in the midst of a global pandemic and an economic downturn and as we know, thousands of Tasmanians are now out of work as a result. It is difficult to argue for more members of parliament at this point but it is not a discussion we can drop because every member of this House, in an unguarded moment and possibly not on the record, would confirm that this House is too small and that makes it at some level dysfunctional that the Cabinet heavily outweighs the Liberal backbench, but it also means that when a minister, for whatever reason, is no longer able to exercise their duties in that portfolio, the range of choices available to the premier of the day are very restrictive.

It also means that MPs, backbenchers, are finding it that much harder to raise their genuine issues in this place. It means that ministers who are carrying four or five portfolios are not able to adequately connect with their electorate. The House should be reminded that under this Government there are more portfolios than in my memory in Tasmania. There are 36 ministerial portfolios, which is utterly ridiculous. There are not 36 government departments and while I understand a department like State Growth works to four or five ministers, it is patently unproductive and unnecessary for there to be 36 portfolios, with weird ones in there like Strategic Growth.

The consequence of that has been a shrunken Estimates schedule where the Liberal and Labor parties conspired to make sure that the Environment and Parks portfolio, which last year was allocated a total of five hours, this year only has two hours dedicated to those two separate portfolios. Again I place on the record Labor's willingness to take another half-hour away from the Environment and Parks portfolios until we put up some protest. Obviously it is in both the

Government and Labor's interests for there not to be sufficient scrutiny of the Environment and Parks portfolios because in those portfolios the differences between the two parties are indistinguishable. There is only one party in this place that consistently stands up for nature and for public protected areas and that is the Greens, but I digress.

The numbers in the House of Assembly will need to be restored. We will bring on that debate next year on the House of Assembly Restoration Bill. I understand that the Treasurer is not keen at this point but we should be able to have a discussion about how you could restore the numbers. Perhaps it is possible to amend the bill so that the restoration of the House to an appropriate size for our population and the complexity within portfolios could be deferred, for example, to the next state election. We cannot keep putting this off. It is ultimately self-defeating to us all and it deprives the people of Tasmania of comprehensive political representation.

The House is also going to have to deal with the issue that was raised in the inquiry relating to the need for dedicated Aboriginal seats in the Tasmanian parliament. The report was agnostic on whether those seats should be in the House of Assembly or the Legislative Council. Again, Liberal, Labor and Greens members of that inquiry agreed that it is a wrong that needs to be righted and that parliament should provide for two dedicated seats for the palawa/pakana people. We will bring that on for debate next year I hope members approach it in the spirit of genuine reconciliation and a willingness collectively to right the wrongs of the past.

I note that this Appropriation Bill funds the Office of the Ombudsman. I thank the Ombudsman, Mr Connock, and all who work in that office for their work. It is extremely important for transparency, accountability and public trust in government. I was interested to hear yesterday that the Premier wants to sit down with the Ombudsman and 'interrogate the data', to use his words. It is a really straightforward fix here, given that the evidence in the most recent Ombudsman's report is that we are Australia's most secretive state. The fix is that the Premier simply needs to direct heads of department to make it clear to delegated Right to Information officers that they are to apply the full effect of the law, and that in every possible case active or open disclosure should be the norm.

Good governments have nothing to hide. Good governments are open and transparent with the people. It is possible, despite the reputation for secrecy that this Government now has, to turn that around by publicly committing to full transparency through the Right to Information process and if necessary following a meeting with the Ombudsman to strengthen the Right to Information Act.

The Right to Information Act, because of the way it is drafted, is only as good as the government of the day. What we have found over the last six-and-a-half years is that the act is not being applied. It is regularly breached by government agencies. Members are regularly denied information or provided with pages of redactions. It brings shame on us all as parliamentarians that we are prepared to allow a statute's legal requirements not to be met by government departments. That is what the Ombudsman found.

The Premier can remedy that issue that has been brought to parliament's and the public's attention by the Ombudsman by taking the action I mentioned earlier, which is to talk to the secretary of Premier and Cabinet and, if necessary, direct Ms Gale to engage with other secretaries of agencies, so that the message is oxygen clear.

What has happened here is that a culture of secrecy has been allowed to infect government. It is possible to turn that around. It is necessary to turn that around to improve public trust in elected representatives, in governments and in parliaments. That is something we should all be supporting.

[12.43 p.m.]

Ms OGILVIE (Clark) - Madam Deputy Speaker, I am pleased to speak on this second bill. I am particularly interested, and I am sorry if I sound like a broken record, in digital technology. I will talk a little about parliament and how we manage things here within the budget that we have. I get out there and fearlessly lobby the Government for more investment for these areas.

All of us in this place are very grateful for the fantastic team here. When we lock ourselves out of our computers they are very quick to fix us up. Imagine what they could do if we really enlivened our parliamentary capacity to enable greater, better and broader communications with the electorate.

I concur with my parliamentary colleague for Clark in that there has never been a more important time for people to have access to members of parliament. The statistics show that we have never had less access on the numbers, purely based on the population and the number of members we have here. Let us look at other ways we can address those issues.

I am very interested in your ideas, Ms O'Connor, about how we can restore parliament. While that is unfolding I hope we can do some more interesting, novel and contemporary things in relation to how we manage our democracy from an online sense, particularly through our parliamentary approach.

We have seen in Appropriation Bill (No. 1) a huge amount of money going into a vision for transformation across the State Service. We could have a similar vision for transformation in parliament and across what we do here. We look at the website and say it is all about the website, but it is actually about how we manage information and manage process flows throughout this place. Doing things in the way we have always done them may not necessarily be the best approach.

We have had a very interesting year where we flipped everything on its head and worked out how to do things. Mostly it worked; sometimes we had a few issues. On the whole we were able to work remotely. We were able to use information and email and other communication systems to patch together a more agile approach to how we go about running our democracy.

It will be interesting and energising to look at some of the other parliaments around not just Australia but around the globe. I was fortunate before the pandemic broke out to attend a cyber security conference at Westminster. Cyber security has now become code for all IT and tech and communications. They were doing incredibly interesting things. They are very much on the front foot in the UK. It is a national parliament so their budget was a lot larger. They are releasing information and encapsulating datasets that then allow them to go out into the market working with the universities, working with Oxford. We went to Oxford and looked at some of the work that was being done there. It was very interesting stuff. We could draw a lot of lessons from that.

If you look at what is happening in the United States, and even in Russia and China, particularly when it comes to their capacity to engage themselves in parliamentary democracies elsewhere, it is something that we need to -

Ms O'Connor - It is called interference.

Ms OGILVIE - Thank you, I was looking for the word - something that we need to be thinking about very carefully even in a small place like this. There is a lot of democracy and communications and strategic thinking, digital technology side of things that we need to get on top of. I have promoted the idea before of some sort of standing committee or group within parliament, or some sort of cross-Chamber team, that could get on top of this together. I would like us to think deeply about that.

I spoke about it right through the pandemic. I was pretty strong about not wanting parliament to be closed but appreciate the necessity for that to have happened. I am very strong on the fact that we, like every contemporary organisation in Australia, owe it to our customers, our constituents, to be able to continue to provide services when the worst happens.

What is our resilience planning around that? I am not sure we have done that thinking yet. The fellows in our great IT section may have done that. It would be interesting to hear what they want to say.

When looking to enliven greater capacity for transparency and open government, look at governments such as Queensland, which has taken a forward step in government - I call it 2.0 technology. It is charged, good processes, working collaboratively across government and private sector and in particular open data, open datasets. That is something that fits more within the Appropriation Bill (No. 1) because it is that transformation project, but there is no reason why we cannot draw some understandings and some lessons here from that.

I am also passionate about stopping the nastiness, as far as we can, of online bullying and the work that we do in this place being allowed to be done with a certain standard of behaviour. It is up to each of us to be able to do that. Having said that, it is something that we are going to have to think about more deeply from that digital perspective. The phrase we like to use in our office is, 'government for the people, of the people and open to the people'. That means greater and broader and deeper communication.

Whilst I would love to pin it all on the Ombudsman - I think they do a magnificent job with the resources that they have, and what is a fairly arcane structure of our State Service as well with its siloed-type operations - if we had an agency for digital transformation, or some sort of standalone entity, that would help as well - to enable us to do more here; perhaps a little bit more budget, some sort of leadership team, cross-party, cross-chamber group, with the goal of making what we do here really clearly and quickly accessible to all.

Some of the recent commentary around online petitions, and of course, other countries are using polls within their parliamentary process as well; very interesting stuff. Online petitions: we get worried when we see that robots and bots can be engaged in those. I think ours is set up slightly differently, and have a lot more robustness of their data around them. Looking at the way people are engaging with parliament, what might have been perhaps in the 1970s and 1980s a direct engagement with MPs, now there is a lot more online and digital engagement. That is a counterweight against the challenge we have as sitting MPs to be able

to be accessible at all times to all people, but also with an additional layer of all of the work of social media and technology that sits across the top of that.

We can do it better; we can do it more openly. When I say 'we', I mean MPs. We are the ones who know what the job is and we can lead some of the scope of work that needs to be done.

For my sins, of which there are many, I spent quite a lot of time in Telstra Corporation and they put me through some Six Sigma training in process re-engineering which seemed deadly at the time, but now actually makes a lot more sense to me because it is also about good processes. That is where I see some of the RTI work that could be improved and enlivened there as well. There are categories to this. RTI is one part of it where people write in and request certain information but there is a bigger picture at play which is to be on the front foot and to be communicating to our customers and constituents. I use the word 'customers' advisedly because we are here to provide a service, a service about reporting on what we are doing and good governance.

Ms O'Connor - That is terrible language for democracy, to call our constituents 'customers'.

Ms OGILVIE - You do not like the customer stuff? No, this comes from my Telstra training. That is how I was engaged to -

Ms O'Connor - It is a terrible way to talk about the people we represent. They are not our customers.

Ms OGILVIE - I think people who go to Service Tasmania are customers. There are layers to it, right? So, I disagree with you and it is not meant to be offensive. We talk about constituents.

Ms O'Connor - No, I know. It is just modern management lingo which does not sit with democracy.

Ms OGILVIE - Well, it does because otherwise we take a backwards step and maybe we are just too big and too unwieldy. You can deal with people individually.

Ms O'Connor - Okay. They are constituents, our communities.

Ms OGILVIE - People who go to Service Tasmania are definitely customers and they deserve the best effort we can give them.

Ms O'Connor - Sure, but we do not work at Service Tasmania.

Ms OGILVIE - Yes, but we are part of the big show.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER - Order, it is through the Chair, please.

Ms OGILVIE - I do not mind chatting. It is all good. Apart from the management language, which we might disagree on, there is other transparency that would be really helpful in this place as well. It has worried me from time to time as I have sat there thinking that I

would like to take a point of order on something, not quite knowing what the convention is because it is not -

Ms O'Connor - Careful, you get booted out.

Ms OGILVIE - I think she would like this bit, yes.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER - Order.

Ms OGILVIE - Get off the transparency issue. It would be really helpful to know and to have access to the conventions, where these conventions are held, standing orders and rulings. I am reflecting on my experience in the legal sense that we are actually able to see what the rules of the court are and what the judges have decided, standing orders in net effect over there, but it would be very helpful to have that all here. I think other jurisdictions do that. I wonder whether that is something we have here. It is available, is it? I do not know. Perhaps you could let me know.

The last bit is really a fun one, and this is about parliament and making it a more contemporary place. There is a great opportunity to make some upgrades and changes to things like the parliamentary dining room, with a bit of investment. I suggest that it would be great for the Opposition to be given upgraded offices, having spent some time in there. I love my office. I am in there with my team and we are very happy in our little shared office but it is time for an upgrade.

Mr O'Byrne - We will not be there long.

Ms OGILVIE - You do not want them? Labor says they are happy with them.

Mr O'Byrne - No, that is not what I said. I said we will not be there long.

Ms OGILVIE - You will not be there long? Okay. Labor is saying it is keeping them hungry but it is not the most pleasant place. It could do with a proper upgrade. Anybody who is an elected member deserves to be in decent offices so that is perhaps something that is on the agenda and let us hope that comes to fruition.

My team and I did a little bit of blue-sky thinking. We think it might also be time for a parliamentary shop to bring in some additional revenue like Westminster, like Canberra. I can see the cufflinks now, the Tasmanian island state cufflinks, it could be cups, it could be fridge magnets, and it could be books of quotes from the Premier. He has some good zingers there. School groups would be interested in this and visitors coming to the state would like that as well. I am fairly sure that Government House is looking at something or has done something along these lines too.

We are a unique and beautiful little parliament that people like to come and see and they are not quite sure how much access they can get. It would be great if they all went home with a nice fridge magnet that said that they had come to see the beautiful state of Tasmania and our beautiful Parliament House.

I have mentioned a bit about amenities for minor parties and independents. We have a very small room and we are very happy with that but we do not have any facilities so that is difficult. Do you want to wrap-up, Premier?

Mr Gutwein - I could wrap up in three minutes.

Ms OGILVIE - I will leave it with you on that great note of shops and restaurants.

[12.57 a.m.]

Mr GUTWEIN (Bass - Treasurer) - Madam Deputy Speaker, I thank all members for their contributions. A couple of matters were raised. First, in terms of the funding provided to OPC, that was in the 2019-20 budget and with COVID-19 we did not get to roll anything out earlier this year. It is in the Budget and -

Ms O'Connor - It has been sitting in the budget for nearly two years.

Mr GUTWEIN - last year's budget was the first one I understand, 2019-20. So this will be the second year. I stand corrected on that but I would expect arrangements would be announced early in the new year.

In terms of digital inclusion and technology, we had a late request from the House of Assembly for some support through this Budget process for a new website and for some improvements to technology. I am pleased to announce that we will be providing an initial \$240 000 to the House to contemporise its website and platform, and a further \$100 000 to ensure that it can be managed on an ongoing basis and open up democracy more widely through the site.

There was a range of other matters, not all of them went to the Appropriation Bill (No.2) so I will not digress. I thank Ms O'Connor for outlining the Greens strategy for the next 12 months. It has given me an understanding of where we are heading.

I commend Appropriation Bill (No.2) to the House and I look forward to seeing all members at Estimates next week.

Bill read the second time.

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

PAYROLL TAX REBATE (APPRENTICES, TRAINEES AND YOUTH EMPLOYEES) AMENDMENT BILL 2020 (No. 48)

Second Reading

[2.31 p.m.]

Mr FERGUSON (Bass - Minister for Finance - 2R) - Madam Speaker, I move -

That the bill be now read the second time.

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a very real and significant economic impact on businesses, jobs, families and the Tasmanian community. In response to this, the Tasmanian Government has taken unprecedented steps to support the state's recovery including social and economic support packages totalling around \$1 billion.

To ensure that the Tasmanian community is well placed to meet the challenges presented by COVID-19 and the opportunities ahead, the Premier's Economic and Social Recovery Advisory Council was established to provide advice to the Government on strategies and initiatives to support the state's medium- and longer-term recovery from COVID-19.

On 20 July 2020, the council delivered its interim report to the Government. The report identified 64 key recommendations to assist Tasmania's economic and social recovery. All recommendations have been accepted by the Government.

Recommendation 45 of the council's report stated, 'The state Government should extend the payroll tax rebate schemes for youth employees and for apprentices and trainees'. The interim report goes on to say that the youth employment incentive should be extended for at least 12 to 18 months to provide enhanced medium-term certainty to employers taking on new young workers. The report also provides that the apprentice and trainee payroll tax incentive should be extended to all sectors and extended in duration for an extra 12 to 18 months to provide an incentive for business to take on young employees.

This bill amends the Payroll Tax Rebate (Apprentices, Trainees and Youth Employees) Act 2017 to implement the council's recommendation. To support local businesses that invest in an apprentice or trainee, the Government will extend the successful payroll tax rebate scheme for apprentices and trainees by 12 months, from 30 June 2021 to 30 June 2022. Importantly, the extended scheme for apprentices and trainees will also be expanded to include all Tasmanian industries from 1 January 2021 to 30 June 2022.

The Government recognises the valuable investment that business makes in training the next generation of Tasmanians and we want to make sure that businesses are confident and prepared to take on more apprentices and trainees. In April this year, the Government reintroduced a one-year payroll tax rebate for new youth employees as part of stage 1 of the Government's social and economic support package in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. To further encourage businesses to employ more young people, this bill also extends the payroll tax rebate for youth employees by 18 months, from 31 December 2020 to 30 June 2022.

In addition to the payroll tax rebates, this Government will also be extending the Targeted Apprentice and Trainee Grant for Small Business to any small business who employs an apprentice or trainee until 30 June 2022. We expect that initiative will support around 2000 new full-time apprentices and trainees. Together, we expect the small business apprentice and trainee grant and the payroll tax rebates to support the employment of a further 4000 apprentices, trainees and youth employees.

The extended and expanded rebate will incentivise new employment opportunities for apprentices, trainees and youth employees in Tasmania, and is expected to cost the Government around \$11.3 million.

This Government recognises that a skilled and productive workforce is vital to our economy as we recover from the impacts of COVID-19, and that a rewarding career is

beneficial to the wellbeing of individuals and communities. The changes to the payroll tax rebate scheme will contribute to a more productive workforce, now and in the future, to the benefit of both young people and businesses.

I commend this bill to the House.

[2.35 p.m.]

Mr O'BYRNE (Franklin) - Madam Speaker, I rise to speak on the Payroll Tax Rebate (Apprentices, Trainees and Youth Employees) Amendment Bill 2020 and indicate at the outset that this has absolute support from the Labor Party in this place. This continues the bipartisan support that the Labor Party has provided to the Government in responding to the pandemic crisis and the economic crisis confronting Tasmania, Australia and the rest of the world.

I recall standing here in March providing support to the Government for their social and economic initiatives in response to the pandemic. I commend the Government for the work of establishing the Premier's Economic and Social Recovery Advisory Council and commend them for responding to one of their recommendations. Recommendation 45 states -

The State Government should extend the payroll tax rebate scheme for youth employees, and for apprentices and trainees.

I acknowledge that in this amendment bill, the Government is extending that to 30 June 2022 and is extending the range in terms of the scope of industries and extends the tax rebate for youth employees by a further 18 months, again to June 2022.

These are the kinds of initiatives that Tasmania requires to support our young people in getting a chance, getting back into work, and getting some hope. It sends a very strong message to employers around the state that in this parliament, across both sides of the House, there is support for them to do all they can to employ young Tasmanians and to give them a chance to build a career.

We all know what that provides people in their life. It provides them with an ability to build their own personal skills, build a greater network of work colleagues and friends, but also to build a better life for themselves, in getting a house or getting forward in their career. Giving more people access to apprenticeships and having an environment where employers are supported in ensuring that they not only employ people in their existing trade's mix and their existing staffing mix but they are encouraged to renew their workforce, they are encouraged to bring new people to build the capacity of their company to respond to the needs of the market.

Labor is very strong on this. In our alternative budget and our vision, our fully-costed jobs plan for the state, we have made apprenticeships and traineeships for workers and the important role the TAFE system plays in ensuring that apprentices and trainees get good quality training a key component of our vision for the state; it is one element of the supply chain, so to speak.

It is all very well and good to identify the funding mechanisms to support people getting in to apprenticeships and traineeships. It is also crucially important that we support the system that trains them and that that system is responsive to the needs of industry; it is responsive to the needs of the economy. Not only do we need to maintain a workforce in terms of its capacity

and the replacement when people retire or when people move on, we need to be able to respond to the changing needs of those industries, and the training and the work that is required to make sure that we have a high-skilled, high-responsive modern, contemporary skilled-up workforce in Tasmania.

We know with the unemployment statistics out today that Tasmania now has the highest unemployment rate in the country by a fair margin: 8.2 per cent is the unemployment rate as it is today. The national average is 7 per cent. We are way ahead of the state closest to us and that is Queensland at 7.7 per cent. That is a tragedy; that is a jobs crisis for Tasmania. Bringing in bills such as this and having discussions around our ability to support more workers in the workforce is crucially important. Despite the Government's rhetoric, heading into COVID-19 the economy was softening and our employment numbers were softening as well.

What has been exposed in the pandemic is precarious employment and what that means to not only employers, but to those individuals who do not have a chance to get a level of permanency in their working life. Casual employees and precarious forms of employment have exposed how thin our labour market is to economic shocks such as a pandemic.

We saw it, albeit to a smaller degree, during the global financial crisis. Our full-time employment is only 155 000, a fall of 13 000 from the state's pre-GFC peak. Mainland Australia saw full-time employment rise by 17 per cent over that same period, but unfortunately Tasmania's has fallen by 7.7 per cent. In the past 12 months the economy has shrunk by 0.5 per cent. That is the biggest decline in 20 years. It confirms that we are in a recession and our employment is the worst in the nation. Our youth unemployment rate is the worst of any state.

We have lost more than 12 500 payroll jobs since the pandemic began in mid-March. This is a loss of 4.8 per cent compared to a much lower national average of 4.4 per cent. There have been much bigger losses in sectors, such as 16.6 per cent in agriculture, forestry and fishing, 14.8 per cent in accommodation and food services, 11.1 per cent in mining and 10.9 per cent in arts and recreation. In a fortnight in mid-October, 6100 payroll jobs were lost, a decline of 2 per cent. It is a much bigger loss than the national average of 1.6 per cent.

We were soft heading in and it is obvious from the numbers that the pandemic has exposed our fragile economy. That is why we are seeing such large rises in unemployment. JobKeeper is starting to come off. The JobSeeker payment will start to be withdrawn from the economy. That will have a massive impact on consumer confidence and have a massive impact on the multiplier effect of a dollar spent in our economy.

While we are optimistic about the future of Tasmania, we have to be realistic about the economic circumstances we find ourselves in. It is all very good for the Government to talk about cautious optimism and pick some of the data that fits that narrative, but the harsh reality is that we have not seen the worst of this economic crisis by a long shot.

Once JobKeeper is fully removed from the labour market in March, and arguably its distortion of the economy, and once a range of insolvency laws revert to the normal state of play, I am frightened that we will see many Tasmanian businesses fall over, we will see many businesses make the decision that they cannot survive or cannot trade through. Many businesses have been working on the basis that they have been provided support with JobKeeper and they have had some holidays with rental and other forms of payment, and there

have been short-term concessions rolled out in the economy. Unless those economic support measures are continued, we will hit a wall.

We saw this, and I lived through it, when the stimulus package after the GFC came off. We saw the real impacts of that on the Tasmanian community once infrastructure and various forms of national and local stimulus were withdrawn from the economy.

We support initiatives such as this to assist people in getting back to work. It is not only about the numbers of apprenticeships and traineeships that we identify, it is about rebuilding TAFE from the ground up. That is why we will invest in our alternative budget, in our fully-costed Labor jobs plan, \$22.5 million over four years to expand the teaching workforce and improve regional delivery and align with training industry needs. A further \$40 million will be spent providing free TAFE training in areas of critical skill shortages. We will employ 80 new teachers and we will work with them so they can spend some time in industry on those innovative secondments so that they can maintain their skills and maintain their contemporary knowledge of the needs of that industry. We are investing in our teaching workforce in TAFE to rebuild it.

We have heard in so many forums in the industry advisory councils we have established that the TAFE system, while they have tremendous support for it, is struggling to meet the demands and needs of business today. You can announce as many apprenticeships as you want but if we do not have a training system that supports high quality training and supports delivery, not only in the big population centres but in regional Tasmania, to be as effective and responsive as possible then there is a lot of money wasted. There is an opportunity lost and an opportunity cost for young Tasmanians.

We know that there is a range of state and federal initiatives in the training sector in apprenticeships and training both at TAFE and in the private sector. We know a number of groups in our community have been impacted. That is why we have announced 500 adult apprenticeship traineeships for workers over 35, to equalise the cost. Over a four-year apprenticeship or traineeship on average there is anywhere between a \$22 000 and \$40 000 price differential for an adult apprentice compared to a junior apprentice.

It is an investment in 500 older workers to get a second chance at a career, unemployed workers getting access to a level of support so they have a fair chance in an interview process with an employer, so they can get back into the workforce and reskill. It is not just about finding one section of the workforce and providing a benefit to them, it is about looking at the full spectrum of workers being able to train and get access to that form of training.

Our job-creating plan will provide support to those workers. You think the Government should adopt it. There is an election in March 2022. There are a lot of challenges facing Tasmanian workers in the next six to nine to 12 months. They cannot wait for a change of government. They cannot wait for an election-style budget. We believe that the Premier and Treasurer should reconsider his approach to job creation because the Budget locks in 8.5 per cent unemployment. With the statistics and the data that came out today, there is no doubt that people in Treasury are revising that figure upwards. If you hit 8.2 per cent and there is no major infrastructure investment, or major program that gets jobs out between now and Christmas, that is going to sky rocket. That is a tragedy for Tasmanians.

Behind every statistic is a Tasmanian who has lost their job. That is a tragedy. As the IMF has advised, as economists across the globe have advised, you need to use your balance sheet to invest. Use your balance sheet now, take on borrowings to invest in your economy now to save as many jobs as you can. We have only seen the estimate for the next two years because the Premier will not share the estimates and the underlying economic forecast for the third and fourth year of the Budget. We know that they should use the balance sheet now to try to drive unemployment down and employment up.

We are very concerned about the Government's ability to get the infrastructure projects out the door. When you look at the agency projects and the infrastructure, many of them are reannouncements. More than half are delayed. If you add up the combined delays across all of those close to 100 projects, it is close to 90 years of combined delays. In the short term there is a crisis. I have seen it very clearly, being in government towards the end of the global financial crisis. Unless you are in there and unless you are making really hard action and incisive interventions in the economy, it quite easily spirals out of control and it is harder to get back because you lose confidence, you lose hope, people stop investing and that will be a shockwave through the economy.

In summation, we support this bill. There is absolute bipartisan support for good measures and we think this will go some way to assisting young workers getting access to a traineeship or apprenticeship. I look forward to seeing more focus on the work of the Premier's Economic and Social Recovery Advisory Council and seeing other recommendations being acted on as quickly as initiatives such as this, because our economy needs it and our community needs it.

Cynically, some people have said that the budget in May/June of next year will be the election budget. That is too late for many Tasmanians because they will be thrown on the unemployment scrapheap and that will be a tragedy.

[2.51 p.m.]

Ms O'CONNOR (Clark - Leader of the Greens) - Minister, you have tripartisan support on this Payroll Tax Rebate (Apprentices, Trainees and Youth Employees) Amendment Bill. We recognise that it is a response to the 64 major recommendations that came from the Premier's Economic and Social Recovery Advisory Council, and that the effect of this bill is to extend the payroll tax rebate as it relates to youth employees for 18 months from the end of this year to the middle of June 2022, extend the payroll tax rebate as it relates to apprentices and trainees for 12 months from 30 July 2021 to 30 June 2022, and expand the payroll tax rebate scheme as it relates to apprentices and trainees to all industries from 1 January 2021 to 30 June 2022.

These are necessary measures in a time of pandemic and economic contraction and deepening social costs as a result of those two factors. Certainly, everything we can do to retain young people in the workforce, to ensure there are more jobs available for young people, and to make sure that we have the apprentices and trainees with the skills we need for effective COVID-19 recovery is extremely important and necessary. This is necessary legislation.

We would argue, though, that this is a short-term approach to youth unemployment. We know that, disproportionately, young Tasmanians were dealt an absolute body blow as a consequence of the pandemic. Many young Tasmanians were coupling their studies at TAFE

or university with part-time work in the hospitality sector particularly, but also in tourism-related businesses, and many young people have lost their jobs.

At the moment we have this large, untapped, young, work-ready generation who are disproportionately impacted by the pandemic. The parliament needs to do everything it can to harness the skills of those young people but, importantly, give them some hope for career pathways in the future, the capacity to have meaningful work, to be able to find a home, or to buy a home. These concerns should be primary for this parliament and we need to recognise how disproportionately and unfairly young Tasmanians have been affected by the pandemic.

It has not come up in conversation much in parliament today, but it is necessary to remind ourselves that young people are also experiencing deep climate anxiety. On all these levels our children and grandchildren are experiencing structural disadvantage and genuine fear about the future and the capacity of governments and parliaments to take meaningful action on climate change. They were already worrying before COVID-19 about how they were going to afford to go to university and carry a HECS debt, or afford to go to TAFE, which is still too expensive for many. Many of them have given up on ever owning their own home. The sense of anxiety about the state of the planet is deep.

We very much support the Government's moves in the mental health and wellbeing space to increase resourcing into adolescent mental health. This is long overdue. It has been a substantial area of unmet need in Tasmania and young people in the mental health system are being neglected, cast off. We have to do better by them and this suite of changes we are debating today is one step in the right direction.

We are going to need to take some substantive structural actions in order to make sure that there are enduring benefits to young people as we make our recovery from COVID-19 and tackle climate change. These are the twin crises that the Tasmanian Budget should have dealt with in an integrated way and which the Tasmanian Greens' alternative budget does. If you want to make those transformational changes to your society that bring down emissions, repair damaged landscapes and make sure that we are heavily invested in renewables so that to the greatest extent possible Tasmanians own their own power, then you need to, if you are being strategic, have twin courses of action where you are investing in COVID-19 recovery. That is social and economic repair, and at the same time you are investing in climate action, which is environmental repair that has substantial social and economic benefit. We would have liked to have seen much more of that emphasis and acknowledgement of the reality in this year's state Budget.

Every state budget is about the values of the government of the day. Every state budget is about choices. In Australia it is because of the choices of successive governments that we have widening and deepening social and economic inequality. It is not a glitch in the system. It is a feature of the system by design, and it has also been because of government choices that we are regarded globally as an absolute laggard on climate action, something of which we should all be ashamed.

In our alternative budget we have a suite of measures that we believe would help to generate jobs in Tasmania while tackling COVID-19 and climate, but importantly make sure that young people have an employment pathway and are gathering the skills they and this island will need in the future. Because we made choices in our alternative budget to invest in young people, we have allocated \$240 million across the forward Estimates for a youth jobs guarantee.

A genuine jobs guarantee, which guarantees meaningful work to people, would have to be funded at the federal level. It is not something that state budgets can bear, but it is important that we test this concept because the time is coming when governments are going to have to start thoroughly looking at some of their assumptions about the labour force. They are going to need to acknowledge that something has to give, because we have far more jobseekers in the country at the moment than we have jobs available.

Across most sectors there is an increasing level of automation, so people are already being shut out of jobs by the system and that will only accelerate. We know, for example, that for all the talk from both the Liberal and Labor parties about the jobs in the industrial fish farming industry, increasingly fish farming companies are investing in automation in order to bring down the costs of labour and increase their profits.

Governments are going to need to think about employment differently and they will need to understand that this is where government can play a role. Just as it was following the Great Depression in America when there was the New Deal, which recognised that government has a role in providing meaningful employment to people that delivers huge social and economic benefits, we are going to need in this country some evolved government, hopefully not too far in the future, that will recognise the need for a green new deal and a jobs guarantee. These are structural reforms which we believe will come.

Were you snickering, Mr Tucker?

Mr Tucker - I did not snicker.

Ms O'CONNOR - Okay. I will give you the benefit of the doubt.

Mr O'Byrne - He may have been giggling internally.

Ms O'CONNOR - Maybe he is giggling internally, as we all do each question time.

I take up what Mr O'Byrne said about a casualised workforce and it is very interesting when you have a look at what has happened with the transmission of COVID-19 across the world and how outbreaks have started. In Ireland, the United States, United Kingdom, Victoria and South Australia it was a casualised workforce that led to the spread of COVID-19 into the community, because we restrict people's choices when labour is so precarious and they have no job security. How can we blame someone who is working in one aged care facility in order to just pay the rent but has a second job as a carer in order to pay for groceries and other bills?

That is the system that unchecked capitalism and rampant deregulation of the labour market has created. Rampant capitalism has created the circumstances where, because of the workforce structures that capitalism likes - and that is precarious workforce conditions, casualised labour - we have seen people die. Capitalism and massive deregulation of the labour market has led to deaths. You cannot argue with that; that is what has happened right across all of the western world and those countries that I talked about. We need a better way. We need to do this better. We need to look after workers better. We need to start properly investing in people. We need to have an economy that works for people and the planet because at the moment it is totally the other way around. You have an economic structure that is degrading

the quality of life of people at the same time as it is gouging the wealth and the ecosystems out of the planet, so we have to do so much better.

Our alternative budget also recognises that the costs of studying at TasTAFE can be prohibitive for some people. We made a choice in our alternative budget to invest in education, skills and training. We think it is possible for government to provide free TAFE for about \$11 million a year. That is small change relative to the benefit that it would bring.

We also recognise that access to transport can be a huge inhibitor for people to access education, training, employment, and life opportunities out there. We would fund free public transport. Again, it is a choice that governments make.

We recognise that the investment in housing for this Government is significant which, for the first five years of its existence, underinvested in the increasing supply of social and affordable housing.

It is hard to argue against the notion that rather than investing so much of the State Budget in roads and bridges, if you pivoted a bit more around into social and affordable housing, you could double the number of houses that the Government wants to build. What do we have - a \$300 million housing budget - I think it is for 1000 new affordable homes. Twice that much, 2000 homes for Tasmanians who need them. As we know from the information that came to the parliamentary inquiry on housing availability and affordability, we are about 11 500 homes short of the housing that is needed in Tasmania.

I have had the opportunity now to have a look at Labor's photo album that they presented the day before for their Budget reply and the first thing I will say is, 'Good on you for having a go'.

Mr O'Byrne - Damned with faint praise.

Ms O'CONNOR - No, good on you for having a go. I would note though a couple of things for anyone who wants to know how fundamentally humble the Greens are. We have one photo in our alternative budget. It is not of Dr Woodruff or me. It is a picture of farmlands in central Tasmania. Labor's photo album has 21 photos of Rebecca White, in 42 pages. A lot of pictures, not a lot of leadership in this document but at least you had a go.

I did want to ask some questions and it is a shame that I do not get to ask you questions at this point in my political career, but I -

Mr O'Byrne - This is exhibit A. It proves that we do not talk, so there it is.

Mr Street - I like page 40, if you get to that.

Members interjecting.

Madam SPEAKER - Order.

Ms O'CONNOR - Madam Speaker, what I was really interested to hear in the Opposition's reply was mention of the word 'climate'. It was quite heartening really and we

had the climate mentioned even in this year's Liberal State Budget so at least parliament is catching up with the science to some extent.

Labor is talking about funding a climate action workforce which would be fantastic, but I cannot get my head around the numbers. It is an investment over four years of \$15 million which we are told will create 200 jobs but the way it rolls out is that it is \$3 million in the first year, \$4 million in each of the out years. I do not know if Labor would be prepared to pay people as little as \$25 000 a year. If they were, they might be able to employ 120 people but if you were paying people a reasonable but close to minimum wage of say \$50 000, Labor might be able to employ 60 people.

It is positive to see Labor thinking about a capacity that could be harnessed in our community to tackle the biggest challenge that this state faces, but the numbers are rubbery. It is not possible to only invest \$15 million and employ 200 people. It does not add up unless you want to pay people something close to unemployment benefits. That is partly Labor's plan but even when you do that, you do not get to 200 people.

Mr Street, I feel like I am walking into a trap here, but what happens on page 40?

Mr Street - I like the asterisks next to the expense's column on page 40 that basically says, we accept all of the Liberal's budget.

Ms O'CONNOR - Oh, 'unless otherwise indicated, Labor will continue existing government programs'.

Mr Street - Exactly.

Ms O'CONNOR - Well, that was the safe path to take.

Mr Street - It saves hours of work, Ms O'Connor.

Ms O'CONNOR - That is right, but having made a modestly courageous effort to prepare a photo album alternative budget, it was politically, probably the only way they could go, but it is a bit disappointing. More than anything, I am disappointed by all those pictures. It is not about our faces; it is about our values and it is about the ideas that we bring into this place.

Before I sit down, I will talk about people at the other end of the spectrum. We are debating legislation today that will extend payroll tax exemptions for young employees, apprentices and trainees and that is an excellent initiative but we cannot let ourselves forget - and we are not forgetting - that out there in the community right now, there are people who have been left behind. They were left behind before COVID-19 and they are still being left behind.

We have tried to bring in amendments to this place to the Police Offences Act to remove the criminal sanction that is applied to begging. We brought legislation into this place last year and then we were reassured by the then minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Management that legislation would be brought in and it would be Government legislation. Some months later an amendment bill appears to decriminalise begging. Excellent. Again, I hope some members recognise the value of having the Greens in this place because we push the envelope for all the right reasons and while we might not win for people on the day, we often end up

winning for people and that amendment bill was a win for some of our most disadvantaged, down-on-their-luck Tasmanians.

The House passed the begging bill many months ago; I do not have the exact date but the House of Assembly passed the bill. It had in it an extra provision, which we argued was unnecessary, around police move-on powers. We said it was not necessary, argued strongly against it, and were ignored by Government. The bill went upstairs and the MLCs recognised that that extra provision was unnecessary. Basically, we know it was because the Government did not want to bring in a bill that was identical to the Greens. They had to just put something extra in it so it was not the Greens bill. However, you want to make yourself feel better, that is fine, but the Legislative Council saw straight through it too. They removed that extra clause and on 24 September just gone the bill went through Committee amended, so it went through the second reading and the Committee stage. The Government allowed it to sit at the bottom of their Order of Business for the best part of six weeks. Then it was brought forward for the third reading in the Legislative Council on 11 November and we now have the amended bill, which is exactly the legislation that the Greens brought in to decriminalise begging.

I understand that today we are going to knock off early potentially after we do the payroll tax legislation, so relatively soon. We have ample time to deal with the amended police offences bill to decriminalise begging. It would really truly be a 20-minute debate. There is ample time, but the Government has made a decision not to bring that amendment bill on. It let it languish upstairs for as long as it could get away with it, it arrives down here and we are going to knock off early today and the consequence of that is that the bill will not pass parliament this year.

The bigger consequence of that is that it means through the entire summer until we return in March next year it will be possible for police to arrest someone because they are so poor they are asking for money. The penalty for that is either a fine that a homeless person could not possibly pay or a stint in Risdon. That is what this Government is prepared to allow to happen because they are so pig-headed. It is pig-headedness not to let that bill go through because it would make Tasmania just a little bit fairer and a little bit kinder. Surely that is something we all want to be part of.

The Greens have no capacity to control government business for the day any more than what is provided for, but it is shameful because a decision has been made to allow that legislation which simply needs to be ticked off in here to sit on the bottom of the Notice Paper now until the Government feels that it can slip it through quietly sometime next year.

It is shameful. Seriously, if you ever wanted an example of how the decisions we do or do not make in this place impact on the lives of people, think about that bill and a choice that has been made by this Government to let those amendments sit for three or four months, which means beggars, poor people, people who are reduced to asking for money, face the risk of a fine they cannot pay, an arrest or time in jail. That is utterly shameful. What we demonstrated during the worst of the COVID-19 period is that we are capable of making choices not to leave people behind, but a choice has been made to leave a small cohort of desperate and poor people behind this summer.

We support this legislation, of course we do. We want to see more young people in work. We want to see this island recover from COVID and be stronger, but it is deeply disappointing that a decision has been made by government to leave one group of people completely behind

while it engages in rampant self-promotion about this Budget. A choice has been made and it is a shameful choice.

[3.16 p.m.]

Ms OGILVIE (Clark) - Mr Deputy Speaker, I will be supporting this bill as well; it is a sensible proposal. I am also interested in some of the elements of the alternative budget. I, of course, have not prepared an alternative budget. I have a very small team. The way we go forward with things is to propose ideas, to seek to negotiate outcomes on those ideas, and try to land some wins. Some of the work around the digital work we are seeing today has been very fruitful. We have adopted a slightly different model. I know how hard it is to do things from opposition, so I congratulate both the Greens and Labor for their efforts.

I wanted to raise today, because we are on the issue of tax, the question of stamp duty reform. I know there has been some work done both in New South Wales and Victoria on this issue. In New South Wales the government brought down their 2020-21 budget earlier in the week. One of their innovative proposals they are seeking feedback on are changes and possible future elimination of stamp duty on house and building purchases, and proposing an alternative model, which they say could be replaced over time by an annual property tax as suggested by David Thodey, who I think was heavily engaged in that conversation in New South Wales in his report which was presented earlier this year. I have had a chance to speak with him on that issue and I know that there are other economists around town who believe there might be a fairer way to do things.

I believe the proposal looks as though buyers could pay the stamp duty or opt into a new annual tax. That would help people's cash-flow situation as well, and I like the idea of it being an opt-in or opt-out idea. I wonder whether that is something that the Department of Treasury and Finance might ask PESRAC to look into and maybe crunch some numbers. The hope would be perhaps to provide a new avenue for people to afford to buy their first home.

There are barriers with those on-costs. It is really dead money when you are a purchaser. It is very important money for the state obviously but perhaps we can see if we can look at that in a different way. I know the Victorian government is currently considering whether they should follow that lead of New South Wales and move to a new system which gives purchasers the option of opting in or out. There is a lot of speculation on that at the moment. Stamp duty is a huge revenue driver for the state Government so we need to act very carefully on this.

As a parent I am very aware of the fact that it is going to be incredibly difficult for our kids to get into their own homes. Life and the landscape of home ownership has changed dramatically, even since the 1980s when I was moving through this phase of my life. Luckily for me, I was able to do my first university degree before HECS came in, and what a nice thing that was because I could do a wonderful Arts degree in classics, history, philosophy and politics at Melbourne University quite some time ago now, and really it was catered for by the Australian Government. I feel quite sad for kids nowadays because the university side of things, the Arts degree, is a really important connector to our culture and our history. It is important that people are allowed to explore ideas and philosophy and not be penalised in a sense, that they have not done a professional qualification in the sense of some of the other degrees. I stand up for the arts today, for history and learning. I spend a lot of time talking about science and technology and law but the arts is very important as well.

The one thing I wanted to ask in this and I was taken with the idea of the innovation fund, which is a very good idea, but I was confused about Labor's jobs and the innovation fund. What are the jobs coming out of that fund, or how will they be delivered? These jobs that are proposed in here; are they people who are going to run the fund, board members, those sorts of things, or is it some other model whereby jobs are sparked elsewhere by granting money to maybe start-ups?

Mr O'Byrne - Let us do a bit of research on the jobs investment fund that we administered when we were in government last.

Ms OGILVIE - Right. So you have got a model there?

Mr O'Byrne - This is a different bill. If you have these questions you can talk to me but not on the floor of parliament.

Ms OGILVIE - We were going to write to you but I thought it would be easier if I raised it here. I am very interested in that and very supportive of it, but interested in how those job figures are connected. As I said, I have not produced an alternative budget so I do not intend to be critical. I am trying to suggest that that was one good idea that came out of that. I will leave it that. Thank you very much.

I will say on the bill that is coming down from upstairs, my understanding is there is a technical legal problem with the move-on power and that is what needs to be discussed. I will reserve my judgment on that.

[3.22 p.m.]

Mr FERGUSON (Bass - Minister for Finance) - Mr Deputy Speaker, from the outset, I would really like to say - I feel like I have said this a few times this year and I hope I can say it next year - I appreciate everybody's positive support and the way that people express that in this debate. All the previous contributors who have discussed the initiatives in this bill, it is really great. The Tasmanian people do not get to see enough of this, I have to say, when the parliament agrees on things. The press for all its many wonderful attributes, often does not tell Tasmanians about the times that we agree on things. Those of us who have been around for a while will know that is actually more often the case than not.

Ms O'Connor - That is true. We almost like each other most of the time.

Mr FERGUSON - When the 11 o'clock ticks things can change. I appreciate that. The Government appreciates the support of the Opposition and the Greens and Independent member because this is important. The Tasmanian people, particularly those families who are struggling with work and who are hoping for something better for their son or daughter, this is the kind of thing that the Government is bringing into the House, being supported by other members will achieve a help towards their employment goals.

By the way, when I was first health minister - it now seems like an eternity ago - but I sat down with Roscoe Taylor who was the then director of Public Health and he said something which really resonated with me and I have never forgotten it. It was not what I expected him to say. He actually said to me, the number one factor towards a person's health is in fact employment. It really hit me very, very - wow. It was very impactful.

Ms Butler - You mean you did not know that until he told you that? Sorry, but really, that is offensive.

Mr FERGUSON - I think we know it to be true but when you are hearing it from the Director of Public Health you are expecting someone like that to say something scientific.

Ms O'Connor - Diet, genetics.

Mr FERGUSON - Thank you, Ms O'Connor. You are being far more reasonable. You are expecting something about vaccines. You are expecting something about new nutrition as a child, you are expecting something about whether you were breastfed, or whether you went full term, your family dynamics, your environment, even education, you might have thought. But the number one was employment; whether a person had a job.

Ms O'Connor - Because people want to live with purpose and they do not want to live in poverty. They want to be able to have choices.

Mr FERGUSON - I totally agree and that is a vital point. The social safety net of employment is incalculable. It has been a blessing for me, it has been a blessing in my family. No doubt others here would relate to the same. Where we have seen intergenerational unemployment naturally we see a huge loss in human potential; the loss of a person being able to achieve their true purpose or their true potential in life. Where we can intervene, where we can have a stronger economy, where we can businesses that feel confident to be able to give that person a start, that can make a material difference to the expected outcomes of a life in a very meaningful way.

I say that very deliberately because I like bringing purpose into these debates so that we can be reminded that this is not just another ordinary six-page bill. This is actually something that will bring life and health to our economy and happiness to people's lives. It is our contribution; it is what the Tasmanian public look to us to achieve.

I say that very deliberately and it has been a shocker of a year. None of us went into this year thinking that we would have gone through the range of experiences, feelings and traumas that we have. As MPs, we have been very cocooned and cushioned from that in our own personal lives. Whenever we have left this place and gone back into our electorates and spent long hours with families and businesses, including those who were supportive of what the Government and what the parliament was doing and those who were very angry about, 'How dare you close our borders, how dare you tell us we cannot operate. I have just lost this, it has just cost me that', the reality has been, on the ground in the Tasmanian community, that we have confronted those situations and it has been very sad and it has very testing. I know for myself and I think all of us in different ways have probably played a pastoral or a friendly role to people in trying to help them get through those difficult times when not everybody is in the same place. Not everybody is able to draw on the sorts of resources like family and friends and even people who are able to support them financially through those difficult times. The importance of a job is not lost on this Government.

To Mr O'Byrne's point, I can only agree with him when he emphasised in a political way, the value of training as an enabler for that employment is not lost on the Government either.

Ms O'Connor - Nor on us, just to be clear.

Mr FERGUSON - Indeed. They are good reminders for us to be having in this debate because it is part of a continuum and the right thing to do is to open up these training opportunities. The right thing to do is to provide businesses with, not just incentives to get them to do something but to provide that adjustment factor that might be, for them, the gap that they face in being able to give that person a start. Of course, plus the TAFE initiatives, the private RTO initiatives, the partnership that we have with the federal government around JobTrainer.

While I will not go into it in any kind of detail, I do not need to, but the JobMaker program is vital in providing incentives to employers to give younger people a start. I spoke yesterday in my Budget response and I heard Ms O'Connor today talking about the importance of young people through this because I do agree that they have paid a particularly heavy price as a generation. It is entirely reasonable for us to have incentives that are about helping to promote their prospects coming through this. Many others of us in my generation of the children of the 1970s and perhaps my parent's generation, the baby boomer generation, are set up. The younger generation is not set up, particularly those who have been in casual employment, people like my kids, your kids who have part-time jobs and maybe also working through their studies. We all know that they do look with some wonder and that is, 'When I get to graduate I wonder what my prospects will be at that point?'.

By bringing in these initiatives, it shows the priorities of the Government. Ms O'Connor reflected on that quite a lot. That is what our priority is and I do not feel the need to respond to all the other comments that have been made that are perhaps not directly relevant to the bill.

I only want to say that in respect of the unemployment statistics that continue to come through, the Government understands it has been a very challenging year for many Tasmanians. We remain completely focused on doing everything we can, first of all to look after our state government employees, which we have done, who are a subset of total, but then to look to the private sector as by far the largest employer in the state, to give them increased confidence that they can go forward, hang onto the staff that might be on the margins of employment and for those that are able, to take on someone new or to increase the hours of their staff who are looking for more work. That is precisely what our Budget does.

Our budget documentation has no photographs, not even one on the cover. We have had an interesting discussion about photos. The Budget, in all of its black-and-white glory, is all about the most comprehensive range of initiatives the state has ever seen to promote employment and one of the primary mechanisms for that is our infrastructure program, not only in my portfolio but right across the board.

Delivery of infrastructure has been, interestingly, commented on quite a lot lately and we are very pleased with the delivery of infrastructure that we have achieved in six years. On a year average basis, it is over \$100 million more than the previous government each and every year. In 2018-19, just in roads and bridges, the state roads program, the Government achieved a 91 per cent delivery. In 2019-20, which includes three or four solid months of coronavirus, we achieved an 86 per cent delivery rate and historically they are very positive.

If you look ahead at the size of the infrastructure budget increasing, to get those kinds of delivery rates in the future you are looking at more than \$400 million worth of delivery just in the state roads program alone, which is phenomenal and by any historical measure quite a breathtaking outcome.

I take on board the other comments that have been made in relation to climate, in relation to young people and in relation to stamp duty. We are aware of what New South Wales are looking to do there. It is not something we are looking at doing but it is always interesting to see what tax reform opportunities other states are taking up.

This bill is all about jobs, training and providing apprenticeships and trainee pathways for young people, but it is also - and nobody has mentioned it - about adult apprenticeships and adult trainees. They are covered in this legislation: fFor people of our age group who have come through, done a career at some time and may even be in a business which is offering apprenticeships and they like what you are doing so much, they like your character, they like your work ethic, they might offer you an apprenticeship. Adult apprentices are more expensive so this is a further way that we can be providing some support in that area.

I thank members for their contributions to this debate and again commend the bill to the House.

Bill read the second time.

Bill read the third time.

ADJOURNMENT

[3.34 p.m.]

Ms ARCHER (Clark - Attorney-General) - Mr Deputy Speaker, I move -

That the House do now adjourn.

Allison Shand - Tribute

[3.34 p.m.]

Ms ARCHER (Clark - Attorney-General) - Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise this afternoon with great sadness to pay my and the Government's deep respects to the family, friends and colleagues of Allison Shand, who tragically passed away this week. Allison was a beloved member of staff in the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions where she held the very senior position of Crown Counsel.

She commenced with the DPP in 2006 following completion of her Bachelor of Laws and Bachelor of Arts degrees at the University of Tasmania and then being admitted and enrolled as a practitioner in the Supreme Court of Tasmania and no doubt the Federal and Family and High Courts of Australia as well.

Soon after starting with the DPP it became apparent that she was an incredibly talented lawyer, both technically and for her sound mind and fair judgment. She was liked and highly regarded by members of the Bench and Defence Counsel, as well as being loved by her colleagues in the DPP and Department of Justice more broadly.

I am told that she had a mischievous sense of humour, loved animals, was brilliant, extremely kind, quick-witted and generously gave her time to help and mentor others.

Allison was also a calming and effective communicator. Her colleagues tell the story that whenever dealing with a distressed, anxious or reluctant client on the phone, for example - and I am sure that probably happened on many occasions - or when they were struggling to get people to come in for a meeting, it was Allison they would go to who would positively engage with people, calm them and resolve the situation.

I think of particular importance is the fact that having worked on many cases in her 14 years at the DPP, she changed the lives of countless victims and vulnerable Tasmanians through her work. Not many can say that we individually made such a difference to the lives of so many.

I know her passing has devastated her family, friends and colleagues and left a hole in their lives that will never be filled. She made an invaluable contribution to this state and to the Tasmanian community and I would like to particularly say thank you in that regard.

I also take this opportunity to add my voice to the many who have paid tribute to Allison this week and express my sincere condolences to her family, friends and colleagues for this enormous loss. My thoughts and the thoughts of the Government, and no doubt members in this House as well, are with them at this very difficult and sad time.

Members - Hear, hear.

Allison Shand - Tribute Queenborough Oval - Upgrades to Facilities

[3.37 p.m.]

Ms OGILVIE (Clark) - Mr Deputy Speaker, I also share those thoughts in relation to Allison. I know that people are really beside themselves with sadness and grief. She was an extremely well-loved member of the profession. I concur with the Attorney-General and thank her for saying all of that so that we all did not have to get upset; it is a very upsetting situation.

I rise to put on the record something I wanted to speak about this week in relation to the upgrade of Queenborough Oval and its facilities, which have been in the state of abeyance for some time, perhaps even since the 1970s. It is a very difficult situation there, particularly for young girls, because there are no facilities for girls and women there. Girls can be quite shy when it comes to that particular age bracket and they are coming across from school and getting changed or using facilities. Even places to use for feminine hygiene products do not exist. It is a very unfortunate and difficult situation and it is really quite urgent that this is fixed.

Perhaps part of the reason it has not been addressed yet is because it is in a postcode that is considered to have enough assets to be able to do things themselves, but this is a community sports ground on which others play. When the girls' football team comes over from Claremont they need to use those facilities as well. Kids from the local schools - Taroona and Kingston and wherever they come from to play - need to use those facilities. I do not think I have seen facilities as bad as the ones at Queenborough.

The House will recall that I have done quite a lot of work in football land on this issue. We have some work going on at New Norfolk, Sorell, Claremont, Hobart, North Hobart and Tarooma but we have glossed over this part. The football, cricket and soccer grounds now have more people than ever playing these games, which is fantastic. The Hutchins Old Boys club is based there as well. They are looking like they will have a women's team soon as well, which will be very interesting. Perhaps the Attorney-General might play for Hutchins Old Boys. I do not know what she is thinking there. She is shaking her head but I will get her on the ground.

Ms Archer - I support all teams.

Ms OGILVIE - She supports all teams. I am a netballer so I get out of this. I have suggested they build some netball courts there as well.

It is used by a wide range of people all year round for both men's and women's AFL cricket and school sports. The facilities at Queenborough Oval are, to put it bluntly, atrocious. It is a site where facilities have been neglected for many years. I am a big fan of women's football and women everywhere, and the girls there do not even have a place to put their sanitary products. It is really disgraceful and not acceptable. The Minister for Sport and Recreation has shown a great deal of interest in this and I am grateful for that. I will be sitting down with her soon to talk it through.

I will wrap up on that but want the girls and boys who play there, and those who want to get onboard to play those sports there, to know that we will stand up for them and get that oval fixed.

The House adjourned at 3.41 p.m.