



PARLIAMENT OF TASMANIA

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

REPORT OF DEBATES

Wednesday 14 October 2020

REVISED EDITION

Wednesday 14 October 2020

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

QUESTIONS

Brahminy Foundation Program

Ms WHITE question to PREMIER, Mr GUTWEIN referred to MINISTER for HUMAN SERVICES, Mr JAENSCH

[10.02 a.m.]

Yesterday you repeatedly assured this parliament that children in the Brahminy program were safe. You said, and I quote -

I understand there is positive progress being made and these young people are turning their lives around.

A shocking video has emerged of one of the Tasmanian children at Brahminy allegedly stealing a vehicle and speeding through a community area at 100 kilometres an hour. In the video the youth says, and I quote -

My family have been messaging me lately and they have been saying I have not changed. Well to be honest maybe I haven't.

This child was holding a phone and filming themselves to be broadcast on Facebook, clearly putting themselves and others at risk. This video is believed to have been filmed in September this year.

How can you claim that children in the program are safe and well and making good progress, when there is clear video evidence that is a lie? Why have you not acted immediately and decisively to bring these children home?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the Leader of the Opposition for her question.

I understand the minister spoke with the Leader of the Opposition this morning, and with the Leader of the Greens, and has offered a briefing later today.

As I said yesterday, my foremost concern is the welfare of those children who are in the program. I am happy to defer, and to refer this question to the minister for a more detailed answer. I do not want to engage in political debate today on these matters. However, the minister can provide more detail if that suits the House.

Mr O'BYRNE - Point of order, Madam Speaker, relating to the ability to answer questions and defer. The Premier took the question and he has answered it. It is up to the minister of the time or the Premier or the person being asked the question to immediately defer,

if the question is not within the portfolio area. The question was to the Premier. He took it, he answered it. He did defer in his answer to the minister -

Madam SPEAKER - I understand your situation. Two conditions can apply for a minister, including the Premier, to redirect a question. The first is that the minister to whom the question is directed has the responsibility for that subject matter of the question, which in this case is Mr Jaensch. The second condition was that the minister to whom the question was first directed has not commenced a substantive answer to that question.

The issue is whether you classify the Premier's answer as substantive. I do not believe so. If you would like an answer to the question you can have an answer from the minister, or we can move on to the next question.

Which would you prefer?

Ms White - The Premier deferred the question.

Madam SPEAKER - Please, Mr Jaensch.

Mr JAENSCH - I thank the Leader of the Opposition for her question and the Premier for his reference to me.

The Government is aware of the video published to Facebook, which has been presented by some media. Importantly, I am advised the young person involved did not steal the car. It was more of a joy ride than car stealing or absconding. I understand the vehicle was from the Many Colours 1 Direction - MC1D - program. The young person was in contact with staff at MC1D while they were in the car. They parked the car, locked it, and contacted staff; and police then assisted in reuniting the young person with MC1D staff.

Ms White - Were they authorised to use the car?

Madam SPEAKER - Order, Leader of the Opposition.

Ms White - Were there any charges?

Mr JAENSCH - No charges are being laid. The young person has been apologetic and has taken responsibility for their behaviour. This behaviour is not okay. It is not allowed. It is not condoned.

Opposition members interjecting.

Madam SPEAKER - Order.

Mr JAENSCH - For children with traumatic backgrounds, and complex deep behavioural problems to manage and overcome, unfortunately this behaviour is not uncommon or unexpected. It is why some of these kids are with a program that is set up to help them to manage their behaviour, know their boundaries and take responsibility for their actions.

These are kids with very severe behavioural challenges, from their very traumatic young lives. That is why we need to find the right therapeutic programs and environments for them to be cared for and treated in.

My advice consistently, as late as last night, from senior staff in my department visiting those children on the ground is that that environment is safe for them; they are doing well. They will continue to have challenges. The aim of this program is to assist them to manage their behaviours so that as they become adults and as they return to Tasmania and more independent living, they have greater control over their behaviour and their ability to operate in society.

Opposition members interjecting.

Mr JAENSCH - That is what this is - it is a therapeutic program. It is not a wilderness camp. It is not a tough love bootcamp. It is not a detention centre. This is a place where we need to assist kids who have never been given responsibility, who have trusted people who have let them down in the past and who have never been trusted themselves. There will be times when those kids take opportunities and take advantage of those situations. Sometimes that will put them at risk, and sometimes it will put others at risk. Part of their learning how to manage risk and responsibility is to give them opportunities, and help them to learn and understand how to manage those behaviours.

Opposition members interjecting.

Madam SPEAKER - Order.

Mr JAENSCH - If Labor is suggesting that those children should be detained for their own safety they can make those calls.

This is a therapeutic program. All of those children will be returning to Tasmania unless we have evidence to the contrary, that they are unsafe or not making progress, or this program is inappropriate.

Those children will be returning to Tasmania when their therapeutic progress allows. As late as yesterday, I have been advised by my department, speaking directly to each of those six kids, that those kids want to be there and want to stay there and are not ready to come back to Tasmania.

Brahminy Foundation Program

Ms WHITE question to PREMIER, Mr GUTWEIN

[10.10 a.m.]

When did your office become aware of the video that shows shocking footage of a young person in your care, putting themselves and the public at risk, broadcast on Facebook?

Yesterday you said -

I am advised that these young people are safe, they are well and they are making good progress in their placements.

Were you aware of this incident when you made that statement, and do you stand by those words today?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the Leader of the Opposition for that question. I personally became aware yesterday afternoon, after question time, that there was a video. I would need to check when others were aware that video was first known about. I will check with my office and will provide further details to the House.

With regard to this particular matter, I will come back to where I started this morning, before I referred the question to minister Jaensch. I understand that he has spoken with you this morning. These children are in very difficult personal circumstances. You know that is their background. We have people on the ground at the moment in that program, and the feedback we have received is that those children are safe. That was the advice I received yesterday and that was the advice I provided to this House.

I am certain, based on where this parliament is going this morning, that you want to wring every last political drop out of this.

Ms White - We want the children safe.

Madam SPEAKER - Order.

Mr GUTWEIN - I encourage you -

Ms O'BYRNE - Madam Speaker, point of order. I, and every member on this side of the Chamber, take offence at the Premier saying that us asking genuine questions about the wellbeing of a child in the care of the state is in any way a political motivation.

What transpired on that video is an incredibly serious matter and the Premier needs to answer it, not in a political way, and not in a way that accuses us of that. It is worth taking offence to.

Mr GUTWEIN - I note the point of order as raised, but I make the point that these children are able to watch what is occurring in this parliament because of the webstream. They would have knowledge of the public discourse that is occurring regarding their particular circumstances. These are vulnerable kids, and as I indicated yesterday. We have people on the ground in that program at the moment, communicating with the Government and with the minister. I understand they will be providing a briefing to the leaders of the Labor Opposition and the Greens later today, and maybe the Independent member as well. I understand the Speaker might also be briefed on this matter.

This is very serious. Believe me, if I thought the best way to deal with this was to reach in and take those children immediately out of that program, I would do that, but that is not the advice that I am receiving. I will wait until we have received the advice from the people on the ground regarding what is occurring there, and regarding the welfare of those kids.

That is the most important thing. I would urge you not to politicise this issue and to put those children into a state where something happens that none of us in this place would want to occur. I urge you to tread very cautiously. I want to reiterate that if the advice to me, and if I felt that the best thing to do was to reach in and take those children out of that program immediately, I would do that. I caution you in terms of your recklessness, in terms of your

desire to make a political point on this. I urge you not to make this situation more difficult for those children.

Brahminy Foundation Program

Ms O'CONNOR question to PREMIER, Mr GUTWEIN

[10.16 am]

Yesterday in this place you reassured us your Government is looking to get the best outcome for the young people at Brahminy in the Northern Territory and has engaged directly with the participants in the program. You have reassured us of that again today. We have now seen video evidence of at least one young Tasmanian, a long-term participant in the program, on the loose, in a borrowed vehicle, doing more than 100 kilometres an hour on a remote back road. I am sure you will agree that it is heartbreaking viewing.

Do you really believe the program is delivering the best outcomes for these young Tasmanians? Do you really believe the best outcome is almost 3000 kilometres away? Do you believe we cannot do better for them here?

Why will you not step in to bring them home? Do you recognise that rather than banishing these troubled young people to the Northern Territory, far from family and community, there is a compelling need for a Tasmanian-based, appropriately resourced and supported bush therapy program? Will you commit to making that happen as a priority?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the Leader of the Greens for that question. I thank you for asking about this particular matter in a relatively sensitive way.

My advice is that the Government has examined opportunities for the development of a program in the past to deliver similar outcomes to the MC1D program. We have looked at it, as I understand it, and we will continue to do so. This included a request, an ROI back in 2018, which, unfortunately, did not identify any suitable programs amongst a small number of Tasmanian community organisations that made submissions at that time.

I understand that we have continued to engage and work with Aboriginal communities and organisations to scope an On Country residential program delivered in Tasmania by Aboriginal people. We are also open to further discussions with service providers that have expressed interest in presenting service models that may assist the complex situations that these young children are in. I hoped that we could reduce the need to use an external program like MC1D. The Government is looking at what it can do.

I come back to this point - and you asked me about what I genuinely feel about this situation - based on the advice that I have received to date, reaching in and removing those children out of that program immediately is not the right thing to do for those children. If that advice changes, then in a heartbeat I would do that. I have thought long and hard about this situation.

The easy, political thing to do would be for a kneejerk reaction and to bring those kids home. That is the easy thing to do. The difficult thing to do is to ask people in this place to

think about the impact that this public discourse is having on those kids: what it is doing to those kids who are in a therapeutic program at the moment who, on the advice that I have received, are taking steps forward in being able to repair their own lives.

Today you will receive a briefing from people who are on the ground. You will be able to form your own judgment of the steps that have been taken and form your own judgments about the steps that will need to be taken into the future. I urge you to receive that briefing, to take on board that information. First and foremost, I ask everyone in this place to put the kids front and centre in our thinking because that is the most important thing.

I must admit I watched Sky News earlier this morning; I watched ABC24 early this morning and I thought, what impact is that having on these kids? How is that helping their self-worth at the moment?

In terms of where we are at the moment, there is a review under way, it is wide ranging and it is looking at the issues that confront us in terms of this program. There are people on the ground. I ask this parliament and the Leaders and others who will benefit from the briefing today to move forward with the kids front and centre, have that briefing and then make your own judgments about what we think is the best next step.

Social and Economic Support Package

Mr ELLIS question to PREMIER, Mr GUTWEIN

[10.21 a.m.]

Can you update the House on their delivery of the Government's nation leading Social and Economic Support Package and how it is supporting job creation, job security and assisting the Tasmanian community during the coronavirus pandemic? Are you aware of any alternative approaches?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the member for Braddon for his question and for his interest in this matter. We have put in place unprecedented levels of support for our community. Because we entered this pandemic from a position of economic strength with one of the strongest economies in the nation, and our budget had the lowest net debt in the nation, finishing the financial year with net cash and investments which no other state or jurisdiction was in a position to do -

Mr O'Byrne - It is a fair way from where you started.

Mr GUTWEIN - Did you just say it was lower than what we started at?

Mr O'Byrne - No, it is a fair way from where you started.

Mr GUTWEIN - Let me make the point: we have put \$1.1 billion into our community to support them. We will wait with interest for your alternative budget. We will wait with interest to see what you might do.

We have supported hundreds of community organisations and thousands of Tasmanians. We have provided over 18 000 wellbeing calls, 485 referrals through our support partners, the

Red Cross and the Salvation Army. Over 1000 nights through the program were put in place by the Minister for Housing through our new safe spaces in Hobart, Launceston and Burnie. Our emergency food relief partners have provided 13 600-odd food hampers, 138 000 ready-to-eat meals, over 820 000 kilograms of fresh and staple food and 4145 temporary visa holders have received emergency relief grants.

This was nation leading. We were the first state to take that step. Six hundred and seven Tasmanians have been provided with relief from extreme rental hardship, and 311 Tasmanians have received emergency assistance grants. Crucially, we have continued to support small business. Those enterprises and their hardworking staff will drive our economic recovery and create the jobs.

We have provided significant support in terms of waivers and relief on payroll tax, land tax, motor tax, electricity bills, fees, leases and licences and in business support grants as well as zero interest loans. We have provided \$1.6 million to extend existing single or final year Tasmanian arts organisation contracts by an additional year and provided more than half a million dollars to support new organisations. There is a reason. The NAB business survey has found that we have had the best business conditions in the nation for the entire year so far.

Furthermore, we have provided \$12.5 million in our nation-leading Make Yourself At Home travel voucher program. This is expected to generate about \$50 million worth of economic activity. Nearly 4600 vouchers have been submitted for redemption, with almost 2000 already reimbursed, which means that thousands of Tasmanians have already undertaken their travel, putting vibe and stimulus into our tourism sector.

The groundbreaking agreement with Sharp Airlines to operate three weekly services from Hobart to King Island and Flinders Island started last month, and nearly 1500 seats have already been booked.

Already, \$50 million in COVID-19 loans has been provided to more than 350 businesses to help them through. Because of our strong balance sheet, recently the Minister for State Growth announced a further \$60 million in support, and nearly 150 businesses have put their hand up for assistance through that program.

We are delivering our plan to rebuild a stronger Tasmania. Nearly 16 000 Tasmanians are back in work, and that is about 80 per cent of the jobs that were lost at the peak in May. Pleasingly, some 8200 - about 52 per cent - are jobs that women had, who have come back into the workforce. This is particularly pleasing.

Tasmanians are adapting to work in a COVID-19 world. As at 24 August, 1400 Tasmanians have received subsidised training through the \$1.5 million Train Now Fund; 541 small businesses have received digital-ready training; 490 Tasmanians have received up to \$3000 for career advice, reskilling or new licences for their next job; 349 temporary visa holders received \$2000 to keep them connected to their employer.

Madam Speaker, 366 workers have accessed the Rapid Response Skills Matching Service with local opportunities, and 24 more young Tasmanians have been employed as part of our youth payroll tax rebate scheme. Our campaign to encourage Tasmanians to take their pick of our Tassie harvest jobs has seen 28 000 unique page views, and I encourage Tasmanians

to work in our agricultural sector, work with our farms. There is opportunity to be there and Tasmanians should grasp it.

I come back to the point: what does the other side have to offer? We are still waiting for the plan from the shadow treasurer that he said he would put together. He has even given up interjecting when we raise it with him. If that is not a signal of defeat, I do not know what it is. The point is this: the Budget is coming up. The shadow treasurer needs to commit to an alternative budget. If the Greens can put together an alternative Budget, why not Labor? They need to demonstrate to Tasmanians what they stand for - and, importantly, how they will pay for it.

Ms White - Take your seat.

Madam SPEAKER - Excuse me, could we have a bit of respect.

Mr O'Byrne - He will do it tomorrow as well, and we look forward to it.

Mr GUTWEIN - We will continue to do it until the shadow treasurer puts up and explains what their policies are, and importantly, how they will pay for them.

Football Finals - Crowd Limits

Ms OGILVIE question to PREMIER, Mr GUTWEIN

[10.29 a.m.]

Life is short and it has been a tough year, so I want to talk to you about football. It is about the upcoming football finals in Tasmania, and what I see are some double standards being applied. I must declare an interest, as a very proud ex-president of the SFL.

In Western Australia, crowd limits for football is set at 50 per cent capacity, meaning 30 000 can attend an AFL game. In South Australia, the current limit is 15 000. In Queensland, it is 25 per cent of capacity, up to a maximum of 10 000.

In Launceston, 3250 people are to be allowed to the TSL grand final, and even with the relegation of the women's games to the Friday night here in Hobart, we know passionate southern Tasmanians are feeling like they are being treated a little bit unfairly.

We have the Huon coming up for the big game. Will you please undertake to urgently reconsider what I see as the overly restrictive 1000-person limit that you are placing on the SFL Grand Final?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the member for Clark for that question and for her interest in this matter.

This is a very difficult circumstance we are in. It is called a pandemic. I know I do not need to explain to you the challenges we have faced, and our community has faced, and the

fact that we have one of the oldest and most vulnerable populations in the country. The fact is, our decisions and the decisions of Public Health have largely been made through that prism.

As a former footballer myself - and I know others in this Chamber had an interest in football as younger men; not so many women at that time playing - I can understand why people would like to see larger crowds. However, the decisions Public Health make are made to keep people safe, and they have set a limit of 1000, increased from 500.

My understanding is that the TSL Grand Final that will be held at UTAS Stadium falls under the national stadia policy on the basis it has individual seating - and that is 25 per cent of the roughly 13 500 seats there. It is a different proposition for a stadium like that in terms of contact tracking and tracing.

For North Hobart, a trial was conducted that I think allowed for 25 per cent - about 1200 to 1250 people - to attend. That was not as successful as it could have been, and I believe that was a point made by the president of one of the clubs on that day.

This application has been looked at closely by Public Health. I have raised this myself with the Deputy State Controller, and the decision of Public Health is firm. It is unfortunate, but again I must back that position. I have backed the Public Health advice every step of the way, and while I understand it is frustrating for those involved in this issue, the limit that has been set is the limit that will stand.

I hope Tasmanians more broadly can understand the reasons for that. Some very difficult decisions have had to be made right through this, and in the main the Tasmanian community has got on board. I can understand, as I have said, the desire to have a larger crowd at a grand final. Unfortunately, this is a grand final that will be played in a year in which we have had a pandemic, and the circumstances are such that we must put the health and safety of Tasmanians first - and the advice from Public Health is that the limit must remain at 1000.

I would like to find a way. As a member of parliament, as a politician, it gives me no pleasure to deliver a message like that, because at the end of the day I am potentially annoying the other 3000 to 4000 people who might like to attend a game like that.

I did attend the NTFA Grand Final. What was interesting - and I am not sure whether it was the location, or the prospect of snow at Deloraine that was reported on the Friday night - but with the 1000 limit, I think I was the 892nd person through the gate at about 20 minutes to go.

Ms Ogilvie - And the live streaming.

Mr GUTWEIN - They were live streaming, and I am presuming the SFL will live stream this match as well. If they are not, or if they have difficulties with that, then obviously we would look to see what we could do to support them with that live stream. The limit that has been set, is based on Public Health advice. We have accepted Public Health advice right through this, as difficult as it is. Unfortunately, we are in the midst of a pandemic and our first and foremost thought has to be keeping Tasmanians safe.

Brahminy Foundation Program

Ms WHITE question to Mr GUTWEIN

[10.35 a.m.]

The Brahminy program is clearly failing Tasmanian children. Yesterday, you said departmental officials had visited the Brahminy camp in September, the same month a child in the program allegedly stole a vehicle, risking the safety of themselves and members of the public. You said -

There was a direct visit by a Tasmanian Child Safety Manager in September and through regular ongoing contacts with the Child Safety Officers, I am advised that those young people are safe and well and making good progress in their placement.

Did this shocking incident involving a child in the program occur before or after the visit from department officials, and was the incident reported to the department?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I will need to seek advice on that matter. I am happy to report back later to the Leader of the Opposition.

Residential Tenancy Act - Actions of Minister

Dr WOODRUFF question to MINISTER for BUILDING and CONSTRUCTION, Ms ARCHER

[10.36 a.m.]

It has now been established in black and white that you were part of a pre-COVID-19 decision that would have made it easier for landlords, including Housing Tasmania, to evict tenants from their homes without a genuine or just reason. Is it not true Mr Jaensch was caught lying to parliament because of a decision made in your portfolio, and it must have been your recommendation?

Under Administrative Arrangements, you have responsibility for the Residential Tenancy Act. It was obviously a proposal you approved and signed, that led the Government to decide to remove tenancy safeguards during this housing and homelessness crisis. As the responsible minister, on what basis did you decide the best response to the Supreme Court's decision last year would be to strip tenancy protections? How do you justify this decision to the thousands of Tasmanian tenants who would have been affected? Will you, unlike the Housing minister, answer truthfully?

Mr FERGUSON - Madam Speaker, point of order. I ask that you rule on this because the parting insult is out of order.

Madam SPEAKER - I am going to uphold that point of order. The only way you can accuse a member of lying is via a substantive motion. That opportunity took place yesterday. I am upholding the point of order.

Dr WOODRUFF - Madam Speaker, on the point of order, the minister's record stands for itself.

Madam SPEAKER - No, that is not appropriate and I rule it out.

Mr FERGUSON - Madam Speaker, I am asking that you ask the member to withdraw the allegation. It was dealt with yesterday.

Madam SPEAKER - You have to withdraw it unconditionally.

Dr WOODRUFF - I withdraw.

Madam SPEAKER - Unconditionally.

Dr WOODRUFF - Unconditionally.

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, the question is not surprising, because the comment which has now been withdrawn indicates the Greens are not accepting the decision of the House on this matter.

I was clear during the debate on the Residential Tenancy Amendment (COVID-19) Bill yesterday, for the benefit of this House - and it is on *Hansard* and therefore public - I have ruled out any changes to section 45(3)(b) of the Residential Tenancy Act 1997.

Dr Woodruff - No, that is not what the question is about.

Ms ARCHER - That should put the matter to an end. We have been through this, minister Jaensch has been through this.

Following the Supreme Court decision last year in relation to Mr Parsons, the minister publicly made it clear that the Government would seek advice on the implications of that decision. We examined the issue and sought advice and, as we have said, no final decision was made by Cabinet to change the Residential Tenancy Act in respect to the Parsons matter.

Dr Woodruff - No, that is not what the question is. You were going to do it. You made the recommendation that led to the Cabinet decision to do it.

Madam SPEAKER - Order, please, Dr Woodruff.

Members interjecting.

Madam SPEAKER - Order.

Ms ARCHER - The key issue is - as the Premier has wisely interjected - they were Cabinet deliberations. The Greens know this. They want to continue to politicise the matter and they want to continue to scare housing tenants.

I made it clear yesterday in this House and I will say it again. I have ruled out any change to section 45(3)(b) of the Residential Tenancy Act 1997 and that is the end of the matter.

Support for Small Businesses and Events

Mr ELLIS question to MINISTER for SMALL BUSINESS, HOSPITALITY and EVENTS, Ms COURTNEY

[10.41 a.m.]

Can you update the House on how the Government is supporting small businesses that are vital to Tasmania's events industry as we work to rebuild Tasmania?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the member for Braddon for his question.

The Tasmanian Government recognises the significant contribution of small businesses, the hospitality sector and events to our community. We also know COVID-19 has had a significant impact. The Tasmanian Government's direct cash support packages for small businesses total over \$80 million, forming a significant component of our nation-leading COVID-19 support package, with more than 20 000 grants paid to businesses since the pandemic began.

Most recently, at the end of September we delivered \$9.45 million in grants of \$5000, to 1890 small businesses under the COVID-19 Small Business Sustainability and Recovery Assistance Grant Program.

We also recognise the value of our reputation as the home of high quality, home-grown festivals and boutique events, and know that it is an important point of difference that brings visitors to our state and entices locals to travel around the island and spend money in shops, cafes, bars, restaurants and in local accommodation and tourism attractions.

The T21 Visitor Economy Action Plan recognises the importance of our events sector and we are committed to supporting our important event small business sector as it continues to face the ongoing challenges of restrictions associated with COVID-19.

Today I am pleased to announce that a new round of funding will be made available through the Event Infrastructure and Critical Support Small Business Grant Program. Funding of \$2.5 million from our \$80 million investment in small business will be used for a competitive, merit-based grant round to assist eligible small businesses - ranging from small grants of \$5000 to grants of \$100 000 for businesses with larger turnover. This new program is targeted to support those small businesses which have high barriers to entry in terms of the capital or specialist skills or equipment requirements, and which provide critical event support infrastructure and other services that are essential to running events as part of our recovery for the visitor economy.

This is not a funding mechanism for individual events or for those who attend or participate in events. It is support for the providers of critical infrastructure and services, without which we would not be able to run major events at all. This includes businesses such as providers of audio-visual equipment and services, marquees and temporary structures, on-site infrastructure provision and waste management. Professional event organisers and promoters will be eligible where they are providing critical services to the delivery of public or ticketed events in Tasmania.

This scheme will help insure we retain the critical support for events - the foundations of our sector - so we can continue to support existing events as well as new events in the future.

To be eligible, applicants will need to meet criteria including demonstrating that at least 70 per cent of their small business operations are to supply or support the delivery of events in Tasmania. They will also have to demonstrate they have suffered a decline in turnover of 50 per cent over the last six months, or demonstrate an expected 50 per cent decrease in bookings or expected turnover in the coming six months because we know that the summer season is incredibly critical for these businesses.

Full eligibility and detailed guidelines will be made available in coming days via the Business Tasmania website. Final funding decisions will be made by a panel which will include representations from the events sector. The program will be open for applications from Monday 19 October and will close on 13 November.

We know this is a very challenging time for businesses which is why we are delivering the Events Ready Grants Program so that events can operate now, safely. We are also developing a framework so that large events in the future will be able to occur in a safe way. We will have more to say about that in coming weeks.

The Tasmanian Government remains committed to supporting this important sector and ensuring we regain the economic and community benefits it delivers for Tasmania. If we look broadly across our economic package, we know that this side of the House stands for supporting Tasmanian businesses and Tasmanian individuals. We know that the other side is wanting in this. We do not know whether Mr O'Byrne is going to deliver an alternative budget. We do not know which of our policies he supports. We do not know where they are going to go, whether there are alternative budget or alternative policies. They are adrift. They do not know what they stand for. They do not have policies and we wonder whether he will present an alternative budget.

Brahminy Foundation Program

Ms WHITE question to MINISTER for HUMAN SERVICES, Mr JAENSCH

[10.46 a.m.]

The video of a Tasmanian child in the Brahminy program is shocking. This child's own words and actions clearly show they are far from safe and far from rehabilitated. The Brahminy program is clearly failing to keep at-risk children safe and, as a result, the safety of the broader community has also been put at risk. Why have you repeatedly claimed that children in the Brahminy program are safe when we have clear evidence that shows that is not true? When did you become aware of the incident involving a child at Brahminy and when did you advise the Premier's office?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the Leader of the Opposition for her questions. As the Leader of the Opposition would expect, I need to caveat this, as the Premier has as well, that we are here talking about the circumstances of a young person on care and protection orders in a care setting. I cannot speak in detail about the individual person, any further than I have. Under

the act, it is improper for me to do that. That is why, as the Premier mentioned earlier today, I reached out to you, Ms O'Connor and Ms Ogilvie, and arranged a confidential briefing directly from the department - not via me - on these current matters of interest.

The reason for that is that in this very sensitive and complex environment I take advice from people who are qualified and empowered under our legislation to be managing the safety and the best interests of those children. We have engaged the Many Colours 1 Direction organisation to provide a care setting for these children, subject to all the normal due diligence checks of their staff and that organisation that they are fit to do so.

We have also engaged the Australian Childhood Foundation, a separate organisation with specialist skills and therapeutic care and counselling who are there on the ground each week working alongside Many Colours 1 Direction with those same kids. Child safety staff regularly visit Many Colours 1 Direction in person, usually every six weeks.

Ms WHITE - Point of order, Madam Speaker. It goes to Standing Order 45, relevance. The question to the minister was when did he become aware of the incident at the Brahminy program and when did he inform the Premier's office. I would ask the minister to address the question?

Madam SPEAKER - That is not a point of order but I ask the minister to stay focused on the question.

Mr JAENSCH - Thank you, Madam Speaker. I am making my way to that point.

The context of the Leader of the Opposition's question had to do with our confidence around statements of the safety and wellbeing of the young people and that is what I am addressing first. Each young person in the Many Colours 1 Direction program has a child safety officer responsible for overseeing and coordinating their care. Each young person has a care team that convenes regularly to review the young person's needs and their progress and their case direction. These teams include child safety staff, Many Colours 1 Direction staff, other professionals and family members where that is possible.

The Tasmanian Child Advocate conducted a review of the program in 2019 and visited the program herself. In 2017 we conducted an independent review of the program. During COVID-19 we had a special arrangement between our Department of Communities Tasmania and the Northern Territory Families department so that they are able to respond rapidly in the event of any serious incidents.

Through these oversight and safeguard mechanisms up to and including the visit in September by Child Safety Service staff; up to and including the Secretary of the department, the legal guardian of those children, speaking to those children by a video conference on Friday; up to and including this week and yesterday and last night when the deputy secretary of my department spoke to me about what she had seen and heard from those kids on the ground. All those people with legal responsibilities and specialist training in the care and the supervision and the therapeutic rehabilitation of these young people have confirmed that these people are in a safe place, they are doing well, and they want to stay.

These are the people we will take advice from when it comes to the wellbeing of these kids and what happens to them next - not, with respect, Ms White and the Labor Opposition. I

also had advice from my department from Friday when my secretary and the Child Advocate met with the young people in the MC1D program by video conference. They said to me that it was clear that the repeated media reports and highly publicised demands by public figures for these young people to be brought back to Tasmania is doing them harm. The young people clearly feel that what is being claimed about Many Colours 1 Direction is unfair. This is from the secretary. My observation, shared by the Child Advocate, is that this is also based on a shared fear -

Members interjecting.

Madam SPEAKER - Order, please.

Mr JAENSCH - that they will be made to leave Many Colours 1 Direction and return to Tasmania before they ready.

In terms of the safety and the wellbeing of those young people, I have given you a run-down of who we are receiving advice from. That advice has been consistent. Those kids are in an environment that is safe for them.

Ms WHITE - Point of order, Madam Speaker. I regret rising again but it does go to Standing Order 45, and it goes to the question which was asked of the minister. That is, when did he find out about this incident and when did he inform the Premier's office? I ask you again to draw the minister's attention to the question.

Madam SPEAKER - I can draw his attention to the question. His five minutes is up but it is up to the minister if he will answer that.

Mr JAENSCH - Thank you, Madam Speaker. As I answer that final part of the question I bring again this statement: it is clear that the repeated media reports and highly publicised demands by public figures, including you, Ms White, for these young people to be brought back to Tasmania is doing them harm. You are doing these children harm. That is the advice from the legal guardian of those people, Ms White. You need to take responsibility for that and so does the media.

I will seek further advice on the matter of the timing of when I first became aware of the Facebook posts in question.

COVID-19 - Safe Return to Play for Sporting Clubs

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

[10.54 a.m.]

Can you update the House on the success of the Government's nation-leading coronavirus support package and how it is supporting Tasmanian sporting clubs and delivering a successful and safe return to play?

Members interjecting.

Ms White - Just told another lie.

Madam SPEAKER - Order. Order.

Mr FERGUSON - Point of order, Madam Speaker. I wonder if you could deal with the disorderly conduct of the member opposite.

Ms WHITE - I withdraw.

Madam SPEAKER - Yes, it is disorderly conduct. You cannot accuse someone - you have withdrawn it, thank you. Please proceed, minister.

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the member for his question. The COVID-19 pandemic has clearly placed a major strain on the many sport and recreation organisations across Tasmania through autumn and winter. Sporting clubs and organisations play an enormous role within our state, and in many respects they are the glue that brings communities together.

The Government's goal has been 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 have met our obligations. When the pandemic hit, we consulted with the sector to determine what government support could be provided to ensure the viability of community sport. I was delighted to announce our nation-leading grants program, which allocated funding of more than \$2.9 million to support the sector, including keeping Tasmanians in employment wherever possible, and ensuring sport can revive and continue in line with Public Health advice.

In tranche 1, we kept more than 180 Tasmanian sporting administrators in work, despite a devastating loss of revenues from postponements to competitions as player registration fees, gate fees, canteen takings and sponsorship all dried up.

I am pleased to advise the House that tranche 2 of our sport and recreation assistance package has now closed, and has seen 431 organisations approved for grants to return to play. More than \$900 000 was allocated to repeater clubs under tranche 2, which enabled immediate practical assistance for clubs and players through a return to competitions, safely.

Clubs and associations were able to access funding to purchase new equipment to improve the quality and safety of the sporting experience for their members, or to help fund requirements such as COVID-19-related signage and sanitation stations. Many of the clubs that received funding have said the support has been lifesaving. For example, the Kingston Crows Cricket Club said -

Absolutely fantastic. COVID-19 was an unforeseen expense and it is great to get this assistance to protect our players and supporters.

The George Town Saints Netball Association said -

We are so grateful for all of the assistance from Sport and Recreation in allowing us to continue to play the game we love. In these challenging times

it is so nice for our teams to have some normality, and without all the work being done we would not be playing.

The Southern Wolves Basketball Association said -

The funding will be put to great use within our club, and it is government support like this that has allowed small sporting clubs like ours to grow and retain their memberships in such a crazy time in our lives. Again, a massive thank you - excitement and grateful is an understatement. We can now put our efforts into a wonderful club, learn, grow and prepare for whatever comes our way. This period has taught us that we are more than just a sporting club. We have made a difference in some children's lives, and we thank you for making a difference to ours.

Having attended many sporting matches over the last few months, whether that be soccer, football or hockey, I have seen firsthand just what this support has meant to many clubs.

Throughout this pandemic, our first priority has been to keep Tasmanians safe, and provide support. I understand the impact COVID-19 has had on Tasmania's sporting community, and I thank everyone for their patience and commitment during this very challenging time.

Looking back, I am proud of the initiative the Government has provided to the sporting sector. Finally, good luck to all those competing in finals in the coming few weeks.

Members - Hear, hear.

Brahminy Foundation Program

Ms WHITE question to MINISTER for HUMAN SERVICES, Mr JAENSCH

[10.59 a.m.]

How can you expect us to believe that you do not remember when you first became aware of a serious incident involving a child in your care, allegedly stealing a car and putting themselves and the public at risk? This incident should have been reported to your department, and you would have been briefed. If not, that raises further serious concerns. Either way, this video has been in the public domain since 8 p.m. last night.

Minister, I ask you again: when did you become aware of this incident and when did you inform the Premier's office?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the member for Lyons for her question. I reiterate that moments ago I have undertaken to get further advice so that we can provide an accurate answer to that question.

What I note is that the Leader of the Opposition is continuing to draw into the public spotlight the circumstances of an event surrounding an individual Tasmanian child in out-of-home care with complex behaviour. This is very close to being in contravention of the act, given the context that I have laid out around the safety environment, the oversight, the advice that I have received regarding these children, their circumstances, their wellbeing and their progress.

Considering also that I have reached out and offered a confidential briefing - which we do not need to provide to the Leader of the Opposition - so that the Leader of the Opposition can have direct advice from people who are on the ground, qualified, and responsible under law for the wellbeing of these young people -

Opposition members interjecting.

Madam SPEAKER - Order, Ms O'Byrne. Refrain.

Mr JAENSCH - yet she is continuing this line of questioning, and again thrusting these matters into the public spotlight where they are doing those young people harm.

As I said before, I will get further advice on the matter at the heart of her latest question, but I condemn her for continuing in the knowledge that this line of questioning is doing harm to young people.

Brahminy Foundation Program

Ms WHITE question to MINISTER for HUMAN SERVICES, Mr JAENSCH

[11.02 a.m.]

Yesterday you said you do not really care what name Allan Brahminy goes by, and what it might have been before. You have neglected - negligently dismissed - serious allegations that Brahminy concocted his Indigenous heritage. Even worse, you have dismissed the concerns of mistreatment expressed by former participants in the program, and the families of current participants. You have asserted that he is delivering good outcomes for vulnerable people, despite clear evidence that he has failed to keep children safe in his care.

Why have you prejudged the outcome of a departmental investigation by claiming, against all evidence, that the Brahminy program is working?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the member for Lyons for her question. I note that I am not blindly backing in Allan Brahminy. I am backing in these kids. I am investigating Allan Brahminy and the Many Colours 1 Direction program to ensure that the best interests of those children is being met. The advice that I have consistently had over weeks and months and recent days and hours has consistently given me a picture, and an assurance, that the children are safe, well and progressing well in that environment.

I am not making that up. That is not my opinion. That is the advice from the people who have the qualifications and the power and the eyeballs on those kids on the ground right now, and that is what they are telling me. I am passing it on. I have offered to provide more advice directly to the Leader of the Opposition today at our earliest opportunity.

We are reviewing the program, and we will continue to do so. As the Premier said, if there are elements or aspects of that review that are found to be unsafe, inappropriate or in need of change, we will act on those recommendations in a heartbeat.

Our first priority has been to confirm the safety of the young people who are our responsibility, who are in the care of Many Colours 1 Direction program right now. We have done that, and made that advice available to this House, in real time, as it is coming to us.

We cannot say fairer than that. We are not hiding anything, we are not glossing over and we are not pre-empting the outcome of the review.

Ms O'Byrne - Is the identity issue being covered in that?

Madam SPEAKER - Order, please.

Mr JAENSCH - The matter of Mr Brahminy's identity, and again we are contracted with Many Colours 1 Direction Pty Ltd, Mr Brahminy is the employee. I am advised that all the workers working with our children have the appropriate equivalent of the Tasmanian Working with Vulnerable People checks, and the organisations have been assessed through normal due diligence processes for engagement of services of this kind.

My deputy secretary is continuing the review, which will include any elements of Mr Brahminy's former names, life and history -

Ms O'CONNOR - Madam Speaker, point of order. I am seeking some clarification from the minister to make sure that he has not misled the House. It is our understanding that Mr Brahminy is not only an employee of Many Colours 1 Direction - he is the founder and principal of the program. Is he an employee, or does he run the show?

Madam SPEAKER - Is that a point of order or a clarification?

Ms O'CONNOR - The minister said he is an employee. That is a really critical point of fact we need to have.

Members interjecting.

Madam SPEAKER - Order. Do you want the answer?

Mr JAENSCH - The matters of Mr Brahminy's identity as they relate to the safety of the children in the care of Many Colours 1 Direction is part of the terms of reference of the review that is currently under way. The deputy secretary of my department is investigating right now and will report to me by the end of the month.

Brahminy Foundation Program

Ms WHITE question to MINISTER for HUMAN SERVICES, Mr JAENSCH

[11.07 a.m.]

Yesterday the Premier was asked a question about a complaint that has been raised by a parent of a child currently in the Brahminy program. The complaint was the subject of a care concern investigation launched by the director of Child Safety Services in February, looking into the use of restraint, general care and wellbeing, and access to family and privacy.

Yesterday the Premier said that the investigation had concluded and -

Advice on the outcome was provided to the individuals who raised the concerns.

We have been contacted by the parent who made that complaint and they say this is untrue. This parent has said they have not been notified by Child Safety Services of the outcome of the investigation and, what is more, access to their child remains severely restricted.

Did you mislead the Premier about the status of the investigation and did you cause the Premier to mislead the House?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the member for her question. As the member knows, I cannot and will not be discussing the circumstances of individual investigations of care concerns in this place. From time to time, concerns are raised for children in out-of-home care.

A number of allegations and references to care concerns have been raised in public reporting recently around Many Colours 1 Direction. As part of the terms of reference of the current review, I have asked my department to ensure we are identifying all such cases alleged and referred to, and following them up to ensure they have been appropriately dealt with where they can be identified. That advice will be part of the report that I expect by the end of the month.

Police, Fire and Emergency Services - Government Investment

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

[11.09 a.m.]

Can you update the House on how the Government is supporting Tasmanian jobs as well as investing in police, fire and emergency services?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the member for Braddon for his question, and his interest in police and the housing that is going into regional and rural Tasmania.

The Tasmanian Government is committed to rebuilding our economy and supporting jobs throughout the state by funding projects that provide work for Tasmanians. I can advise the Department of Police, Fire and Emergency Management received \$4 million as part of the \$50 million commitment announced by the State Government for COVID-19 infrastructure stimulus funding through the Public Building Maintenance Fund.

I can report that \$1 million of that money has already been spent in our local communities - on renovations to the Burnie Police Station's shower and bathroom facilities; removing asbestos and replacing the façade on the Zeehan Police Station; upgrading the Hobart City Police complex and the Tasmanian Fire Service headquarter's heating, ventilation and air conditioning; comprehensively upgrading the department's security access system to provide increased levels of security; replacing floor coverings and lighting at various department facilities; and undertaking essential plumbing and draining works at Devonport and Scottsdale Police Stations.

The further \$3 million will be spent on building maintenance upgrades at King Island, Rosebery, Woodbridge, George Town, Burnie and Launceston; station upgrades in Clarence Plains, Bridgewater, Queenstown and Huonville; electrical, heating, ventilation and air conditioning upgrades in various locations around Tasmania; and further upgrades of security and access systems.

These funds will provide economic stimulus to a number of regional Tasmanian communities and businesses affected by COVID-19. The Government also provided COVID-19 stimulus funding of \$7 million for the refurbishment of the Launceston Police Station which was constructed in 1977. The initial scoping of the proposed works has taken place with improved security, building services and space utilisation being prioritised. Decanting space for the affected staff has been secured at Henty House. When completed the refurbishment will provide police officers and the community with modern, fit for purpose premises well into the future.

The Government has also provided a further \$8.7 million to upgrades of the final 29 police residences across the state. This is well under way, with 12 of the 29 properties scheduled for completion by the end of 2021. Requests for tender submissions have been received for renovations on residences at Dover, Geeveston, Curry and Nubeena. Architectural drawings are currently being prepared for residences in Oatlands, Campbell Town and Fingal.

This Government has invested a total of \$21.7 million since 2015-16 for police officers and their families stationed in our remote and regional areas of Tasmania, and a boost for the economies in which they serve. Significant upgrades of over 30 police residences have taken place since this ambitious program began. The upgrades demonstrate the progress we have made in rolling out immediate stimulus and support through our building blitz across public buildings. This is ensuring there is a steady flow of capital works which is essential to support local businesses as we recover from the impacts of COVID-19 and rebuild our economy.

I take the opportunity to thank all our police officers, fire and emergency service workers in Tasmania for the fantastic job that they do in protecting us and keeping us safe. Their dedication and contribution to our communities each and every day ensures that Tasmania remains the best and one of the safest places in Australia to live and raise a family.

Time expired.

TABLED PAPERS

Public Works Committee - Report

Mrs Petrusma presented the report of the Public Works Committee on the Peacock Centre Redevelopment.

Report received.

Public Accounts Committee - Report

Mr Street presented the report of the Parliamentary Standing Committee of Public Accounts Review of Tasmanian Government Fiscal Sustainability Report 2016.

Report received.

MARINE-RELATED INCIDENTS (MARPOL IMPLEMENTATION) BILL 2019 (No. 37)

CORRECTIONS AMENDMENT (ELECTRONIC MONITORING) BILL 2020 (No. 27)

Bills agreed to without amendment by the Legislative Council.

FOOD AMENDMENT BILL 2020 (No. 41)

First Reading

Bill presented by **Ms Courtney** and read the first time.

LAND (MISCELLANEOUS AMENDMENTS) BILL 2020 (No. 42)

First Reading

Bill presented by **Mr Barnett** and read the first time.

MOTION

Leave to Move Motion without Notice - Motion Negatived

[11.21 a.m.]

Ms WHITE (Lyons - Leader of the Opposition) - Madam Speaker, I seek leave to suspend standing orders to move a motion of no confidence in the minister for child safety.

I will circulate that motion now and read it for the House -

I move that this House expresses no confidence in the Minister for Human Services for the following reasons -

- (1) Serious allegations have been raised about the mistreatment of children in the Many Colours 1 Direction program in the Northern Territory.
- (2) The minister is refusing to bring Tasmanian children in the program home despite unresolved concerns about the treatment of children and the identity of the program's founder, Allan Brahminy.
- (3) The minister said in a radio interview on 2 October that allegations Allan Brahminy concocted his identity and indigenous background would not form part of the investigation.
- (4) The minister has repeatedly assured this parliament and the people of Tasmania that children in the Brahminy program are safe and are being successfully rehabilitated.
- (5) Video evidence has emerged which shows a participant in the program allegedly speeding in a stolen vehicle, risking the safety of themselves and members of the public.
- (6) The minister would have known or ought to have known about this incident when he claimed children in the program were safe.
- (7) The minister has actively played down concerns about the safety of children in the program including describing the disturbing incident of a child stealing a vehicle and speeding through a community area as 'more of a joy ride'.
- (8) The minister has repeatedly misled the parliament and is unfit to be a minister of the Crown.

Madam Speaker, we had hoped today that the minister might have been able to address in more detail the questions that we asked. He was not able to do that. Unfortunately, we now struggle to trust a word the minister says.

It has become clear that he did not even tell the Premier the whole story, not letting the Premier know about that video until late yesterday, when, in fact, it has also become clear, remarkably, that he is unable to recall, himself, when he first became aware of that incident, which we would presume would have been reported to the department. He would have been briefed on it, and if all of that failed, which would have been concerning in and of itself, he should have seen the video as it was posted last night and come prepared to answer questions on it today in parliament.

This is very serious because it goes to the welfare of six vulnerable children, who we have been concerned about for many weeks. In fact, and we have raised concerns about the Brahminy program for many years. It sends children from Tasmania to the Northern Territory,

a practice that we do not agree with. It is a practice the Liberal Gutwein Government seems to think is acceptable - to send these children out of sight and out of mind.

It is inappropriate for the minister to not have the details on hand when he comes to question time. Given the extraordinary public scrutiny this program has been receiving lately, he should have known that these questions would have been asked of him today to give an explanation to the public, and to the families who are concerned about the welfare of these children, what the current status is of the program, and whether he was aware of that incident and what action he took at the time.

We seek leave to move this motion, to have it debated today without notice because we no longer have confidence that this minister is able to do his job. You would have to wonder whether the minister, Roger Jaensch, had been more focused on his political survival over the last few weeks than on the welfare of these six young children. He was unprepared in question time today, and unable to answer very straightforward questions. There is no doubt that the minister should have known the answers to those questions. He should have been expecting them.

I was also appalled to hear him defend the action of a child who stole a vehicle, saying it was 'more of a joy ride'. That situation was not supervised, it was not authorised, it was not something that we would expect of any of our children. He is the legal guardian - the state is the legal guardian - of those six children, so the incident cannot be dismissed so flippantly as being 'more of a joy ride'. It is a serious incident, and it needs to be treated seriously.

The minister should have been prepared to come into this House today to answer questions but he did not have the detail. He could not even say when he first became aware of that incident. That makes me wonder whether he has been more focused on his own political survival lately than on the welfare of these six children. We have grave concerns for his ability to conduct his important work in his portfolio, and that is why we move this motion today.

These children, and the Tasmanian public, deserve somebody who is able to execute their duties in a way that continues - without wavering - to uphold and protect the rights of the children, to make sure they are safe and are rehabilitating, and are getting the best appropriate care close to home, connected to community.

The minister continues to defend a program and to pre-judge the outcome of a review. He is prejudicing that inquiry by continuing to come here saying that, based on the advice he is receiving, the program is safe, the children are doing well, and they are rehabilitating. That is prejudicing an inquiry - you are prejudging the outcome of the inquiry.

We need those children to be returned to Tasmania. The minister has refused to do so. This matter has been in the public domain for more than the last few weeks. The program has been under intense scrutiny for years. We have been raising concerns about it since 2016, and yet the Premier and the minister continue to come here and defend it. How can we trust a word the minister says when he did not even tell the Premier the whole story? He cannot get up here and recall basic facts about what has happened in that program, even after an incident like this has been broadcast to the public. He should have been better prepared to answer questions today. He was not prepared, and that is very concerning.

Madam Speaker, we move this motion because Tasmanian children in out-of-home care and the Tasmanian public deserve to have a minister who will do everything possible to make sure that they get the best and most appropriate treatment. Quite clearly, this program is not providing that treatment.

[11.28 a.m.]

Mr FERGUSON (Bass - Leader of Government Business) - Madam Speaker, it is appalling that Tasmanians have such a pathetic Leader of the Opposition who will drag Tasmanian children through the quagmire of politics, when a briefing has been offered at lunchtime. The member is not even informed - she does not know about the substance of the issues she seeks to drag through this House. It is appalling that the member has nothing to offer this House, no policies for Tasmanians - just a group of members who are fighting for relevance and trying to score political sugar hits off the back of children and families who deserve a lot better.

So we can all be very clear, the member is now seeking to again upend the business of the House to try to launch a no confidence motion, less than 24 hours after a motion was considered yesterday. The matter was resolved, a vote was taken on the Floor of this House. Despite the goings on of question time today, nothing has changed. I noticed the Leader of the Opposition said -

Ms O'Byrne - It is a completely different issue, a different failing by this minister.

Mr FERGUSON - Would you just care to listen? We listened to you. The member said 'we no longer have confidence that this minister can do his job'. When did the member have confidence? What has changed since yesterday?

Members interjecting.

Madam SPEAKER - Order.

Mr FERGUSON - I am sensing again, as I said yesterday, no room for grace. During question time this morning, the Leader of the Opposition asked the minister a question on a matter of fact, date and time. The minister, quite properly, wanting to give the House a correct answer, in good faith, in keeping with all convention, undertook to seek the advice, rather than providing an answer on the run, or guessing at an answer and later being accused of not having it quite right. He quite properly took it on notice and undertook to take the advice of his office and/or his department and to come back to this House to provide the factual answer to the factual question.

But no, that is not good enough, says the Leader of the Opposition and her colleague. Not good enough. You do not want an answer. You want your political sugar hit today. I cannot help but notice there is no regard, only rhetoric; no real regard for the children and the families at the centre of this issue. Oh, they say they are outraged. This is feigned outrage -

Members interjecting.

Madam SPEAKER - Order, I will have to ask people to leave this Chamber if this noise does not cease.

Mr FERGUSON - The matter was resolved yesterday. In the meantime, the minister has been asked a question seeking a factual answer. That question has not yet been answered because the minister, quite properly, has undertaken to seek advice so the member - in case they were genuinely looking for an answer in good faith, which is now in question - can be provided with the correct answer.

Furthermore, it has been made very clear the Leader of the Opposition is not informed. The Leader of the Opposition and other members have been offered a briefing. That is fundamental to the question of whether this leave should be granted on the basis of urgency. The Leader of the Opposition cannot wait one and a half hours for the briefing. The Leader of the Opposition is not prepared to wait until 1 o'clock for a briefing. If it was urgent, I would be more than happy, right now, to move for suspension of the House so the briefing can take place straightaway and we can catch up on the work of the House later. I offer that. Would you like to me to suspend the House so you can have your briefing now?

Ms White - The minister could not answer straightforward questions. This is about the minister's competence.

Madam SPEAKER - Order.

Ms White - It is not about a briefing. It is about the minister's ability to do his job.

Madam SPEAKER - Order.

Mr FERGUSON - All I hear is noise. I do not hear a genuine willingness to take the briefing. On that basis, we will not be agreeing to leave because the member has no good will or good faith - there is no genuine interest in the children and the families at the centre of this matter. There is no concern for community safety, only pointless points of order.

Ms WHITE - Point of order, Madam Speaker. I state on the record if the Government wants to suspend the House to provide a briefing, then do so, but it will not absolve the minister from his responsibility.

Mr FERGUSON - Right, there you go, thank you. That is a no.

Madam Speaker, clearly the Government -

Ms White - It was a yes. Do it.

Madam SPEAKER - That is a yes. I heard that as a 'yes', minister.

Ms White - Let us have the briefing now.

Mr FERGUSON - Clearly what is happening here is pure politics -

Members interjecting.

Madam SPEAKER - Order, please. This is absolute rabble.

Ms O'BYRNE - Point of order, Madam Speaker. On clarification. As I understand it, the minister has stated he is prepared right now to suspend the House so we can have that briefing and we can then determine whether we need to progress with the suspension of Standing Orders. We were seeking leave to suspend standing orders because of loss of confidence in this minister. When we accepted the briefing, the minister said he would not provide it. Can the minister clarify exactly what he is offering?

Ms OGILVIE - Point of order, Madam Speaker. It is getting a little confusing, because we are in the middle of a motion for suspension of standing orders - sorry, the seeking of leave - and I am looking forward to my opportunity to have a say on that. If we suspend the House, then I am denied my opportunity to speak on that motion. Process wise, how would that actually work?

Mr FERGUSON - Madam Speaker, I believe we will need to resolve this question before I can move for suspension. If the members believe that the briefing that will be provided at the earliest opportunity, I will suspend the House when I know that can be done. No question, Madam Speaker.

Members interjecting.

Madam SPEAKER - Minister, your time has expired.

Members interjecting.

Madam SPEAKER - Order, please. No-one gives those instructions except me.

Mr FERGUSON - At my earliest opportunity, I will move that way.

[11.36 a.m.]

Ms O'CONNOR (Clark - Leader of the Greens) - Madam Speaker, we will always support having a debate on whether the House has confidence in a minister, and so we will support the seeking of leave.

It is important the House understands that the question before the House yesterday in the no confidence motion that we moved was quite different from the substance of the no confidence motion that Labor has presented today.

Yesterday, we dealt with, by vote, whether or not Mr Jaensch had knowingly misled the House in relation to a Government decision to weaken the tenancy protections through amendments to the Residential Tenancy Act.

Today, the question relates to whether or not Mr Jaensch is fit as the minister responsible for child safety, given the extent of the serious allegations that have been raised - potentially about mistreatment of young people in the Brahminy program, and whether or not we have any clarity on Mr Allan Brahminy's identity, as well as his position, because the minister told us this morning that Mr Brahminy is merely an employee of Many Colours 1 Direction. Mr Brahminy is the founder of the Brahminy Foundation, and a principal. Again, there are questions over whether or not we are being told the truth.

Dr Woodruff and I would very much like to have that briefing from the department, and from the departmental officers who have visited the Brahminy program in the Northern Territory, and are happy to have that at any time today.

However, there is a question here - given the evidence of the situation that at least one young person is in - about whether the portfolio, and these children, are in the best capable hands. It is a question the House should have an opportunity to have answered.

I certainly reject the accusation that we are not concerned for the wellbeing of the children and young people at that facility. In fact, from Dr Woodruff's and my point of view, that is our primary overriding - and in fact only - concern here. We are deeply concerned that the State of Tasmania deals with children in its care, who are its responsibility, by sending them some 3000 kilometres away to a remote facility in the Northern Territory. All the evidence points to this not being the best approach for these young people. To remove at-risk children from their communities, from their kin, and banish them so far away across sea and land cannot possibly be the best way to respond to this group of young Tasmanians.

The House should have an opportunity to debate whether it has confidence in Mr Jaensch in relation to his administration of child safety, and particularly in relation to the very serious allegations that have been made about children in the Brahminy program.

Members will be aware that it is Private Members' time today, and there are two motions on the books that relate to the Brahminy program. Both of those motions, one from the Labor Opposition and one from us, call for those young people to be brought home as a priority.

We also want to see this Government move, as a matter of urgency, to have a better program in place, so that we are not banishing children to the far outback far, far away - and largely out of sight and out of mind. It is an indictment on the Government that they have not come up with a local solution, found a local provider, or even done it themselves through Child Safety. It is an indictment that these children are still being sent to the Northern Territory.

I know these kids have particular behavioural issues and challenges, but when they are so far out of sight and out of mind, no matter what kind of remote oversight Child Safety puts in place, they are still a long way away from the reach of the State of Tasmania. They are outside the jurisdiction of the Commissioner for Children and Young People, and that seems to have been forgotten in this debate. The commissioner has no capacity to make sure those kids are going well, because it is beyond our border, and therefore beyond her jurisdiction.

As a parliament, we need to be able to debate questions of confidence. These are really important questions that come before the House, because they examine whether the House agrees that the minister is appropriately managing their portfolio. It is really important that we remember that Mr Jaensch - perhaps alongside minister Courtney - has more at-risk people under his portfolio responsibility than any other minister in the Government. That is what makes the Human Services portfolio so significant, and at times requiring such a tender touch. It requires enormous empathy. We heard yesterday from the Premier and other Liberal members that Mr Jaensch is an empathetic person. I do not doubt that at all.

That is not the question. The question is whether we have confidence in minister Jaensch, given the significance of the issues that have been raised about young people in Brahminy.

We have terms of reference for a review that make no provision for examining historical allegations of abuse. In fact, last week when I wrote to the minister concerned about the terms of reference, he said - and I will paraphrase him - 'If any person has concerns about how they were treated while in out-of-home care of any form, they should raise their concerns with the Department of Communities Tasmania. If they are currently still under care orders, they can speak with their child safety officer or the Tasmanian Child Advocate. If someone wishes to raise historical claims of abuse in state care, they can access support through the Abuse in State Care Support Service'.

So, Madam Speaker, we should have this debate. We are talking about very at-risk young people here, and the House needs to resolve the question over whether minister Jaensch is the best person for the job.

Time expired.

[11.43 a.m.]

Ms OGILVIE (Clark) - Madam Speaker, I am open to having the debate, but I would like to raise a couple of issues that are genuine and serious about the nature of the debate that we, as a group of adults and leaders in the state of Tasmania, are proposing to have about children who have access to social media, who will see what we are going to talk about, and who will be able to watch what we say. I am deeply concerned about that, which is why I was very keen to have the briefing.

It has been a bloody tough year, and we know we have already lost people. I am deeply concerned about this. We all need to be very concerned about what we do and say in this place. I do not believe there is a single person in here who does not genuinely feel deep concern for those kids. That is what we need to think about, so I would like to have the briefing first.

I have quickly read the motion that was tabled this morning. I would also like to say that I think we have, shall we say, a technical issue in paragraph 7 where it states -

A disturbing incident of a child stealing a vehicle and speeding through the community.

That is an allegation of crime. Undoubtably if a crime has been committed, police would be investigating it. I believe we cannot discuss that element in this place. I encourage the Leader of the Labor Party to have a think about that. If things are before the courts, it can be prejudicial and we need to be extremely careful about that.

I am concerned about that. I do not think I could sleep at night if one of the kids did something after we have come in here and had this debate. This is not about me saying that it is all right, or the minister is okay; this is about the children. We ought to have the briefing and then we can have the debate.

[11.46 a.m.]

Mr FERGUSON (Bass - Leader of Government Business) - With, indulgence, Madam Speaker, I sought advice from the Clerk and I am advised that it is entirely possible for private members' time this afternoon to be used to pursue the motion, in which case the Government would not refuse leave at that time, again allowing the briefing in the meantime.

[11.46 a.m.]

Mr O'BYRNE (Franklin) - Madam Speaker, it is disappointing that the Government is seeking to gag this debate and not even allow a debate on want of confidence. The minister's performance during question time clearly demonstrated that he is unable to answer some of the most basic questions that we are asking of him in his role as minister.

We are dealing with some of the most significant issues a state can deal with; that is, managing an environment and a framework of care for some of our most vulnerable children. When those matters cannot be answered appropriately, or even with any form of detail that gives us confidence that he is undertaking his duties as commissioned by the Governor, then they are fundamental to the functions of this House.

The member who just resumed his seat, in his very disingenuous way, accused us of playing politics. This is a very grave and regrettable matter that we have to be debating. We should not have to be debating these kinds of issues. These are the tough issues that need to be debated. When issues in the community occur and the role of government is under question, it is entirely reasonable for us to ask these kinds of questions of a minister, of a government. For the Leader of Government Business to say that we are trying to upend the business of the House, then I would argue, Leader of Government Business, that ministerial accountability is the business of this House.

It is fundamental to the business of this House that a minister can undertake their duties and answer the most basic questions on the most serious of issues. For the minister not to be able to answer a very clear question that was put to him on a number of occasions, for being unable to recall when he saw that shocking video that is now in the public domain, for affecting children in the Government's care is a demonstration of the lack of competence. We now believe we no longer have the confidence in him.

Look at the public comments. This is not an issue that is blindsiding the minister. This has been a matter of public debate now for a number of years and it is has risen again because of the fundamental questions being asked about this program.

Families have been making complaints, complaints as far back as February. When you have serious allegations being made about identity fraud and about mistreatment of children, the minister should then not be surprised that we are asking basic questions about his conduct in this matter. He should be able to answer the questions. That is why we need to suspend Standing Orders to debate these matters because we are absolutely and fundamentally concerned about these children and about the environments they are in. It is regrettable that we have to have this debate but when we see a government not responding to the families of children in these programs, not responding appropriately to the serious complaints - identity fraud and mistreatment of children - when we see you not responding but not only not responding but contradicting yourself.

The issue of identity fraud was raised only recently. You said publicly that the claims about Mr Brahminy's indigenous origin story would not be part of the review and you said, minister, only Mr Brahminy could answer those questions about his background and his name and those matters, which is galling in and of itself. Then you get up in this House and say it will be a part of the review. You contradict yourself in your public utterances, in your answers

to your questions, and, in your non-answers to questions. You contradict yourself and you contradict the Premier.

The Premier committed in this House on the Floor today that it was a wide and broad-ranging review but in answer to questions put to you by the media as a response to complaints about the program, you said that it will not be a part of the review. Well, which is it? Who are you misleading? This House? Your Premier? The people of Tasmania? When your story does not add up, when you change your position, it raises serious questions about your ability to conduct your duties. That is why we are having this regrettable debate. No one is enjoying it. This is not politics, as the Leader of Government Business would have us say.

Mr Ferguson - Correctly said.

Mr O'BYRNE - No, no, no. Absolutely not.

Mr Ferguson - Correctly pointed out to you.

Mr O'BYRNE - Absolutely not. Then you tried to say that the debate was dealt with yesterday. That was a completely different matter. The matter was on a question of whether the minister had misled the House in the last sitting of the week around a decision made in Cabinet. The debate yesterday had nothing to do with the matters that we are raising today, although it has everything to do with the way he conducts himself in this House. You said in your answer that 'we would act in a heartbeat'.

The community has been asking you to act in a heartbeat but compare your actions to the actions of the Education minister, Mr Rockliff, when talking about historical claims of sexual abuse in the public sector. He moved in a heartbeat. He updated the House. He made it very clear about the decisions he had made, the stepping down of people in roles that they were still performing in our public education system. He did act in a heartbeat and this is not an issue that is raised today; this is not an issue that has been raised yesterday. This is an issue that has been raised now over months.

Families have been raising this issue with you, minister. The media has raised serious concerns and you needed to demonstrate more than in your speech yesterday. In your contribution to this House yesterday, you backed it in and said that you did not care about Mr Brahminy's background; you did not care. Well, I am sorry, but I have been working in a role in an organisation where we had children in our care. All the steps you need to go through to ensure that the children in your care are safe are significant. My background was considered and the background of the staff we had was considered.

Time expired.

[11.53 a.m.]

Mr GUTWEIN (Bass - Premier) - Madam Speaker, I cannot believe that members of this House would rush headlong into having this debate when they profess to have the best interests of the children at heart. The facts are you have been offered a briefing. The Leader of Government Business has checked the time and, unfortunately, because somebody who is being brought into that briefing is from the Northern Territory, the earliest it can be undertaken is 1 p.m. - he has checked to see whether it can be brought forward - 1 p.m. today.

That briefing is about providing you with information about the welfare of these kids. That should be what is front and centre in our thinking. If you decide that you want to bring forward a no confidence motion this afternoon, then the Government says bring it on but at least be informed about these kids.

I am staggered that members on that side of the House would play this political game. I made the point this morning: we have kids who are technologically savvy, and may be watching this debate right now. If I was one of those kids, I would be sitting there thinking this is all about me.

If, as you profess, your key motivation is the wellbeing of those kids, then take the briefing first. Understand what is going on, on the ground there. That is the decent and reasonable thing to do. You are playing with people's lives, playing with children's lives. I urge you to put aside your political interests for not much more than one hour and get the briefing first before you push on with this political stunt.

Time expired.

The House divided -

AYES 11

Dr Broad
Ms Butler (Teller)
Ms Dow
Ms Haddad
Ms Houston
Mr O'Byrne
Ms O'Byrne
Ms O'Connor
Ms Standen
Ms White
Dr Woodruff

NOES 13

Ms Archer
Mr Barnett
Ms Courtney
Mr Ellis (Teller)
Mr Ferguson
Mr Gutwein
Ms Hickey
Mr Jaensch
Ms Ogilvie
Mr Rockliff
Mr Shelton
Mr Street
Mr Tucker

Leave denied.

MATTER OF PUBLIC IMPORTANCE

Children and Young People

[12.04 p.m.]

Ms HOUSTON (Bass) - Madam Deputy Speaker, I rise to speak on the issues of youth and children, and particularly the Brahminy program. Child safety has often been raised in this Chamber. Recently, the issues with Brahminy have been very concerning and unfortunately those issues are now playing out in the media, raising serious questions about the program's

safety and the level of supervision. There is so much wrong with the picture we are getting of the Brahminy program, it is difficult to know exactly where to start.

First, let us deal with the matter the minister previously said he did not care about: the identity of the operator. We have every reason to be concerned. The program and the Brahminy Foundation that delivers it may well be compromised. It cannot have integrity when there is a possibility that the person behind it is not who they claim to be. If the foundation does not have integrity, it cannot be considered appropriate or safe to deliver services for vulnerable and at-risk children. How can anyone be the principal indigenous practitioner in a therapeutic residential care program, when their very identity is in question? The possibility that someone has constructed a false identity and back story, especially a false indigenous identity, should raise red flags. At its very best this is unethical. At its worst it is outright dangerous.

The Australian Childhood Foundation delivers safeguarding children training to organisations delivering services to children and vulnerable people. The goal, they say, is building and supporting child-safe organisations, to build their capacity and to keep children safe from abuse and exploitation by employees and volunteers. That is the goal the Australian Childhood Foundation sets - certainly in safeguarding children training that I have been in as the leader of an organisation that delivered services to children, and that anyone else who has been involved in that level of an organisation will have done.

One of the first things one is alerted to in this training is the necessity to ensure people are who they claim to be. Those who change their identity and hide from their past are a risk. They are especially a risk to the vulnerable and at-risk children they work with. That is something that the minister should care about. There are just too many questions left unanswered. It is, therefore, unethical to allow someone with a questionable past and potentially a fabricated identity to have total control over the lives and safety of at-risk Tasmanian children. To allow this to occur well out of the scope of the Commissioner for Children, and beyond appropriate oversight of the department and the Government which is ultimately responsible for these children, is negligent.

Instead of just reviews, the minister should be looking at bringing them home. After all, it is apparent that the supervision is lacking, and safety is not a priority in this program.

There have been numerous other concerns raised about Brahminy, other than what we have seen recently. The program has had ongoing complaints over a number of years. I am told by a reliable source that concerns and investigations date back as far as 2011-12.

The Northern Territory Government does not send children to this program. No other state government sends children to this program. This in itself should flag concerns about its suitability as an appropriate therapeutic program for at-risk Tasmanian children, especially when we cannot see what is going on there.

At best, some of the practices the Brahminy program uses are outdated, and certainly not trauma informed. The use of restraints, of time out, being forced to sit outside on a milk crate for hours on end, or restricting access to food as punishment, are not trauma informed. It certainly is not therapeutic.

Time out may well have been an approved practice in the past, but now it is considered outdated and ineffective. Monitoring all communications between children in these programs and their families or caregivers is a clear indication that something is amiss. If these are the issues we know about, we should rightfully suspect there must be more going on that we do not know about - that there is more going on that is worse than this.

It concerns me deeply that Tasmanian children are being removed from their families and their homes, only to be sent to the other end of the country in a questionable program. Removing children from all their social supports, and everything familiar to them, is questionable in itself, and it certainly does not lean towards being trauma informed.

It is an even greater concern to me that Tasmanian Aboriginal children are being removed and sent to this questionable program, which has no connection to their community, culture or country. While the Government would have us believe that it is for their own good, others have said the same thing of the removal of Aboriginal children in the past, and have been proven very wrong.

While the minister has said there will be a review, removal of Aboriginal children from their homes has already been reviewed, and its findings can be found in the *Bringing Them Home* report on the national inquiry into the separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children from their families. The report clearly demonstrates that the removal of Aboriginal children, keeping them from kin, community, culture and country, has had horrific consequences in the past. We should have learnt something from that. As a country, we should have learnt something from that.

For a while, it seemed we did, but the recent developments seem to have us moving backwards. In child safety, we seem to be slipping back into the failed ways of the past. Perhaps the worst part of this entire situation is that it is entirely unnecessary. These children do not have to be banished to the Northern Territory to a program that no other state government utilises, and that no-one else seems to trust.

We have the capacity, right here in Tasmania, to develop and deliver therapeutic residential care programs. We certainly have the capacity to develop and run a culturally appropriate on-country therapeutic program for at-risk kids in out-of-home care - and that is exactly what we should be doing. Bring them home.

Bring them back here and initiate and develop programs that can be run on-country, on their country with their community.

[12.09 p.m.]

Mr JAENSCH (Braddon - Minister for Human Services) - Madam Deputy Speaker, I thank Ms Houston for bringing this forward. It clearly is a matter of public importance, and very private importance as well for the children and families and workers involved.

I want to refer to a number of references that Ms Houston made in her contribution, referring to Mr Allan Brahminy and the Brahminy Foundation, and alluding that this person has total control over the children who are under the guardianship of the state and placed with our program.

I need to reiterate that the Tasmanian Government engages with a company called Many Colours 1 Direction Pty Ltd - not directly with Mr Allan Brahminy, and not with the Brahminy Foundation as the contracted provider.

Ms Houston referred to the Australian Childhood Foundation, and I understand she did so in the context of their standing as a provider of therapeutic services -

Ms Houston - Yes, as a provider of safeguarding children training. They actually deliver the training that sets up the framework for what the processes should be for ensuring that organisations are safeguarding children in their care.

Mr JAENSCH - That is right, and trauma-informed care in particular.

I want to read into *Hansard* a statement from the Australian Childhood Foundation from 18 September.

The Australian Childhood Foundation (ACF) is a national not for profit organisation which provides counselling and therapeutic support to children and young people who have experienced trauma associated with abuse and violence. ACF receives funding from a number of state and territory governments to provide this service to children and young people who live in out of home care. For the past three years, ACF has worked alongside Many Colours 1 Direction. ACF is separately contracted by the Tasmanian Government to provide counselling and therapeutic support to the children and young people who reside at Many Colours 1 Direction. ACF counsellors have not directly witnessed, or been made aware of, any incidents in which the young people at Many Colours 1 Direction have experienced any form of abuse.

It is ACF national policy that should any of its staff be concerned about the safety of children and young people, they have an obligation to report such concerns to the relevant child protection authorities. As a leader in the field of child trauma services, ACF takes its commitment to the safety of children and young people very seriously.

We have the Australian Childhood Foundation as part of the partnership of delivering care and supervision to the young people at Many Colours 1 Direction.

Ms Houston referred to allegations and concerns that date back to 2011 and 2012. I note that was the time frame within which the Labor government at the time engaged the Brahminy Foundation, and placed children from Tasmania with them, through wilderness camps I believe.

Ms O'Connor - They never sent kids from the out-of-home care system there.

Mr JAENSCH - I am noting that the time frame that was alluded to by Ms Houston is the time frame within which the Labor government sent children to this place, this foundation, these people, Mr Brahminy -

Ms O'Connor - Not sending children on care and protection orders, though.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER - Order.

Mr JAENSCH - and were confident at that time that it was a good and safe placement.

I note that Ms Houston refers to the use of restraints, time out, not trauma-informed therapies, and denying access to food as allegations of improper treatment or abuse of the children. These assertions and allegations are the basis of the review that is being conducted now by my department as a matter of urgency, which will be reporting back by the end of the month. We have offered a briefing with representatives of the parties from the investigators who are on the ground in the Northern Territory right now. Those are matters under active investigation.

Ms Houston made comments regarding the removal of children from their families, and being sent to this remote place away from their communities and support networks. I note, for the record, that children are not removed from their families by governments, but under court orders that determine that their best interests would be served by being in the guardianship of the state. The removal of children from the guardianship of their family is a matter determined by courts.

The Government then has an obligation to place them in appropriate care settings that meet their needs. We note again that the young people involved in the Many Colours 1 Direction are children with extraordinarily complex needs. There are circumstances when isolation from the families and community networks and influences that may have in those children's past contributed to their trauma is, in some circumstances, part of helping those children to reset and focus on their therapy.

The program is not only for Aboriginal children. I want to make that clear as well. Even then, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander child placement principle, as I understand it, determines that the preference is, in order of priority, that children be placed with Aboriginal families with kin and with community members wherever it is possible to do so, but that their other care priorities come first.

Time expired.

[12.16 p.m.]

Ms O'CONNOR (Clark - Leader of the Greens) - Minister, would those Aboriginal child placement principle guidelines that you were talking about a moment ago be the ones that were last updated in February 2006?

Mr Jaensch - Yes.

Ms O'CONNOR - Yes, I thought so. The other guidelines that have come out of the department, which we have, is the guideline for adolescent risk of suicide assessment, which was last updated 20 years ago.

Mr Jaensch - I would be happy to take a question on that from you at the appropriate time, Ms O'Connor, so we can answer that.

Ms O'CONNOR - We have departmental guidelines relating to highly at-risk young people that are 14 years, 20 years out of date.

Madam Deputy Speaker, if we step back from this situation, and remind ourselves that children on care and protection orders are the responsibility of the state - the state is their parent for the time that they are on a care and protection order - does a parent send a child with behavioural issues, who has had an extremely traumatic background, 3000 kilometres away for treatment? I do not think that is what a good parent does. A good parent does not punish their child by sending them 3000 kilometres away, because it feels like punishment to those children. Banishment.

Mr Ellis interjecting.

Ms O'CONNOR - Madam Deputy Speaker, we have just had an interjection from Mr Ellis, who is fairly new to the place. I will let Mr Ellis know that at no time, in the previous government, were children on care and protection orders, as I understand it, sent to the Brahminy program. The practice of sending children who are in the care of the state to the Northern Territory began, as I understand it, in 2017 under this Government.

What the minister failed to mention is that the Commissioner for Children and Young People has no jurisdiction at all over those young Tasmanians. The Australian Childhood Foundation is not statutorily responsible for those children. The minister is, and the secretary of the department. The Commissioner for Children and Young People should be able to have oversight over every young person in the child safety system in Tasmania. The problem is, these kids are not in Tasmania.

It is bad practice to banish children who have had traumatic backgrounds, who have significant behavioural issues, and for whatever reason are unable to live with their families.

I had a conversation with the Commissioner for Children and Young People when this issue first arose, and I asked why there is no local Tasmanian response to these kids. That is not a question the commissioner herself can answer. I asked what would be required to have an appropriate and well-resourced bush therapy program here in Tasmania for young people who need that support and guidance, and who need to be given that strength to go onto life and live successful lives and stay out of trouble.

These are the four basics, as I understood it from my conversation with the commissioner. You would need to have a facility that had the appropriate clinical and therapeutic supports in place. Any facility that deals with Aboriginal young people should be close enough to culture, to family and to country, and there needs to be an element of remoteness to a facility like this.

We can do this in Tasmania. It is a question of political will. We have to do better by these kids. We have seen shocking video overnight of a young person who borrowed a car and went for a joy ride and was travelling down a dirt road somewhere in the back of the Northern Territory at more than 100 kilometres an hour. That is a failure of parenting; that is a failure of this state, to make sure that the young people for whom it is a parent are safe - because that child for that time was not safe.

We have a program which is being run by a person who has changed their name, who describes themselves as the principal Indigenous practitioner who is not Aboriginal, who for some reason or another is hiding from his past. That raises enormous red flags. I will go to the letter that Mr Jaensch wrote to me when I asked about the terms of reference and how narrow they were, my concern that they were not going to deal with the historical allegations

of mistreatment, and were not going to deal with the questions over Mr Brahminy's identity. The minister says -

Regarding Mr Allan Brahminy, I am advised that the Department of Communities Tasmania does not purchase services from Mr Brahminy. The contractual arrangements are with the organisation, Many Colours 1 Direction, of which Mr Allan Brahminy is the principal practitioner.

It is primarily a matter for Mr Brahminy to answer questions regarding his identity, as they relate to him and not the program. The department will, however, consider how concerns raised regarding Mr Brahminy's identity impact on the program and the safety and the wellbeing of the young people involved. This is our key consideration and responsibility.

I will say again, it is obvious that when you have a person who is responsible, by delegation from the State of Tasmania, for some of our most at-risk children, who has changed their identity - that is, they have not been honest about who they are and what their background is - you have to ask yourself as the responsible parent, in this case the State of Tasmania, whether it is in the best interests of the child to send them to a facility that is run by a person who has changed their background story.

If I was a parent of these children, there is no way I would send them to a person who was not honest about their background. No good parent would. This is a matter where you have handed over parenting responsibility to a man whose identity has been fabricated.

Time expired.

[12.23 p.m.]

Ms WHITE (Lyons - Leader of the Opposition) - Madam Deputy Speaker, it is critically important that we have this debate about the appropriate way we provide care for children in Tasmania's out-of-home care system.

As at 20 June, there were 1330 Tasmanian children in out-of-home care. A large part of this matter of public importance has been centred around the welfare of six particular children, who have been sent out of Tasmania to a program in the Northern Territory, but we must remember that there are more than 1000 other young Tasmanians who are also in the out-of-home care system. It is critically important that we have appropriate programs in place to support them, and to support them to rehabilitate if they have been affected by trauma or other impacts in their life.

I was taking a look at some work by the Australian Institute of Family Studies. In particular, I was looking at the best practice for therapeutic residential care, because arguably that is the type of program we are sending these young people to the Northern Territory to engage in. Critically, I think two of the key elements of effective therapeutic residential care are not met by the Brahminy program. One is that engagement with a young person's family, community and culture is important as a part of any effective therapeutic residential care. Specifically, it mentions that programs should ensure that young people have opportunities to remain engaged with cultural practices and that this is especially important for those from indigenous and CALD communities.

There is no way that these children, who are thousands of kilometres away from their home and their community are able to maintain engagement with their own cultural practices, and that is one of the reasons we have been raising concerns about why the Tasmanian Government is sending these children to the Northern Territory.

The other concern we have is, and this is a key element that has been named up by the Australian Institute of Family Studies, that there needs to be support for young people to exit care and to plan for post-care support. Some of these children have been in the Northern Territory for close to two years. One key aim that is named up in this document is that 'intensive care placements for young people in therapeutic residential care is time limited, that efforts have been made to address critical issues and behaviours first before the young person is transitioned'.

We have significant concerns about the Brahminy program, not just because of the apparent fraudulent identity of Allan Brahminy, the principal Aboriginal adviser, as he calls himself, not just because of the claims of mistreatment that have been made by children, both presently in that program and past participants in that program, but because it also seems to go against the key principles that are outlined by the Australian Institute of Family Studies for what best practice residential therapeutic care needs to look like. Those children have been sent to the Northern Territory and left there, in some cases for nearly two years, with no appropriate transition for them to come home, to remain connected to community and culture, or for them to have appropriate steps put in place for them to be supported to exit care and plan for post-care support.

Mr Jaensch - No, you just cannot say that, just banished there and left there. I talked about that this morning in question time. You are grossly misrepresenting me.

Mr Barnett - This is appalling behaviour.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER - Order, the Leader of the Opposition has the call. Other members can make their contributions soon.

Ms WHITE - I look forward to your contribution in your defence of this program. It has serious allegations levelled against it about the identity of the person who is the primary practitioner in the program; of the concern about the care and the welfare of children raised by the parents who still have not been able to maintain contact with their children despite raising questions with the Government in February this year despite the allegations that have been made by former participants of this program about the mistreatment they endured in this particular program.

Mr Barnett is pretty quick to jump to the defence of a program that has had serious questions raised about it. While I am thinking about Mr Barnett, one of the things that strikes me as incredibly galling is that the Government can undertake a review into whether we can have potato imports coming into the state within two days, but a review into the welfare of children in the Northern Territory is taken to the end of the month.

Mr Jaensch - We had them up there within days, in COVID-19, in the Northern Territory.

Ms WHITE - You explain that discrepancy. What is more important; the welfare of vulnerable children under the guardianship of the state -

Mr Jaensch - They are there right now, and you will not wait to hear what their representative has to say.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER - Order.

Ms WHITE - I would argue that they are more important. Yet the Government can conduct a review into the importation of potatoes into the state within a couple of days but a review into the welfare of vulnerable children takes more than a month. It is disgusting.

Madam Deputy Speaker, we have serious concerns about the welfare of these children. We also have serious concerns about the investigation that is being undertaken by the Government. Just recently the Deputy Premier undertook an investigation into a historical allegation of abuse in the education system. While that investigation took place, that teacher was stood down, which is appropriate. Yet when we are talking about the welfare of six individuals in the care of somebody who has had serious allegations raised about their identity and the mistreatment that has occurred, those children are not brought home.

Mr Jaensch - Serious allegations of what? Are you going to draw the comparison any further?

Ms WHITE - They are not placed into alternative care arrangements while that investigation takes place. That is a massively different way to treat these children. When I have questioned why they are treated differently -

Mr Jaensch - Be careful how you frame the allegations against Mr Brahminy.

Ms WHITE - from the way that other children are treated in our state. When a concern was raised most recently about a teacher who was providing care in a teaching setting, that person was stood down while investigations took place. Yet these young people are treated differently. The Government needs to explain why.

Mr Jaensch - Be careful what you are implying about the allegations in this case. Maybe because the allegations are quite different, Ms White. Be very careful.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER - Order.

Ms WHITE - The Government needs to explain why.

It is also very concerning to us that the Commissioner for Children and Young People has no jurisdiction to the care complaints that have been raised by young people because the Government has sent them to the Northern Territory. There are serious questions that have been raised that have not been answered by the Government.

Time expired.

[12.30 p.m.]

Mr TUCKER (Lyons) - Madam Deputy Speaker, Many Colours 1 Direction is a therapeutic residential placement program in the Northern Territory delivered in collaboration with the Australian Childhood Foundation.

I want to put some facts on the table for the time line for what has occurred over the years. Young people from Tasmania were first sent to the MC1D in 2012 when a number of people travelled to the Northern Territory for a short-term wilderness experience. From 2015 we began sending young people for longer stays, recognising that the significant changes required in the lives of young people necessitated a longer period of time to see those changes realised.

The Tasmanian Government initiated an independent review of the program in 2017 by MW Group Consultant, Christine Edwards, and Professor Dr Maria Harries assisted the consultant in her review by participating in a site visit to the MC1D. The review determined that the MC1D provides a safe environment for young people.

The Australian Childhood Foundation began providing on the ground, clinical expertise and therapeutic support into the young people placed at MC1D in January 2018. Since then the overall program has strengthened in its therapeutic credentials while still retaining its essential wilderness connection with country and culture and hands-on experiences.

A visit by the Child Advocate in December 2019 was also for the purpose of reviewing the suitability of the program. The Child Advocate met with each of the young people and determined that MC1D is providing an excellent program of support to a cohort of young people with exceptionally complex needs.

The MC1D provides a therapeutic individualised residential program for up to 10 young people, male or female, aged 10 to 17 years. The Australian Childhood Foundation provides on the ground clinical support to the program to apply an evidence-based, trauma-informed approach. The MC1D also incorporates indigenous cultural practices helping young people to heal and to develop positive identity. The program focuses on developing life skills including cooking and nutrition, daily routines, effective decision-making and problem-solving. The young people receive education through the School of the Air.

We must remain focused on what is best for these young people and resist the temptation to take knee-jerk decisions that may destroy the positive progress they are making in turning their lives around where other approaches have failed.

There is a range of oversight mechanisms and safeguards in place to ensure that young people placed at MC1D are safe and continue to receive the support they need during their placement. The Australian Childhood Foundation is on the ground at MC1D in the Northern Territory and is contracted by the Tasmanian Government to provide essential therapeutic support and clinical expertise to the young people placed at MC1D.

The ACF provides another set of eyes on the ground. They regularly speak directly with the young people and observe their interactions with staff and one another. Child Safety staff regularly visit MC1D in person, usually every six weeks. Their visits involve direct interactions with the young people and the MC1D staff. The most recent of these occurred in

September and a very positive report was received about each young person's wellbeing and progress in the program.

Each young person has a Child Safety officer responsible for overseeing and coordinating their care. These staff have built relationships with the young people over time and include regular private phone and video contact with the young people, sometimes twice a week. Each young person has a care team that combines to review the young person's needs, their progress and case direction. These teams include Child Safety staff, MC1D staff, other professionals and family members where possible.

The Tasmanian Child Advocate conducted a review of MC1D in December 2019 which included a visit to the program. The Child Advocate determined that MC1D is not only providing an excellent program of support to a cohort of young people, with exceptionally complex needs, but is helping these young people change their life trajectory.

In 2017 the former department of Health and Human Services engaged MW Group consultant Christine Edwards, to undertake an independent review of MC1D. Professor Dr Maria Harries assisted the consultant in a review by participating in a site visit to MC1D. The purpose of the review was to assess if the provider met the legislative governance and quality standards required for placing young people needing care. The review concluded MC1D provides a safe environment for young people.

During COVID-19 and while travel was restricted, the Department of Communities Tasmania had an agreement with the Northern Territories Families Department to respond in the event of any serious incidents.

Time expired.

Matter noted.

ELECTRICITY SAFETY BILL 2020 (No. 39)

Second Reading

[12.37 p.m.]

Ms ARCHER (Clark - Minister for Building and Construction - 2R) - Madam Deputy Speaker, I move -

That the bill now be read a second time.

The importance of electricity safety cannot be overstated, as all Tasmanians use and are surrounded by electricity all day, every day. Often, we take our use of electricity for granted and do not think about the benefits that electricity safety laws and their active administration provides the Tasmanian community.

The high level of electricity safety currently enjoyed by Tasmanians is continually being challenged by the speed at which new electricity technology, equipment and storage systems are being introduced.

Tasmania needs robust and up-to-date electricity safety laws to effectively administer electricity safety in response to these new and emerging technologies and practices. This bill provides for this.

Electricity safety within Tasmania is underpinned by longstanding regulatory provisions and responsibilities placed on the electricity supply industry entities, and industrial, commercial and domestic consumers, as well as electrical equipment and appliances.

The Electricity Supply Industry Act 1995 and the Electricity Industry Safety and Administration Act 1997 that provide the current electricity safety regulatory provisions have had only minor amendment and there has not been a substantial review of the electricity safety provisions since their enactment.

The Electricity Supply Industry Act 1995, over time, has tended to concentrate on the regulation associated with the electricity market operation, with the introduction of the National Electricity Market, National Electricity Rules and the Australian Energy Regulator. This bill will instead provide a dedicated focus on electricity safety and its administration to maintain the standard of electricity safety the Tasmanian community has come to expect as normal.

Since the turn of the century, there have been significant changes within the electricity industry. Some of the key changes have been: an increase in small scale solar and wind generation; equipment innovation and the rise of electricity storage systems; and advanced, sometimes called ‘smart’, electricity meters in people’s homes.

Administration of electricity safety in Tasmania currently sits with both the Department of State Growth and the Department of Justice. The Energy Regulator is responsible for the electricity safety functions and powers under the Electricity Supply Industry Act 1995, and the Secretary of Department of Justice is responsible for the Electricity Industry Safety and Administration Act 1997. This division of responsibility for safety is not desirable, and in its current form, can introduce uncertainty and confusion.

The consolidation of electricity safety provisions into a single bill and separating them from the Electricity Supply Industry Act’s licensing and industry operational activities, will allow for a greater focus on the regulation of electricity safety in Tasmania. This bill aims to modernise and clarify the existing regulatory provisions of the current acts, to provide flexible and up-to-date electrical safety requirements for Tasmania. The bill will provide: clarification of safety obligations and responsibilities that are not clearly stated in the current acts; modernised terminology and definitions to assist in a better understanding of obligations for both industry and consumers; and ensure there is suitable flexibility to adapt to innovation and technology well into the future.

The bill establishes the Director of Electricity Safety as a statutory position. This new role consolidates the electricity safety functions and powers of the Regulator and the Workplace Health and Safety Secretary under the Electricity Supply industry Act 2005, and the Secretary in the Electricity Industry Safety and Administration Act 1997.

The Director provides a level of accountability for electricity safety that is consistent with the level of risk and aligns with key statutory officers established under building and gas safety legislation. The Director’s title, functional responsibilities and powers are generally consistent

with the Director of Gas Safety, under the Gas Safety Act 2019 and the Director of Building Control, under the Building Act 2016.

Australia as a whole is grappling with the mitigation of bushfire risks associated with electricity assets. The main bushfire risks are due to the deterioration of those assets over time and the growth of vegetation into the electricity conductors.

This bill will provide clarification of the responsibilities for periodic inspection and maintenance of electricity assets and a vegetation clearance space around those electricity assets. The bill also provides the Director appropriate mechanisms and powers to ensure that these responsibilities are fulfilled.

New and emerging technology in the electricity industry, at times, is outpacing the ability of the current safety regulations to respond effectively. The bill provides for enforceable determinations and codes of practice in order to respond effectively to these changes and provide the appropriate level of assurance for electricity safety to the Tasmanian community.

The bill will fulfil a requirement of the Ministerial Council on Energy Intergovernmental Agreement. This is to provide nationally consistent minimum safety requirements for electricity-entity-owned network assets through an Electricity Network Safety Management System. Both Hydro Tasmania and TasNetworks own and operate these network assets and have already been working towards a compliant system in anticipation of this provision.

The bill also provides for the electricity entities to appoint and manage an Electricity Safety Officer, who may undertake specific electricity safety functions, in a similar context to that of the existing Electricity Officer under the Electricity Supply Industry Act 1995.

The structure of Tasmania's electricity supply and the entities involved have undergone significant change over the past 25 years. In some instances, the demarcation of ownership between the network, operated by an electricity entity, and a property owner's installation, has become confused. This bill will provide the clarification of the point of supply to address this issue and provide certainty for the industry and owners.

The bill will also give effect to the requirements of the Intergovernmental Agreement on the Electrical Equipment Safety System. This system provides a national framework for the certification of electrical equipment, including marking, supply, and management of the scheme. There will be no noticeable change to the current electrical equipment approvals as the new provisions supersede the current electrical appliance requirements under the Electricity Industry Safety and Administration Act 1997.

The bill does not regulate the carrying out of electrical work by electricians licensed under the Occupational Licensing Act 2005, or safe work practices, under the Work Health and Safety Act 2012. In this bill, any electrical inspection, testing, maintenance or rectification of work that is required to ensure an infrastructure or installation meets the safety requirements of this bill must also comply with the electrical work provisions of the Occupational Licensing Act 2005.

We have consulted widely on the Electricity Safety Bill 2020 with key industry stakeholders. This included two periods of consultation during the development of the bill. Consultation occurred with electricity entities, electricity retailers, electrical contractors,

relevant industry bodies and associations and associations, including the Tasmanian Farmers and Graziers Association, Local Government Association of Tasmania, unions, and relevant government agencies.

In conclusion, the bill consolidates existing safety requirements of the current acts and modernises the regulation of electricity safety in Tasmania to provide greater public protection.

I commend the bill to the House.

[12.47 p.m.]

Ms BUTLER (Lyons) - Madam Deputy Speaker, the new Electricity Safety Bill 2020 will consolidate and update all electricity safety requirements, and our advice is that there is a general acceptance that the bill consolidates previous grey areas in responsibility and the understanding of safety obligations and responsibilities.

It will also repeal the Electricity Safety and Administration Act 1997, which currently is under the secretary of Justice, and amend the Electricity Supply Industry Act 1995, the ESI, which is currently the responsibility of the independent Economic Energy Regulator, by removing electricity safety provisions as they will be in the new Electricity Safety Bill.

The energy regulator is currently responsible for the electricity safety functions and powers under the Electricity Supply Industry Act 1995. Previously, the regulator's objectives in administering the Electrical Supply Industry Act 1995, the code, and other related regulatory instruments included -

- promoting efficiency and competition in the electricity supply industry;
- establishing and maintaining a safe and efficient system of electricity generation, transmission, distribution and supply;
- establishing and enforcing proper standards of safety, security, reliability and quality in the electricity supply industry; and
- protecting the interests of consumers of electricity; that role is largely an independent role.

Currently, the secretary of the Department of Justice is responsible for the Electricity Industry Safety and Administration Act 1997.

At this stage, Labor does have strong hesitations in relation to this bill. We will not be supporting the bill at this moment, and I will outline our reasons and concerns -

Ms Archer - Did you say will not?

Ms BUTLER - We will not be.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the bill establishes the Director of Electricity Safety as a statutory position. The bill introduces mitigation of bushfire risk associated with electricity assets. The bill addresses risks associated with deterioration of assets over time, and provides regulation around the growth of vegetation into the electricity conductors and provides

regulation around this. The bill will provide clarification of the responsibilities for periodic inspection and maintenance of electricity assets and vegetation clearance based around those electricity assets.

Members interjecting.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER - Order, let the member make her contribution in silence, please.

Ms BUTLER - The bill provides the director with mechanisms and powers to ensure these responsibilities are fulfilled.

Labor has serious concerns about the powers of the role of the director under section 10 of the bill. The minister appoints the Director of Electricity Safety. That is not unusual. However, the autonomy of the minister and the director is a matter of concern. The director also carries out any other functions relating to the administration of the act the minister determines, and there is scant consideration of constraints.

We cannot rely on goodwill alone and practice from good individuals in director roles in this House. Legislation needs to be robust, and needs to be greater than current situation. It needs to be written in consideration of what the situation will be in another 20 to 30 years' time.

Section 50 states that the minister may determine corresponding law by notice in the *Gazette* to determine a law of another state or a territory or of New Zealand to be a corresponding law, without any checks and balances. We know this is highly irregular. Any concerns with these changes can only be made after the fact - I understand it is six weeks' notice - so if the minister passes a law, we find out about it in the *Gazette* but there is really not much we can do about it, other than jump up and down for six weeks.

Master Electricians Australia have also expressed their concerns about the circumstances in which a minister may have to determine - unilaterally and without consultation - that a law in a different jurisdiction, particularly one in a foreign country, should be enacted without any of our current legal and legislative system reviews and safeguards.

It is a dangerous position and this power should not sit with one position within the executive of any government. There is no obligation by the minister to not diminish safety laws, regulations and codes of practice. There is no obligation to consult employer or employee representatives in relation to adopting laws, codes of practice, regulations and standards. Also, in regulations under Part 12 Miscellaneous, proposed section 178(4) states -

The regulations may -

- (a) be of general application or limited in application according to the persons, areas, times or circumstances to which they are expressed to apply; or
- (b) provide that a matter or thing in respect of which regulations may be made is to be determined, regulated or prohibited according to the discretion of the Minister or the Director;

The Director of Electricity Safety may issue Electricity Safety Orders, make determinations and adopt or issue codes of practice. This is also the ability to adopt regulations and standards.

Proposed section 15 states that the director may make or adopt codes of practices -

- (1) The Director may make a code of practice, or adopt a code of practice, in respect of the following matters:
 - (a) the inspection, testing and maintenance of electricity infrastructure and electrical installations and the metering of electricity consumption;
 - (b) such other matters as may be prescribed.

Minister, I have a question here. In relation to 1(b), what is your interpretation of 'prescribed'?

Then we move to proposed subsection (2) -

- (2) Before making or adopting a code of practice under subsection (1), the Director is to consult with such organisations or stakeholders that the Director considers relevant to the content of the proposed code of conduct.

Madam Deputy Speaker, we believe this is far too much autonomy. Has the minister considered that the director may not appropriately consult, potentially due to lack of understanding or relevance, or may take advice from stakeholders who might provide advice that favours their own business ambition? You do not know what the landscape is going to be in another 20 or 30 years.

There is also the option of ministerial interference.

Minister, what is the consultation required for the director to issue or adopt a code of practice? Proposed section 9, Functions of Director, subsection (e) states -

The Director has the following functions:

...

- (e) to confer with and seek advice from the State Service Agencies, approved authorities and any other persons, bodies or organisations engaged in any relevant industry and other industry groups or bodies, on matters relating to the administration of this Act;

The section does not expressly require the director to consult with representatives of employers and employees. That is something that is lacking throughout this bill.

Proposed section 12, Advisory committees, states that:

- (1) The Director may establish an advisory committee to advise the Director on specified aspects of the administration of this Act.
- (2) The members of an advisory committee are appointed and hold office on terms and conditions determined by the Director and specified in the instrument of appointment.

This section lacks prescription about the makeup of this advisory committee. There is an opportunity here for the director to consult with relevant employee and employer organisations, and there should be a requirement that the committee constitution is to be tripartite, with independence.

Minister, why have you not provided better guidance in relation to the constitution of a self-appointed advisory committee? Please explain that into the *Hansard*. The bill provides for enforceable determinations and code of practice in order to respond effectively to changes, and provide the appropriate levels of assurance for electricity safety. The bill provides for nationally consistent, minimum safety requirements for electricity entity-owned network assets in an electricity network safety management system. However, penalties for organisations that are non-compliant under this act are much less than penalties provided in other states.

In their submission, the Master Electricians Association raises the inadequacies of the penalties. Currently under Tasmanian legislation a penalty unit is valued at a \$168 per penalty unit. The Master Electricians of Australia makes a general observation that - particularly for large corporates and company structures - many of these fines are less than we would expect body corporates, and in some cases individuals, to receive. I quote:

We strongly recommend that the bill be amended to reflect community expectation and impose fines that will act as a true deterrent and not simply seen as a cost of doing business if they are prosecuted.

Why are the penalties imposed in this bill significantly less than the penalties in other states? If this bill is to nationalise and adopt other laws with other states and potentially New Zealand then penalties should also be compliant. Minister, can you clarify this matter for the House? I received this advice yesterday in my briefing, that this was advice from the Department of Justice. Would you be able to clarify that the Department of Justice information to you, when that determination was made for the penalties to be a lot lower here in Tasmania than they are around the rest of Australia for very similar offences or breaches. Apparently, the Department of Justice provided information on that issue and I ask if you could share that with the House. Thank you.

Ms Archer - I think your question is a bit around the wrong way.

Ms BUTLER - I did not misunderstand. I received that advice in a briefing yesterday, minister.

Ms Archer - I think you mean advice to me, not information.

Ms BUTLER - Sorry, minister, yes, advice to you, not information given to you.

Ms Archer - I take advice from my department.

Ms BUTLER - We also have concerns about proposed section 29 with safety and compliance audits. The section states that the director may engage, direct or authorise a person to conduct an audit in respect of any electricity infrastructure, electrical installation, electrical equipment or a particular practice. Proposed section 100 of the bill concerns the audit safety management systems, and states that an electricity entity, owner or operator must have the safety management system audited as determined by the director.

Debate adjourned.

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

ANSWER TO QUESTION

Brahminy Foundation Program

[2.31 p.m.]

Mr JAENSCH (Braddon - Minister for Human Services) - Madam Speaker, with your indulgence, I would like to provide some information following up a question I was asked this morning in question time.

As I stated in a media response yesterday, I was aware of media reports relating to a Facebook post. I also stated yesterday that two senior members of the review team are currently on the ground at Many Colours 1 Direction undertaking a review of the program and they will investigate the circumstances of the Facebook post as part of that review.

To ensure accuracy of information provided to this House, I confirm my portfolio media adviser and the Department of Communities media adviser were made aware of this Facebook live post from a member of the media on 4 October, and were forwarded a copy the following day, at which time a response was provided to the media, following departmental advice. I personally saw a copy of this video on 7 October. Neither the Premier nor his advisers were sent a copy of this video, as the department was aware of the matter and responding appropriately.

To confirm, our advice from the department has continually and consistently been that the young people have been safe at all times and continue to make good progress. Furthermore, the Many Colours 1 Direction organisation was in contact with the department in relation to the incident from the time it was unfolding.

As I have stated publicly, there are currently two senior members of the review team on the ground at Many Colours 1 Direction undertaking a review of the program, and they are investigating the circumstances of this post as part of the review.

The outcomes and recommendations from the review will be provided by the end of October 2020, and the advice from my department is that reports from visiting child safety services last month and more recent feedback from those currently on the ground, indicates the children are safe, well and are making good progress.

We all have a responsibility in this House and more broadly as leaders in the community, to acknowledge that any public discussion or debate on this matter must be done in a way that does not cause any harm to the children involved. It must be done in a responsible way. That

is why there is a review underway and it is why we will continue to keep taking feedback from the experts, including those who are currently on the ground at Many Colours 1 Direction.

MOTION

Brahminy Foundation Program - Motion Negatived

[2.33 p.m.]

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

That the House -

- (1) Notes Tasmania is the only State still sending children on care and protection orders to the Brahminy program, at a cost of \$5000 per week.
- (2) Recognises that reliable witnesses have produced compelling evidence that Allan Brahminy has fabricated a background story.
- (3) Further notes that participants in the program have alleged mistreatment, and it is alleged that communications with families are monitored to deter raising complaints.
- (4) Further recognises this style of 'tough love' program is decades out of date and not conducive to current understanding of behavioural therapy.
- (5) Acknowledges that section 10G of the Children, Young Persons and Their Families Act 1997 requires the placement of an Aboriginal child, as far as practicable, with a member of the child's family or in accordance with local community practice.
- (6) Further recognises with concern that the Commissioner for Children and Young People has no jurisdiction to monitor out-of-state programs.
- (7) Agrees there is no justification for sending children and young people to the Brahminy program.
- (8) Calls on the Minister for Human Services, Hon. Roger Jaensch MP to bring these children home, and to investigate any and all allegations of misconduct or maltreatment by this program.
- (9) Further calls on the Gutwein Government to establish and fund a culturally appropriate bush therapy program based in Tasmania for at-risk young people in the out-of-home care system

A vote will be required.

The Many Colours 1 Direction program in the Northern Territory has been in the news a lot lately and it has certainly dominated debate in this House. I recall what my colleague, the member for Clark, Ms Ogilvie said this morning, when she truthfully stated that there is not a

member in this place who is not concerned about the wellbeing of children and young people. That is the overriding principle here.

Whether you are in government and the minister, or the Labor Opposition or the Greens, we are having this debate because of our sense of responsibility towards Tasmanian children and young people.

We had a briefing at lunch time from the secretary of Communities Tasmania as well as the deputy secretary who is in the Northern Territory at the moment, as well as the Child Advocate and I am thankful for that briefing. I understand there is a level of reassurance in the department that the children are safe and a belief that the children are progressing well. This is what we have heard from the minister and indeed, the Premier.

However, there are some bedrock principles here. We are failing at-risk and troubled young people when the only apparent option for them is to send them to a remote facility 3000 kilometres away in the Northern Territory. The Greens believe very strongly, Madam Speaker, that we need a local, therapeutic bush therapy alternative, and the delivery of that service should be prioritised by the Tasmanian Government and the minister in his portfolio. I take on board what the minister has said about media coverage and that message was reinforced at the briefing - the young people at Many Colours 1 Direction are aware of the debate down here and of the media coverage. There is a concern that that ongoing media debate will impact on those young people.

We are very mindful of those concerns and that is why, from the Greens' point of view, we have tried to deal with this issue as thoughtfully and as sensitively as is politically possible. However, in a democracy, a free press is sunlight. It is often the best way of understanding the true nature of a situation.

If the allegations that have been made in the media are in any way true, then it is deeply concerning. I recognise that there is a review under way and that review will report at the end of October. We look forward to the outcome of that review, and I am a bit concerned that it has already been predetermined by the minister.

We are the only jurisdiction in Australia sending at-risk young people to the Many Colours 1 Direction program, and that raises questions. Why have other states and territories not also sent their at-risk young people to this facility? Madam Speaker, I think it is about political will and I believe the reason young Tasmanians are being sent to this facility is because there has not been the political will to establish a local provider. We can do that here. We can provide a pathway for these young people into adulthood and into a good life.

It is very important that we remember what kind of young people we are dealing with here. These are not hoons, as the *Mercury* newspaper would have it in its coverage - the young bloke who borrowed that car is not a hoon. He is a teenager who has had a really hard life and that hard life began probably before birth. These kids were in many ways born right behind the eight ball and they probably have attachment disorders; they were not held enough as babies, a number of them; they did not feel safe, loved and wanted; their nutritional needs were not always met; their emotional needs certainly were not always met.

These are kids who have crashed into adolescence without some of that solidifying foundation most of us have had. They have entered adolescence not feeling particularly loved

or safe or wanted, and in those circumstances some young people will resort to extreme behaviours. They will be a danger to themselves and to others. Responding to their needs requires a very sensitive and compassionate clinical and therapeutic approach. It requires us to have faith and a belief in the capacity of people to recover from trauma, and it requires us to appropriately fund real trauma-informed responses right through our community and society from pre-birth until the end of life.

Too rarely, I believe, is trauma understood as a causative factor of abhorrent or extreme behaviours in people. Mental illness, addiction, self-harming behaviours; much of it has its foundation in trauma. The children who have been sent to Many Colours 1 Direction will invariably have trauma in their background. A number of them will have come from violent homes. For some of these kids, Brahminy will have been a first place where they have had some constancy and stability in their lives. I acknowledge that and in acknowledging that, I acknowledge that in almost every step of the way these kids have been let down and so they require us to very carefully pay attention to their needs.

The Greens will always believe the best place for us to respond to these needs, the needs of these particular young people, is on this island, close enough to community and kin; 3000 kilometres away, as I said before, feels like banishment.

Apart from anything else, the cost to Tasmanians of each child sent to the Brahminy program is around \$5000 a week. Although this is not a major concern of the minister, it still rings alarm bells with us that reliable witnesses have produced compelling evidence that Allan Brahminy has fabricated a background story about being abandoned or found on a riverbank as a baby and adopted by an Aboriginal family. It would certainly help Mr Brahminy's reputation, and the reputation of the facility that he is running, for him to make a statement clarifying why he changed his identity, or why he created that background story. People who are looking after at-risk young people should tell the truth about who they are and where they came from. It should be a fundamental.

We know from the media reports that there are allegations of mistreatment at that facility. We also know that communications, telephone calls between residents and their families back in Tasmania or other significant people in their lives are monitored. I asked about that today in the briefing. I understand there are at times good reasons to protect the young person themselves by making sure you have some sort of monitoring capacity or a person there who is able to help that young person should the phone call go pear-shaped.

We are disturbed by the philosophy of tough love. You either love someone or you do not love them. I know that there is a view that in order to regulate the behaviour of young people in this situation that timeout might work for them, or denying them certain food privileges may work to change their behaviours, but tough love is not an evidence-based approach. An allegation has been made about a young person who was punished for a behavioural issue by being made to sit outside in the heat on a milk crate. That must have been an awful experience. That allegation needs to be examined in the department's review.

I am still concerned that the terms of reference in the department's review process are too narrow. The terms of reference say -

The review will respond and provide information on the following matters:

- (1) The safety and wellbeing of young people currently placed at MC1D.
- (2) The allegations and matters raised by and following the ABC report.
- (3) The effectiveness of current oversight and due diligence mechanisms in place for Many Colours 1 Direction.
- (4) The overall effectiveness and outcomes of the program including therapeutic benefits for young people.

We believe those terms of reference are inadequate in their ability to invite input from people or their families who have previously been in the program.

I understand that there will be some people connected to that program who are angry about it for a range of reasons. Some of those responses will be visceral, emotional responses. Some people will not always have their facts right but a number of really serious allegations have been made about this program by young people and their families who have previously been resident there, and the review should be able to capture that testimony. It is not good enough to say that we will only look at the cohort of young people who are in there now. We will only ask that bunch of half-a dozen young people what their thoughts are on the program when, as we know, the sending of young people there started some five years ago.

There will be, if you like, an alumni of Many Colours 1 Direction and young people who have been through there. It would serve the review very well if those young people were also invited to tell their story about their experience at Many Colours 1 Direction.

I also know that the scope of the review precludes any investigation of Mr Brahminy's background. As the minister says in his response to the letter I wrote querying the deficiencies in the terms of reference: 'It is primarily a matter for Mr Brahminy to answer questions regarding his identity as they relate to him and not the program ...'. Well, he is the principal -

Mr Jaensch - And.

Ms O'CONNOR - Oh, okay, sorry - '... the department will, however, consider how concerns raised regarding Mr Brahminy's identity impact on the program and the safety and wellbeing of the young people involved. This is our key consideration and responsibility'.

It is good to have that clarified, minister, but it certainly was not in the terms of reference, which is why we raised it as an issue.

Mr Jaensch - We answered it in your question.

Ms O'CONNOR - Let us go now to the Children and Young Persons and Their Families Act. Section 10G of the act is quite prescriptive about young Aboriginal children. I acknowledge not all the children at Many Colours 1 Direction right now identify as Tasmanian Aboriginal but, as I understand it, four out of the six children there do. Section 10G of the Children and Young Persons and Their Families Act as it relates to Aboriginal children is very clear -

- (1) Aboriginal families, kinship groups, Aboriginal communities and organisations representing the Aboriginal people have a major, self-determining role in promoting the wellbeing of Aboriginal children.
- (2) A kinship group, Aboriginal community or organisation representing the Aboriginal people nominated by an Aboriginal child's family should be allowed to contribute to the making of a decision under this Act in relation to the child.
- (3) An Aboriginal child, as far as is practicable, should be placed with a person in the following order of priority:
 - (a) a member of the child's family;
 - (b) an Aboriginal person in the child's community in accordance with local community practice;
 - (c) another Aboriginal person;
 - (d) a person who -
 - (i) is not an Aboriginal person; but
 - (ii) in the Secretary's opinion, is sensitive to the child's needs and capable of promoting the child's ongoing affiliation with the culture of the child's community and, if possible, the child's ongoing contact with his or her family.
- (4) As far as is practicable, an Aboriginal child removed from his or her family and community, should be placed in close proximity to them.

Apart from the subclause in that provision of the act that allows the secretary to make an informed decision in the best interests of the child in relation to an Aboriginal child, that section of the act makes it really clear that when you are dealing with an at-risk child who identifies as Aboriginal, to the greatest extent possible they should be kept on island and have some connection to kin and to country. That is not what is happening 3000 kilometres away in the Northern Territory.

I accept that because the secretary of the department is in effect the parent of those children, that to the greatest extent it is possible from 3000 kilometres away, the department secretary is working to monitor the wellbeing of those children and provide a measure of oversight. However, the bottom line is that it is a very big ask from 3000 kilometres away. It is a particularly big ask during a global pandemic. There will be deficiencies in how the department is able to ensure that those children are flourishing and that they are safe. That brings home the need to have a Tasmanian-based bush therapy response for these young people, and it should be prioritised.

We recognise with something approaching alarm that the Commissioner for Children and Young People has no jurisdiction beyond this island's borders. None at all. The circumstances that those six young people are in are not under the scope of the commissioner's area of responsibility. We know that in the department there is a child advocate who has been working with those young people, and that is very positive but if you have young people on care and protection orders with a range of behavioural challenges and risks associated with those behaviours, they should be placed in facilities on the island where there is proper oversight from the Commissioner for Children and Young People.

It raises the need to amend the legislation that establishes the statutory office of the Commissioner for Children and Young People, to ensure that no matter where they are in the country, young Tasmanians on care and protection orders and those representing them should be within the commissioner's statutory responsibilities, because at the moment her hands are tied.

As I said in the debate earlier today, I did have a conversation with the commissioner about what would need to be in place to establish a bush therapy program in Tasmania for young people on care and protection orders with particular behaviours. You need clinical and therapeutic support, you need to the greatest extent possible a connection to culture and kin, but you also need the remoteness of a wilderness or a bush facility. You need to have something that is at some distance from the potential for risky behaviours by the young people who are part of that program.

Certainly, this issue should bring home to the minister how important it is that the Commissioner for Children and Young People has at least a measure of oversight of young people who are sent beyond the state's borders.

Much better is that this Government prioritise the design of a program for this particular cohort of children that has all those elements that the commissioner for children raised with me, but perhaps takes the best of what we understand is part of the Many Colours 1 Direction model, where there is a measure of stability about who is working with these children, and that the department designs a program.

We know that in 2018 a request for proposal went out, and nothing that was fit for purpose came forward, and so that process was stalled. What the minister can do here is really clear. You do not wait for something that is fit for purpose to come to you. You design the program - and I hope this is what is happening right now. They are your requirements, and if you go out for proposals as part of that - or you establish a consortium, which I understand is being considered - you make it really clear that it is going to look like this, it is going to have these clinical and therapeutic approaches, and you make sure that is what is delivered.

If necessary, the Government should deliver the program, rather than sending these kids 3000 kilometres away to the Northern Territory.

If we cannot find the service provider or providers, then we should go back and do what we were doing not much more than 10 years ago when these sorts of services were delivered by government.

I understand the not-for-profit sector has some real runs on the board in dealing with disadvantaged and vulnerable people, but there is a particular and elevated vulnerability among

these young people. There are risks associated with working with them, risks to themselves, and risks to the people that they are working with.

This is one instance where government setting itself up as the service provider may well be the right approach, just as government runs the Ashley Youth Detention Centre - which is not a therapeutic facility, mind you, and not particularly fit for purpose, and too often a one-way ticket to Risdon. It is provided for by government. The Government runs that correctional facility, and in our view, if it cannot find the right mix of providers, the Government should establish and run a locally based bush therapy program for young Tasmanians, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal, on care and protection orders, or not on care and protection orders but dealing with particular traumas or difficulty in their lives. That should be a home-grown solution.

We should be able to work with the Aboriginal communities in order to deliver something that connects young people back to culture, whether they are Aboriginal or not. The richness of that culture can teach all of us something. Connection to culture, and working with young people on country, could get some fantastic outcomes for young Tasmanians. It could really instil in young people that the state, the minister, the secretary, the department, this parliament, has their back and cares about them, and cares about them enough to find an alternative to shipping them off the Northern Territory.

Point 7 in this Notice of Motion states -

agrees there is no justification for sending children and young people to the Brahminy program.

On reflection, and following the briefing, I understand that the primary justification for sending children and young people to the Brahminy program is because there is nothing here. At one level that is a justification, because if we did not have the capacity to banish these children to the Northern Territory, it is not clear how the state would respond to them here, and that does reinforce the need to get cracking on a local program as the responsibility of the state and nourished here so they can flourish here.

I hope the review investigates any and all allegations of misconduct or maltreatment by this program, whether they be current or historical. That is essential. We want this Government to establish and fund a culturally appropriate bush therapy program based in Tasmania for at-risk young people in the out-of-home care system.

I have raised it in debate, but it is of particular concern that we are dealing with guidelines to staff in Communities Tasmania which have not been updated for more than a decade. The Aboriginal Child Placement Principle, which I understand is being reworked as we speak, was last updated in February 2006, so that Placement Principle is 14 years old. That is manifestly out-of-date and deficient for dealing with our palawa pakana young people.

Almost more damning, is that the guide for Adolescent Risk of Suicide Assessment was last updated in the year 2000. The key guiding documents in Communities Tasmania on how to respond to suicidal adolescents and at-risk Aboriginal kids are respectively 20 years and 14 years out of date. It is important to remember that staff in the agency, when they are

presented with a particular set of circumstances, and are looking for some guidance from the department, will be looking at documents that are scientifically out-of-date, if nothing else.

I have held my tongue a couple of times over the course of today when accusations have been thrown across the Chamber about the risk to young people of the media reporting on what is happening at Brahminy. There is no escaping the fact that we live in a dynamic, information-rich age, and not only can you watch something as it is happening, you can watch it on play-back. I know, because we were told in the briefing, that young people at Brahminy, at Many Colours 1 Direction are aware of the debate that is happening here.

We cannot, however, allow ourselves as political representatives, to shy away from asking questions when there have been serious allegations made about a facility that is looking after at-risk children and young people. It was hard to stomach this morning, listening to the Premier and the minister have a crack at us for raising these matters so they end up in the media, when I remember 19 September 2013 very clearly. I was sitting on the government side of the Chamber. It was only a little over two months after my sister took her life, and at the time when there were tragedies unfolding at a local high school and a spate of young people had taken their lives. The Liberal Opposition, four members of the shadow cabinet, stood up that day and they were prepared to use suicide as a political weapon. At least some of them knew that two months previously, my sister took her life.

I am not going to accept the kind of accusation or the attempt to shut down debate on the basis of worrying about media reporting from that group of people because I will never forget 19 September 2013 question time. I will never forget it. It was scarring and it was base and worse, not for me, but for young people. We had a Liberal Opposition that was prepared to politicise tragedy and families' losses. They were prepared to use it as a political weapon in question time.

Then we had Coroner Olivia McTaggart's coronial report into the cluster of five suicides that precipitated those questions, and she made the necessary and obvious conclusion that media reporting had harmed young people and increased the risk.

I say to the Premier and the minister - spare us the hypocrisy. We are adults here, and we can take on this issue and raise necessary questions in a sensitive and thoughtful manner, about how at-risk children and young people are being cared for at a facility 3000 kilometres away. It is our duty, as elected representatives, to speak for Tasmania's children and young people every day of the week.

From the Greens' point of view, we will not be cowed into not raising these issues by the Premier and the minister, who are looking for a way to shut down criticism and concern. I commend this motion to the House. I hope it has a measure of support. If the minister wants to amend it to take out those parts he does not agree with, he should certainly feel free to do so.

[3.07 p.m.]

Mr JAENSCH (Braddon - Minister for Human Services) - Madam Speaker, I thank Ms O'Connor, the Leader of the Greens, for bringing this motion forward. I indicate at the outset that with the exception of item 7 - which I believe Ms O'Connor herself qualified or withdrew - and section 8 which I will make specific reference to further -

Ms O'Connor - Not that contentious.

Mr JAENSCH - the remaining noting and acknowledging is not, I believe, problematic for any of us. I believe we agreed on those matters, including the intention clearly recorded again - and I am happy to speak more about it today - to work towards having the capacity to accommodate, treat, nurture and heal young people with complex behavioural needs and traumatic backgrounds in our own state.

I need to be clear because I do not think I have said it before: children are not being sent to Many Colours 1 Direction in the Northern Territory because we want to send them 3000 kilometres away. I would send them to the moon if that was the only place where there was the right solution. We need to provide what we can here, and we need to continually aim to do more and better for everyone who presents here with their needs, but this is where the solution is that fits these kids' needs right now. We cannot wish another solution closer to home into being for those kids; we need to work with what we have and we need to move to what we need. I believe there is an acceptance of that principle.

I will put on the record that despite the distance, oversight and safeguards are in place for these young people in out-of-home care - as there are across the out-of-home care system in Tasmania for young people - including Child Safety staff - one for each of these young people - who do visit regularly in person; that there are child safety officers, responsible for overseeing and coordinating their care, who have relationships with those young people and interact with them regularly by phone and video up to a couple of times a week; a care team around them that convenes to review their needs, progress and their case direction, including child safety staff, Many Colours 1 Direction staff, other professionals, and family members where possible; a child advocate visits and is available to these kids; and we have the Australian Childhood Foundation separately contracted to provide therapeutic counselling and support to them, and to Many Colours 1 Direction on the ground in the Northern Territory, and a relationship with the Northern Territory Department of Families, who can provide follow-up and support as well, as needed.

I note Ms O'Connor referred to the review due at the end of October. My specifications for the department have been by the end of October, or within the month, but clearly, they are already sharing some of the observations that have been made. There is more work to do, and I will have those answers brought as swiftly as possible.

We are the only jurisdiction with the young people in the Many Colours 1 Direction program right now. Other jurisdictions have other approaches, and they range from having other programs available to them, custom built or suited to the needs of their kids. I also understand from my discussions about this, that some jurisdictions have a more direct path; maybe youth justice has a solution for dealing with some of the behaviours that come out rather than a behaviour therapeutic treatment-type approach.

There is a range of different reasons why other jurisdictions may not have used this or similar programs, but I acknowledge and agree with Ms O'Connor. We have stated publicly on the record, we agree with the Commissioner for Children and Young People's out-of-home and monitoring report recommendation that we work towards having a program that can do these things here, in Tasmania, closer to country, and under closer care and supervision, without

the distances involved, and the transaction costs that we face when we have to do that over such long distances and time zones, et cetera.

As Ms O'Connor alluded from the discussion we have recently had, that may not be something we have been able to procure from current providers available in the market, or those few who have put their hand up when we have sought expressions of interest.

I confirm again that we have in the past looked for opportunities to develop a program in Tasmania delivering some more outcomes, and we will continue to do so. We had a request for information process in 2018, which did not identify any suitable potential programs among the small number of providers that are already established in Tasmania who made submissions.

In June this year, we also sought requests for information from organisations interested in developing a professional carer model to deliver therapeutic family-placed interventions. This sort of thing needs to be built in as part of a successful transition, stepping-up and stepping-down complement to something like a Many Colours 1 Direction program here. We are still working through the proposals received for that.

We have committed to engage and work with Aboriginal communities and organisations to scope up an on-country residential program in Tasmania. I believe aspects of this are relevant to the commitments we have made under the Closing the Gap national agreement as well, which may enable us to bring other focuses and resources to this.

I am aware there have been previous programs operating in Tasmania. However, they have been relatively more focused to youth justice diversionary programs, as opposed to complex behavioural therapeutic healing models - and maybe even in some cases those programs have been specific to Aboriginal participants and young people, not the broader cohort that is dealt with at Many Colours 1 Direction.

My department advises that the review that is under way right now is assisting them to refine the scope of elements and success factors that would need to be embedded in a model that works for Tasmania. I agree with Ms O'Connor and my department that, in the absence of an off-the-shelf model available through a procurement process, we may need to build something of our own - a brokered consortium or partnership, with a role for government in it also. We will get the best ideas from wherever they are, as before, because the goal has to be the best outcome for the children and young people, in whatever form it comes.

I agree with Ms O'Connor's comment as well, that the matter regarding Allan Brahminy's identity remains an outstanding one. I confirm that the terms of reference, as published, as well as explained to Ms O'Connor in response to her question, for this review include -

The review will respond and provide information on the following matters:

The allegations and matters raised by and following the ABC report.

My intent is that it captures also those matters of identity and the question of the veracity of claims or the uncertainty of identity regarding Mr Allan Brahminy. However, as Ms O'Connor said, Mr Brahminy may be well served by being able to provide a clear statement

in response to these matters. We would certainly be prepared to facilitate that in the context of the review that is currently under way, and have communicated that to him.

I know others may want to speak, so I will quickly run through a couple of other items that were raised.

Ms O'Connor has spoken a couple of times about the perceived out-of-dateness of some policy documents the department has. I am advised that the department maintains a suite of policies and practice advice in relation to child safety decision-making and practice. They interact with one another, they are updated and at times superseded and retired. They are internal policies and procedures for child safety practitioners, and are used in conjunction with other sources of information and in discussion with supervisors regarding the circumstances of specific cases.

I am aware of concerns specifically regarding the guidelines for assessing adolescent risk of suicide, and guidelines for the placement of Aboriginal children. My advice is the department uses a range of resources when it comes to adolescent mental health, and as the guideline referred to by Ms O'Connor states, the document is a guide. It is a guide only. Its content and application need to be considered critically in conjunction with other literary sources, specialist consultancy and normal supervisory structure.

I am advised that the content remains relevant and, exactly as is stated, it is used in conjunction with a variety of other sources of information and assistance, such as consultation with specialist mental health service providers, and information sourced from specialist and authoritative sources. For example, content provided by the statewide mental health services on suicide risk and prevention, other critical risk assessment tools like the Tasmania risk framework and the accompanying practice guide, and in discussion with supervisors about the application of guidance information in a context of specific cases.

I am advised the Child Safety Service has also invested in mental health first aid training for its frontline staff, because while child safety officers are not mental health specialists, they can often be the first attender in terms of interacting with a person who is experiencing mental health crises.

Very quickly, I also want to refer to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander child placement principle. I am advised that the principle, its policy intent and features are still current. I can confirm with my advice from the department that the department is continuing to work and is in the process of putting additional resources to achieving the implementation of the child placement principle more fully. Again this is an area that I intend to pursue progress in the context of the Closing the Gap work as well where it relates to particularly Aboriginal service provision to Aboriginal children and families in this area.

Item 8 calls on the minister to bring the children home. We have had a discussion about what is involved with doing that. I think there is an acceptance that it is not a simple thing to do and it is also not something that we can do lawfully in regard of the parliament or the minister directing the secretary under the Children and Young Persons and Their Families Act who is the guardian of those children. There is a limitation there. The intention is clear. All of those children will be returning home when they are ready, unless the review finds other issues which mean that their earlier return to Tasmania would be beneficial for them or better

alternatives for their therapeutic treatment arise here in the meantime. So I would not be able to support those inclusions in the motion.

Regarding media and the report we do not intend to gag debate. What we intend to do is to plead for modification of the language and the emphasis so that we do not create the sensation that the media might take on, conflate and escalate to the point where we have the broader public that are not privileged to the sorts of context and advice and briefings that we have here making their own judgments about those people and their circumstances from the comfort of their keyboards. That is the only intent of our comments on that matter.

Madam SPEAKER - Minister, I remind you that if you do not want to support those amendments you have to create an amendment.

Mr Jaensch - Oh yes, I have to write it down, don't I?

Ms O'Connor - You should have done this work before you came to the House.

Mr JAENSCH - Madam Speaker, with regard to the motion I propose to amend the motion

(1) By leaving out paragraph (7)

(2) In paragraph (8) by leaving out "to bring these children home, and".

[3.24 p.m.]

Ms HOUSTON (Bass) - Madam Speaker, we will be supporting this motion. I cannot disagree with anything in it. Five thousand dollars per week and \$260 000 per year to keep children away from home in a camp in a residential program in the Northern Territory could be better invested in developing those programs. Keeping them on country should be central. If that is not possible now, then let us fix it. Let us develop trauma informed residential programs and get those kids the therapeutic services they need much closer to home.

There are models that can be sourced and adapted to the situation that is required. A genuine and in-depth consultation process would help source the best option, and consulting with the Aboriginal community and listening to the organisations that support those kids already, would be the best way to have a self-determined and best-informed practice.

Time expired.

Amendment agreed to.

Question - That the motion, as amended, be agreed to - put -

The House divided -

AYES 11

Dr Broad
Ms Butler (Teller)
Ms Dow
Ms Haddad

NOES 13

Ms Archer
Mr Barnett
Ms Courtney
Mr Ellis (Teller)

Ms Houston
Mr O'Byrne
Ms O'Byrne
Ms O'Connor
Ms Standen
Ms White
Dr Woodruff

Mr Ferguson
Mr Gutwein
Mr Jaensch
Ms Ogilvie
Mrs Petrusma
Mr Rockliff
Mr Shelton
Mr Street
Mr Tucker

Motion, as amended, negatived.

MOTION

Leave to Move Motion without Notice

[3.36 p.m.]

Ms WHITE (Lyons - Leader of the Opposition) - Madam Speaker, I seek leave to move a motion without notice of no confidence in the Minister for Human Services.

I will read the motion into *Hansard*, but it should not come as a surprise to the House, given the Leader of Government Business indicated he expected we would use this time to have this debate. That is why they gagged it earlier.

Madam Speaker, I move -

That this House express no confidence in the Minister for Human Services for the following reasons -

- (1) Serious allegations have been raised about the mistreatment of children in the Brahminy Program.

There are two words missing from this motion -

Mr FERGUSON (Bass - Leader of Government Business) - Madam Deputy Speaker, to support the process, I ask if we need to seek leave or suspend right now before the motion itself. We would be prepared to support that occurring.

Ms White - Move straight into it?

Mr FERGUSON - Yes.

Leave granted.

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS

Debate a Motion Forthwith

[3.38 p.m.]

Ms WHITE (Lyons - Leader of the Opposition) - Madam Deputy Speaker, I move -

That so much of Standing Orders be suspended as would prevent a motion of want of confidence in the Minister for Human Services, of which notice has been given this day, being debated forthwith.

Mr FERGUSON (Bass - Leader of Government Business) - I seek the clarity of the Chair on advice of the Clerk and perhaps even you, Ms White. Subject to it being contained before 5 p.m. we would have no issue. Otherwise I will move an amendment to clarify it should be completed in private members' time.

Ms WHITE - Madam Deputy Speaker, I understand the minister was seeking clarification on that matter. We seek to suspend Standing Orders to debate this matter of no confidence in the minister. We will not seek to limit the debate to an hour and a half. This is a very serious matter and it deserves the attention of the parliament, so we will not be agreeing to limit the debate, if that is the proposal from Government members.

For the interests of members, I will read the motion into *Hansard*. It does deal with -

- (1) Serious allegations have been raised about the mistreatment of children in the Many Colours 1 Direction program.
- (2) The minister has repeatedly assured this parliament and the people of Tasmania that children in the Many Colours 1 Direction program in the Northern Territory are safe and are being successfully rehabilitated.
- (3) Video evidence has emerged which shows a participant in the program allegedly speeding in a stolen vehicle, risking the safety of themselves and members of the public.
- (4) The video was provided to the minister's office on 5 October and the minister viewed the footage on 7 October.
- (5) The minister knew about this incident when he claimed children in the program were safe.
- (6) The minister has actively played down concerns about the safety of the children in the program, including describing the disturbing incident of a child stealing a vehicle and speeding through a community area as 'more of a joy ride'.
- (7) Despite the minister viewing the footage on 7 October, the Premier told the parliament he did not become aware of the incident until 13 October.
- (8) The minister has demonstrated such appalling judgment that he cannot be responsible for the care of vulnerable children, and he is unfit to be a minister of the Crown.

Madam Deputy Speaker, again, we are seeking to bring on this motion of no confidence in the minister because we have not been satisfied that the updates he has provided to this parliament in answering his earlier questions that were raised on this matter, or in his public statements, that he has exercised appropriate judgment when it comes to caring for some of the most vulnerable children in Tasmania.

This is a matter that needs to be debated with urgency. We are seeking leave to allow that to occur, and we will not be supporting any limitation of this debate, because it is critically important that we are able to examine all of the matters that are in this motion.

Because I predict it will be an argument made by Government, this is a very different matter from what was examined yesterday. This is dealing with the conduct of the minister in his portfolios of child safety services and Human Services, and the way he has conducted himself, particularly in respect to six children who are in the care of the Brahminy program in the Northern Territory.

It has been unfortunate to watch how this minister has responded to legitimate questions raised by this side of the House, and I do not believe that he has honestly answered those questions at all times. It is very difficult for us to believe everything the minister tells us when it has become clear that he even keeps information from the Premier. He has kept the Premier in the dark over a serious incident that occurred in the Northern Territory -

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER - I remind members that we are on the suspension of Standing Orders debate, not the proper debate. If we could restrict our comments to that, please.

Ms WHITE - Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. Yes, it is. The argument I am trying to make is that it is important that we have this debate now, and that we suspend Standing Orders so that we can proceed with the debate on the motion that I have just read out to the House. The concern we have is that we cannot trust a word the minister says. He did not even tell the Premier the whole story, and that does go to his character and his credibility as a minister. This is a very serious issue and we need to examine it because he is the responsible minister for some of the most vulnerable people in Tasmania, including children.

If we cannot have confidence that he is able to exercise his duties diligently and honestly at all times, and with good judgment, then we need to take action, which is what we have done by moving this motion of no confidence. His response to serious incidents that have occurred has called into question his judgment as a good parent for those vulnerable children.

In response to finding out that a car had been stolen, to refer to that as just a joy ride is not the response of a good parent. That is a demonstration of poor judgment on behalf of the minister, and it goes to his judgment as the minister acting across some of the most important portfolios in government caring for vulnerable people.

This is why we need to suspend Standing Orders to bring on this debate. We will not be supporting any amendments by the Government to gag the debate. We need to deal with the substantive matters that are in the motion.

[3.43 p.m.]

Mr FERGUSON (Bass - Leader of Government Business) - Madam Deputy Speaker, it is not that the Government supports or sees the merit in this latest stunt motion from the Labor Party, but in the interests of meeting the commitments the Government made this morning when a previous debate occurred, together with the simple fact that between now and 5 p.m. it

is in fact Labor Party private members' time, and it is more or less up to the members of the Labor Opposition to choose the motion that is important to them today.

I note the motion that was previously put on the blue was a motion that related specifically to the issue of the welfare of children in the Many Colours 1 Direction program. It is also the case that only 24 hours ago an almost identical motion, certainly in respect of confidence, was debated in this House, and was resolved in this House, and nothing has changed. Nothing. Actually, one thing has changed but as I said this morning, nothing has changed in relation to that, but the Labor Party wants to find a new reason to have their stunt motion and get themselves on the news.

One thing that has changed since this morning is that there has been a briefing. That is a welcome fact, because the Labor Party in their blood lust this morning was not prepared even to wait for that. The purpose of the briefing was to allow members, including the Labor Leader, to be more informed about the issue. I am not prepared to say on the record any of the details that were provided at the briefing, but I am informed -

Ms O'Byrne - You should have been.

Mr FERGUSON - So should you have been this morning, before you leapt into your no confidence motion, Ms O'Byrne.

Ms O'Byrne - Sorry, are you saying that you have access to the child's private information?

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER - Order, the member can make her contribution soon.

Mr FERGUSON - I can say this much. I am permitted to go this far: the display that is being put on in this House today is not in the interests of those young people. Members who are prepared to be honest about it will agree. That was the message.

We can do this any number of ways. This is a potentially 35-minute debate. I do not see that as a good use of time. If members wish to speak this out, that is their decision, but the Government will not be going through the circus again of a no confidence motion with the usual 13-hour outside window, the window for such a debate. The matter was resolved yesterday. It was moved by the Greens Leader. It seems the Labor Leader wishes to copy, and it is entirely -

Dr Broad - You want to go nigh-nighs, do you?

Mr FERGUSON - Ordinarily you would require a 24-hour notice period, if you just allow me to speak.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER - Order, Dr Broad, thank you.

Mr FERGUSON - Ordinarily, 24 hours notice, but given the nature of the motion, given my statements this morning, we are prepared to not stand in the way of the Standing Orders being suspended and will allow this motion to be debated forthwith. However, it does require

an amendment. We can debate it. We can divide. We can waste time. That is up to members opposite, but I do now move -

After the words 'forthwith', insert -

'and that debate on the motion be completed by 5 p.m., and that immediately following a vote on the motion, the House proceeds to Government Private Members' Business.'

[3.47 p.m.]

Ms O'BYRNE (Bass) - Madam Deputy Speaker, the minister has failed to make a case for why this debate should be truncated, and failed to make a case why the debate should not be treated with the greatest respect.

The minister said we do not need to debate this because we already debated it yesterday. The minister was in the House yesterday. He knows that his minister survived a want of confidence motion which dealt with the fact that it was argued that he had lied to parliament in answering questions in this House. That was actually backed up by the evidence provided by the members for the Greens.

It is a separate matter that we are dealing with today. It is disturbing that we have to deal with this second matter because it goes even more to highlighting the incompetence of this minister: that this minister is not able to tell the truth in this place and we have no confidence in his ability to tell the truth in this place, but he also has not been able to deal with the issues, the really significant issues, that go to the very serious matter of children within his care.

Madam Deputy Speaker, while I will not reflect on you while you are in the Chair, you and I have both been in the position of being responsible for children in care, and we know what those responsibilities are. We know that we have walked this path in the parliament before, and that simply saying that these are matters dealing with children does not at any stage recuse the minister from their responsibility to be able to answer questions in this House. It does go to the way the questions are framed. It does go to the way that we treat the issue publicly, but it has never been the case that a minister responsible for child protection has not had to answer questions in parliament. Never.

For the Government to use that as one of the very weak excuses as to why this minister should not be held to account is using those children as shield when he should actually be shielding them and protecting them.

We would not be here if we believed those children were safe, and if we believed that this minister had behaved honestly and truthfully in his representations not only to the parliament, but to the chief minister in his party, to the Premier. It is unbelievable -

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER - I remind the member that this debate at the moment is on the suspension of Standing Orders.

Ms O'BYRNE - This is why it is very important that we have the suspension, but also why we also need to have a proper amount of time to debate this issue. It has not been proven by this Government that this can be dealt with in an hour and a half. This is a very serious matter. The member who just spoke has been playing games with it all day, as was the minister

- the minister who, by the way, successfully amended a motion by the Greens and then voted against it. That goes to our ability to have confidence.

Mr FERGUSON - Madam Speaker, you have already given guidance to the member to keep her remarks relevant to the question of the suspension motion.

Ms O'BYRNE - The suspension motion goes to why this matter needs to be dealt with without a truncated time period. The member who sat down said we had refused a briefing. This is the member who offered us an immediate suspension of parliament so we could have a briefing and then deal with this matter, and then revoked that offer because there was a time set for 1 o'clock. He pulled a bit of a stunt that failed, and he was a bit embarrassed about that. We need to have this debate because this matter actually matters.

Mr Ferguson - You are about to have it but you are delaying it.

Ms O'BYRNE - I do not know which seat you are sitting in.

We need to be able to have confidence in this minister to answer the questions that parliament asks and he should not use as an excuse, 'Oh, I survived a no-confidence on another matter yesterday', as a reason for us not to debate this properly. He should not use as an excuse the privacy of children, because we are all aware of that issue. Every minister who has had this responsibility has had to answer questions in parliament. It is their job. That is not an excuse, and it is not an excuse for them to say we have not appropriately had a briefing. We would have that briefing immediately the minister offered it, but then he failed to follow through.

This matter needs to be debated because we no longer know what is happening with this minister. He is not being truthful to us. Obviously he has not been truthful to the Premier. There could not have been a time when he looked at that video - and he said he saw it on 7 October - and did not think to tell the Premier and the Premier's office. He did not think to take some action. He did not think to ensure he did not make every other member of his party mislead by saying that the children were safe because he knew that they were not safe. He knew that activities had taken place that were not safe, and if he did not tell the Premier and he did not tell us then he is failing, and every single member of that side needs to stand up and defend that behaviour and defend that minister. This debate should go for the full time.

[3.52 p.m.]

Mr GUTWEIN (Bass - Premier) - Madam Deputy Speaker, again, this is a stunt by Labor. They are not even prepared to take up their full time allocation - to 5 p.m. - which is what this side of the House will support.

Ms O'Byrne - We want longer.

Mr GUTWEIN - Well, by standing up to debate this, you are wasting your own time.

Ms O'Byrne interjecting.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER - Order, Ms O'Byrne.

Mr GUTWEIN - I cannot disguise, no matter how I might try, the contempt with which I hold you in at the moment on that side of the House, for the way you are attempting to weaponise children in difficult circumstances with this debate.

You received a briefing of which I have been informed, and I have participated myself post that briefing, to understand the information that was provided. The view of the very senior people who were in that room, regarding these children and their safety, as I understand it, was made perfectly clear to you, as it was to me - they are safe and they are in the best place for them at the moment. Yet you continue to raise this issue and weaponise it for nothing more than political purposes. Where you are at the moment is beneath contempt, to be frank.

Ms O'Byrne - This is about the minister's honesty. You are using them as a cover to protect your minister.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER - Order, Ms O'Byrne, you have made your contribution. I ask that you comply.

Mr GUTWEIN - It is extraordinary. Ms O'Byrne should be someone in this place who understands the responsibility that a minister holds in this portfolio. Your Leader has received a briefing from senior people, not only here in Tasmania but on the ground in the Northern Territory, and you still want to play political games. Regarding the advice I provided to this House yesterday, the department stands by that advice. Nothing has changed about that advice in terms of the children being safe, yet you continue to want to go on with this. You are beneath contempt, to be frank. It is extraordinary.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER - Order, Premier, I ask that you go back to why Standing Orders should or should not be suspended.

Mr GUTWEIN - I am speaking to the amendment. They want to bring on a no confidence motion. We will take it on but we will take it on in their time to 5 p.m.

Amendment agreed to.

Motion, as amended, agreed to.

MOTION

Want of Confidence in the Minister for Human Services - Motion Negatived

[3.56 p.m.]

Ms WHITE (Lyons - Leader of the Opposition) - Madam Deputy Speaker, I move -

That the House has no confidence in the Minister for Human Services for the following reasons.

- (1) Serious allegations have been raised about the mistreatment of children in the Many Colours 1 Direction program.

- (2) The minister has repeatedly assured this parliament and the people of Tasmania that children in the Many Colours 1 Direction program in the Northern Territory are safe and are being successfully rehabilitated.
- (3) Video evidence has emerged which shows a participant in the program allegedly speeding in a stolen vehicle, risking the safety of themselves and members of the public.
- (4) The video was provided to the minister's office on 5 October and the minister viewed the footage on 7 October.
- (5) The minister knew about this incident when he claimed children in the program were safe.
- (6) The minister has actively played down concerns about the safety of the children in the program, including describing the disturbing incident of a child stealing a vehicle and speeding through a community area as 'more of a joy ride'.
- (7) Despite the minister viewing the footage on 7 October, the Premier told the parliament he did not become aware of the incident until 13 October.
- (8) The minister has demonstrated such appalling judgment that he cannot be responsible for the care of vulnerable children, and he is unfit to be a minister of the Crown.

There is no surprise that the Premier is a bit touchy about this one because his minister has kept him in the dark. It was proven today when the Premier said he was unaware of the video relating to a serious incident with children in the care of the state until yesterday and yet the minister saw that video on 7 October. He did not tell the Premier about it. Instead, the Premier came into this place yesterday and defended the program. He said it was turning people's lives around. The Premier said, 'I understand there is positive progress being made and these young people are turning their lives around', but he had not seen the video. That shows without a shadow of a doubt that there are young people in that program who are not acting in a way that we would consider safe and these are children under the guardianship of the state.

There is no doubt that the minister has thrown the Premier under the bus here, by not keeping him informed. In fact, the Premier has admitted he has only now received a briefing. Why did it take so long? This was a matter where serious allegations were raised in the media on 29 September. Why has it taken until today for the Premier to be interested enough to get a briefing?

Is it because the minister, Roger Jaensch, has not kept him informed, not shared with him the level of detail that would be expected of something as serious as this matter. This is the reason his judgment is being called into question and why we have moved this motion. Not only is he letting down children and the people of Tasmania, he is letting down his own Premier. There is no wonder that the Premier is so touchy.

It is important for us to consider the context of this motion and particularly how it relates to the minister. We are not here to talk about individual circumstances of any of those children. That has never been the reason for us moving this motion. The motion is to talk about the conduct of the minister and the responsibility he has to these vulnerable children who are under the care of the state. They are under his guardianship, and the guardianship of the secretary.

The question before the House is whether or not we can have confidence that this minister can do his job. We do not have confidence, and I will explain why.

We have serious concerns about the allegations that have been made about the welfare of children in the Brahminy program. These are allegations that have been made by children and their families who are currently in the program, as well as former participants of that program. They need to be investigated. They should be independently investigated but the minister has already prejudged the outcome of the review.

Despite the fact that review is taking until the end of the month, the minister has already prejudged the outcome because he is determined that the children there are safe and well. The minister is dismissing the care complaints without waiting to see what that review tells him. That calls his judgment into question. How can we take this minister seriously ever again? He says that should something like this occur in the future he is going to undertake a review, and those findings will inform his decisions and his thinking as the minister. What he has demonstrated throughout this period of time is that he will prejudge any review in order to say what he thinks he needs to say at the time, as minister, to protect himself. That is effectively what he has been doing in this place. His judgment is so bad that when he became aware of an incident of a young person in the Brahminy program who had 'stolen a vehicle', a statement that the child used himself in the video, when he was asked to explain how that could occur and how that could be an indication of the safety of that child and the efficacy of the program that the state government is paying \$5000 a week for each child, he said that it was 'more like a joy ride'.

The child was going 100 kilometers an hour in a community area. That is not a joy ride and it should not have been dismissed by the minister as such. He should have been much more careful with his language and addressed the seriousness of that issue and that incident. That calls into question his judgment. If the minister responsible for vulnerable children and for children under the care of the state says that something like that is a joy ride, how is he going to assess other matters that might come before him as a minister?

It calls into question his judgment. Would he say that about another child? Would he say that it was a joy ride if somebody came into the parliament car park and took a car and took it for a few laps around the city in Hobart and, if they brought it back, 'it was just a joy ride'.

It calls into question the judgment of this minister. He has to act in a way that is responsible for the welfare of all children in his care. He has prejudged the outcome with a review. He has dismissed with an off-the-cuff remark that the theft of a vehicle was just a joy ride. He knew about a video and he did not tell the Premier.

What we do know because of the update that was provided by the minister earlier today is that on 4 October his office became aware of a Facebook video depicting an incident of a child in the care of the state in the Brahminy program. On 7 October he personally became aware of that video. I presume that he viewed it at that time. The minister indicates that neither

the Premier nor his office were made aware of the existence of that video. The Premier tells us today that he only became aware of it yesterday. That is quite a length of time between when the minister first became aware of it and the Premier became aware of it.

Why does that matter? It again calls into question the judgment of the minister because the Brahminy program has come under intense media scrutiny recently, with the first media article going live on 29 September. From 29 September the Brahminy program has been in the spotlight in Tasmania because of serious allegations that have been made about the identity of Allan Brahminy, and serious allegations about care concerns of the welfare of children, both current and former participants in that program. On 29 September and on 7 October the minister saw a video and despite the intense media interest and public interest in the welfare of those children he still did not tell the Premier.

The Premier did not find out about it until yesterday. That calls into question the judgment of the Minister for Human Services in doing his job; in doing his job as a minister of the Cabinet and supporting his colleagues as well, not just about his capacity to support vulnerable children in this state.

What we also know from the minister is that MC1D was in contact with the department from the time that incident was unfolding. It is our understanding that incident occurred in September. We also know that in the same month, department officials were in the Northern Territory at that program. In September we had officials from the Tasmanian Government in the Northern Territory at the Brahminy program. We also had an incident occurring with a youth stealing a vehicle, going at 100 kilometres in a community area yet the minister still has not been able to come back into this House and update his answer, or the Premier update his answer from earlier about when the department told him, and whether or not the department officials were there before or after that incident. That is a question we asked today: were those department officials in the Northern Territory before or after that incident? We still do not know.

The question for the minister is why it took him so long to be made aware by his department of this incident, particularly when we are talking about children who are under the guardianship of the state. This has become a very significant issue now. The situation is that the program in the Northern Territory has had serious allegations raised about the integrity of the identity of the individual whose name is attached to that program, Allan Brahminy, as well as care concerns raised from past and current participants in the program. And then, a significant incident, which we understand occurred in September, that the minister claims he did not find out about until 7 October, and he did not tell the Premier about, perhaps not until yesterday. The Premier did not find out about the video until yesterday. What is still not clear is whether the minister was made aware of that incident prior to the video becoming available for him to view on 7 October.

All of these things call into question his judgment about the comments he has been giving to the media and to the Tasmanian public over the past two weeks. He has repeatedly defended the Brahminy program, repeatedly said that those children are safe, yet we have seen video evidence of one child in particular who was not. He was putting his own life in danger and potentially the lives of other people in danger by driving at 100 kilometres an hour in a vehicle that he had stolen.

It is very serious for the minister to be honest with the Tasmanian public about an issue like this. We know for a fact that on 7 October he became personally aware of that video and yet, in the time between then and now, he has made a number of repeated statements -

Mr Jaensch - You have said the same couple of sentences about six times. Is there anything else?

Ms WHITE - Because it is important. You knew about something that concerned the welfare of an individual child under your guardianship. You have confirmed that on 7 October you saw a video, and yet in the days after that you have repeatedly said that the children are safe. You have never once indicated otherwise. In fact, you have prejudged the outcome of a review as being initiated because of serious concerns that have been raised about the care at the program and the identity of the person behind the program, but you repeatedly say that the children are safe. That calls into question your judgment; it calls into question the ability of this minister to be believed.

We still do not have answers from this Government about what their plans are with respect to services that might be provided in Tasmania for children, rather than sending them to the Northern Territory. It would be good to get some concrete information from the Government about what their intention is for children in Tasmania, in the out-of-home care system, who deserve to have services provided here in Tasmania, to keep them connected to people, community and to their families.

There are serious questions that the minister needs to answer about the operation of this program but, most importantly, the concern that we have is about the judgment of this minister and his integrity to do his job because of the way that he has conducted himself since the allegations were first aired. He has assured people and the parliament that children in this program are safe and are being successfully rehabilitated. That is not consistent with what we have seen reported in the media by children who have been through the program. On 29 September - and I am quoting from an ABC online story -

Hobart mother, Sarah, whose real name cannot be used, said her son was 12 years old when Tasmania's Child Safety Service sent him to Allan Brahminy's program in January 2019.

She has hired a lawyer to try to get her son - who is on a care-and-protection order - returned home by the State Government. "We're going on 18 months. I want my son back", Sarah said.

Sarah said her son was on five different types of medication for attention deficit hyperactive disorder (ADHD) when he arrived, all of which were taken off him against the advice of his GP.

"He was so troubled and, to be in the middle of nowhere with strangers and no medication or anything like that, and just having to cope, going cold turkey, it just broke my heart," Sarah said.

"I just couldn't think how he would be feeling."

Sarah's son ran away from the facility along with another Tasmanian boy last October, making headlines in the NT.

Her son called her at the time to say they were finding their way back to Tasmania.

I said, "Please don't. You're in the middle of nowhere."

The two 12-year-olds managed to hitchhike to Darwin Airport before being picked up by Federal Police.

Tom, who was from Devonport, said he had also run away because he couldn't handle the poor living conditions and means of punishment.

"I just couldn't take it and I was going to do something stupid to myself, or I was going to really react bad up there, so I thought 'I've got to run'." he said.

These are the voices of some of the parents and the children who have been involved in the program, the program that the minister has repeatedly assured this parliament and the Tasmanian public is operating successfully and that children are being rehabilitated. Tasmania is currently the only state to send children to this program. There are no other states that use it and the Government has not developed an alternative program in Tasmania. It has to get on and do that without delay. On 2 October, Roger Jaensch said -

The program run by Allan Brahminy in his organisation has been getting results with these kids where other programs have failed.

We now know that he said that after this particular incident occurred in September. The other concern we have is that the minister has been inconsistent when it comes to whether or not the review the department is currently undertaking will consider the identity of Allan Brahminy. This has been one of the serious concerns that has been raised in the media. The integrity of somebody running a program identifying themselves to be of a particular background or connected to a particular indigenous community does matter.

This is a program that speaks about one of its key components of it being the link to indigenous culture. The minister went so far as to say that he did not care about what the true identity is of Mr Allan Brahminy. How can it be the case that the minister responsible for vulnerable children in Tasmania does not care about the identity of the person they are placed with? The minister has been very inconsistent on this matter. When claims were raised with him about Mr Brahminy's indigenous origin story, he initially said it would not be part of the review. He said -

Only Mr Brahminy can answer questions about his background and his name and those matters.

This does contradict what the Premier said yesterday. It contradicts what the minister has said today. I hope that it has finally dawned on the minister that the identity of the person responsible for caring for these children does matter and the integrity of the person who is caring for these vulnerable children does matter. If what he is saying about himself is not true, that matters. I was shocked when I first heard the minister he did not care about the identity of Mr Allan Brahminy. That calls into question his judgment as the Minister for Human Services,

as the minister responsible as the guardian for vulnerable children in Tasmania and the out-of-home care system.

It does call into question his judgment. He was so brazen to say that he did not care about the serious allegations that have been raised about the identity of the person, Mr Allan Brahminy, who is responsible for care and welfare of six Tasmanian children right now. It is important that these matters are reviewed. That goes to the very core of this issue which is about the care and wellbeing of these children and the judgment of the minister to decide where they should be placed. It does matter.

The minister has actively played down concerns about the safety of children in this program. He has demonstrated appalling judgment. He cannot continue to be responsible for the care of vulnerable children in Tasmania. Today, he has again demonstrated that he is not fit to be minister with the responses he provided in question time and this goes to the question of whether he is fit to be a minister at all. Not only has he been unable to answer very straightforward questions when they were initially put to him - and there are still some questions that remain unanswered from question time today - but when he does provide answers, it is very revealing, because we do now know that he was aware of information long before the Premier.

He did not share it with the Premier and he did not share it with the people of Tasmania. He did not use that information to guide his responses to questions that were asked of him about his assessment of a program that is currently caring for six Tasmanian children. It seems he dismissed it, like he dismissed allegations about the identity of Allan Brahminy. He did not care. The Minister for Human Services has to care. That is a fundamental requirement. They have to care.

We do not have confidence in this minister. He has displayed appalling judgment. He has not demonstrated that he cares as much as he should about particular matters in his portfolio, especially when it comes to the welfare of vulnerable children, particularly children in the out-of-home care system who rely on him to be a good guardian, a good parent. That matters.

Given how truncated the debate is today, which I have not even touched on, but it is very disappointing. It is very disappointing that on a matter as important as this, the Government has not allowed more time for debate around the motion to be heard, to give all members the opportunity and for the Government to defend the minister and for the minister to defend himself.

I want to hear from the minister and I know there are other members in this House who will also want to speak on this motion. The Minister for Human Services has to be a person who cares, who takes allegations seriously, who uses their judgment wisely and shares information that is pertinent to decisions the Government is making daily, so that the best decisions can be made.

This minister did not do those things and that is why we do not have confidence in him.

[4.19 p.m.]

Mr GUTWEIN (Bass - Premier) - Madam Deputy Speaker, the first thing I will say is that the Government and I have full confidence in Mr Jaensch. He has our full support.

The Leader of the Opposition has spoken about judgment on a number of occasions. In fact she repeated most of the things she said three or four times, to try to fill in the space, to be frank. She could not have gone much longer, because she simply would have had to go back and repeat some of the things she said for the seventh or eighth time.

In terms of judgment, after being briefed today by the child's guardian, by the child's advocate, by the deputy secretary who is on the ground in the Northern Territory, about the challenges these kids are going through, and the potential harm you could cause by continuing with the public discourse on this particular matter, you decided to bring this on. That is shameful. It is reprehensible. I hope that in your heart of hearts you understand this is not the right thing to be doing at the moment.

We have said on a number of occasions that those kids might be watching this. Well, I want to say to those kids, we understand you have had a difficult life. We understand that you face significant challenges. Please understand from me, on behalf of our Government, that we want to support you, that we believe you are important, that you are not something to be played with or toyed with, that your life is as important as any life in this place. We want you to hear that, and to know that.

I am appalled by the contribution by the Leader of the Opposition. I am appalled on a number of levels, but first and foremost I am appalled because I know she received the same briefing that I have received, that she has heard herself that these kids are safe where they are, that the department is confident of their care, and that unfortunately this debate and the political discourse that is occurring around it has the potential to cause them real harm. It saddens me that you would stoop so low to bring this on. It really does.

Regarding the YouTube clip, let me be clear. I was asked today when the video footage occurred, and when the visit by Child Safety staff in the Northern Territory occurred in September. I am advised that Child Safety Service staff were on the ground in the Northern Territory from 14 to 19 September, and the incident occurred after that on 21 September. As I indicated this morning, the first I had seen of that video footage was yesterday afternoon.

The point that I am certain was made in the discussion with the child's guardian today, with the child's advocate, and also with the deputy secretary who was there on the ground in the Northern Territory, is that the department's advice has not changed. They believe that these kids are safe, and where they are is the best place for them.

For the life of me, I cannot understand how those on that side of the House think that this is doing those children any good at all - especially the Leader of the Opposition, who has had the benefit of that briefing, and to be frank, just wants to go on with this political debate and weaponise this particular issue and these children.

I want to say again to those kids, we value you. We want to support you. We acknowledge you, and importantly we see you unlike those on the other side. You simply could not feel the same way about them as I do because you had the same briefing, you have the same information and yet you decided and you determined to bring this on for political reasons. That is just reprehensible.

The minister has the full support of this side of the House. He is doing a very good job in very difficult circumstances. He is a person of integrity, he is a person who cares, he has

done his very best in these circumstances, and yet what you want to do is to weaponise this issue; one which you have been fully briefed on, you understand the circumstances, the advice has been clear that those children are safe, and yet you want to bring this on.

I hear from the back seat over there - I want to be very careful today in what I say, because I do not want to go wide-ranging and say something that leads to something happening with those kids.

Your judgment, to be frank, is the judgment that is being called into question here, that after you had that briefing, you had to bring this on. Let me say this very clearly: it will be on your head should something occur that is detrimental to those children.

It will be on your head, because you have gone on with this after you have been provided with clear and unequivocal advice from the guardian responsible for those children, from the child advocate who deals with those kids, and from the deputy secretary who is on the ground in the Northern Territory. You have been provided with clear and unequivocal advice.

This side of the House supports Mr Jaensch. This side of the House supports the work he is doing and, once again, you bring on a stunt motion simply for political purposes.

[4.27 p.m.]

Mr JAENSCH (Braddon - Minister for Human Services) - Madam Deputy Speaker, I thank the Leader of the Opposition for the opportunity to address this motion today, which relies very heavily on the Opposition's assertion that children in the Many Colours 1 Direction program, not the Brahminy program - my copy of the motion did not even have a name of the program, it just finished 'in the', but the narrative has been around the Many Colours 1 Direction program - that the children in this program are not safe, and in their reflection on me and my performance and my integrity that I have failed in my judgment about whether those young people are safe in the Many Colours 1 Direction program.

This is not about my opinion and judgment of the fact of their safety. The advice that the children are safe in that setting, and are doing well, has been the consistent advice from my department, from qualified and experienced people, and independent and career people in our public service as well.

Over the last three years at least, in the reports that I have read into *Hansard* - including the briefing at lunchtime today, which the Leader of the Opposition attended - the children are safe and doing well in that setting. This is not about my judgment of that matter. It is about me looking at the repeated, consistent evidence and advice of child safety staff of the Australian Childhood Foundation, the child safety officers directly involved with those children, the care teams who review their progress and the Tasmanian Child Advocate.

Back in 2017, an independent review was undertaken by MW Group consultant Christine Edwards and Dr Maria Harries who, up until now, have been respected by everybody here as authorities on matters of managing the best interests of children and out of home care.

I am not making this up. I am not spinning this. Every shred of formal, qualified advice that I have on the safety and wellbeing of those children has been consistent and has confirmed the setting for them and the condition and the wellbeing of those children up to this point in time. I have asked for more. I have sent a team of people to the Northern Territory to see for

themselves. Before they even got there, I had the secretary on a video call himself, face to face with those young people, to make his own assessment. This is not about me prejudging the outcome of the review, as the Leader of the Opposition asserts. It is about me knowing those kids are okay. That is the priority while we investigate a broader range of matters that will take time.

We have to interview people and gather information to be able to form a view on the allegations that have come through the media over recent weeks and over a longer period of time. Many of those allegations will already have been addressed, but we do not know until we have followed them up, confirmed the identity of those involved, gone through our files and made sure any care concerns, historically, have been addressed as well.

I have not prejudged the outcome of that review by saying that the children are safe and doing well. Even today, we were told those children are safe and doing well. That is the most important thing. The remainder of the review will identify if there are outstanding matters to be addressed - matters that have not been visible to other people who have been observing these kids - or if there are systemic, governance or other matters still to address.

I have not prejudged those. I remain open to those. The Premier and I have said we will respond in a heartbeat to matters arising through this review that need to be addressed in the best interests of those kids, including ceasing to use this program if that is found - but today while we are undertaking that review, those children are safe and they are doing well.

On this side of the House, that is our priority; to find out as soon as possible if those children are safe and well. We have been given that advice and we have shared it because we assume that is the top priority for everybody else as well. We gave the advice again in a confidential briefing in more detail than we can here to the Leader of the Opposition.

The Leader of the Opposition also has made some efforts to characterise my reference to a joy ride as somehow deflecting or making light of a serious event that has recently been made public. I am not seeking to down-play that event. I am seeking to provide context for that event based on, again, explicit, clear advice as to the nature of the event that is being referred to. Ms White makes reference to a young person from the program stealing a car and driving recklessly at high speeds in an unsafe way through built-up areas. I reiterate my comments this morning, comments on *Hansard*, that I am advised the young person involved did not steal the car. It was more of a joy ride. That is where the quote from Ms White stops. What I actually said was 'it was more of a joy ride than car stealing or absconding'.

The reason I provided this context was because of this issue that we have examined again today - every keyboard warrior who sees that video and the story on the *Mercury* website or listens to you here, will make their own judgment about what happened. They will fill the gaps and join the dots and turn this into whatever they want. This was not a kid running away from Many Colours 1 Direction. It was not a car stealing event.

The advice from my department as recently as 8.11 a.m. on 14 October confirms the car was not stolen. It was a Many Colours 1 Direction vehicle. It was a joy ride. That is where I obtained the term from; not out of my head. I was not trying to deflect or down-play this issue. I was aware - because of the advice that I have been given, the advice that you also have been given - that somebody is going to write a horrible, hateful, hurtful, judgmental comment about the situation and the people involved in it, on a website somewhere and it is going to hurt

someone. It is going to hurt them deeply: someone who is already hurt and vulnerable and for whom this may be one of the things that sets their therapy back, and sets back their return to safe, independent living in our society. We have been investing in that for years, in some cases.

I provided that assessment simply to frame this issue in the facts rather than the headlines, or the conflation that Ms White sought to give it.

The terms of reference for this review clearly include the requirement to respond and provide information on matters including the allegations and concerns raised by, and following, the ABC report. That report raised extensive allegations and concerns about the identity and the background of Mr Allan Brahminy. Unfortunately only Mr Brahminy is in possession of the detailed information needed to answer those questions. We cannot subpoena that from him. We can provide him with an opportunity to tell his story,

Ms White - You should require it of him before you put children in his care.

Mr JAENSCH - I do not know what he was called when the Labor government of the time put children in his care. I think he was Allan Brahminy then.

Ms White - Not out-of-home care children.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER - Order.

Mr JAENSCH - I expect that others may want to speak. Nobody jumped before but others are entitled to have their view on this matter.

I believe it is deeply disappointing and disturbing that the Leader of the Opposition has chosen to characterise the situation in a particular way, especially given the privileged access to staff, information and the opportunity to ask questions, and the passion with which those staff spoke about the young people and their progress under this program. She knows full well the risks for the people involved by thrusting this into the spotlight.

As I said in my contribution on the last motion in this House, we do not seek to gag discussion, debate and concern on these matters. We are referencing the harms that can arise from politicians and the media making pronouncements and demands. Again, I refer to advice from the secretary of my department and the thoughts expressed to him by the young people involved in the Many Colours 1 Direction program. It is clear that the repeated media reports and highly publicised demands by public figures for these young people to be brought back to Tasmania is doing them harm. The young people there clearly feel the claims about Many Colours 1 Direction are unfair. My observation - shared by the Child Advocate - is that this is also based on a shared fear that they will be made to leave Many Colours 1 Direction and return to Tasmania before they are ready to do so.

We have to be thinking about these kids first and foremost. They are our most important thing. They are my highest priority as minister and my responsibility as the Government's representative in their care as parent, as the state as parent. I will not flinch from that and I will be as unpopular as it takes to serve the interest of those kids above and beyond any claims, any attacks from anyone, including the Leader of the Opposition.

[4.40 p.m.]

Ms O'CONNOR (Clark - Leader of the Greens) - Madam Deputy Speaker, it is a priority and it should be a priority of this entire parliament to make sure that those young people are safe. I also attended the briefing at lunchtime. I have to say over the course of a number of years now I have had a lot of faith in Mike Pavanne as a departmental secretary and as a high quality and dedicated public servant. When Mike Pavanne says something to me, I see it and hear it through a different lens from what I might hear from the minister himself.

I was significantly reassured that the children who are there right now are being well cared for in this moment. I also listened very carefully to the Child Advocate, Sonya Pringle-Jones, who spoke with great passion for those young people and great concern about the level of media speculation and the impact that it might have on those children. I will keep my comments brief because I do not want to fuel those concerns from people who are working with those young people. That said, we have been really clear in recent days that there is a question of our level of confidence in this minister. That goes beyond the issue of what is happening at Many Colours 1 Direction. I am proposing a couple of amendments to the motion.

It is not fair to say that the vehicle was stolen - it was a borrowed vehicle. I will say again that I urge the *Mercury* newspaper to stop describing that young person as a 'hoon'. It has been used twice in headlines now. It is wrong and it is unfair. It is actually placing a label on a person that can lead to stigma and judgment from the wider community. It was not a stolen vehicle in that video, it was a borrowed vehicle from Many Colours 1 Direction, and so I propose to delete 'stolen' and insert 'borrowed'.

Going through this motion with a level of, I have to say, discomfort, after the briefing I went through it clause by clause. Dr Woodruff and I worked through it and talked about what we could agree with. Points 1 and 2 are statements of fact. Point 3 is problematic - you cannot call that vehicle stolen; it is a borrowed car. The evidence is that the video went to the minister's office on 5 October and that the minister viewed the footage on 7 October - another statement of fact. The minister knew about this incident when he claimed children in the program were safe - that is, again, another statement of fact. We could possibly live with point 6 but point 7 is not germane to this debate. It is irrelevant when the minister showed the Premier the video.

To be perfectly honest with you, Madam Speaker, when I was in government if I had been made aware of a difficult piece of information within my portfolio, I am pretty certain the first person I would not have gone to is the Premier of the day. That is just a fact. This is a matter that was in Mr Jaensch's portfolio. It was a matter of concern to Mr Jaensch and whether he told the Premier four days, five days or six days later, to me, is not relevant to the question of confidence.

The minister has demonstrated poor judgment. On the issues that we have raised previously we struggle to have confidence in this minister. I understand Mr Jaensch is an empathetic human being, highly intelligent and fundamentally a kind man. None of this makes me feel comfortable, personally. The reason that we do not have confidence in Mr Jaensch is because of the answer that he gave to the question on 24 September. I know the House has voted on that but this comes down to the numbers and we still have that issue with this minister. We still have an issue with the minister who tries to tell us that a decision is not a decision.

We certainly have an issue with a minister who has child safety guidelines in the department which are out of date and have not been updated so the guidelines for placing at-risk

Aboriginal children were last updated in 2006. The Guidelines for Adolescents at Risk of Suicide Assessment was written in the year 2000. The Guidelines for Responding to Domestic and Family Violence are almost 20 years old.

We also have issues with the minister's involvement in approving drilling at the Westbury site on Birralea Road during the endangered wedge-tail eagles breeding season. We have serious issues with this minister who appears to have walked away from a commitment to review the reserve activity assessments that underpin development inside protected areas. We have an issue with the minister for ignoring concerns from his own department for an endangered leafy sun-orchid at Rosny on the eastern shore.

Madam SPEAKER - Sorry, Ms O'Connor. I am clarifying. If you are moving your amendment, can you pass it up, please?

Ms O'CONNOR - It is simply to delete 'stolen' and insert 'borrowed' in point 3 and to delete all of point 7.

There is a range of issues we have with Mr Jaensch as minister, which we have not resolved in our minds. It is on that basis that we will reluctantly support the motion as amended.

[4.47 p.m.]

Ms O'BYRNE (Bass) - Madam Speaker, it disappoints me that we have such a limited time. I would like to see every member of Government stand up and defend their minister, something they are clearly not prepared to do.

The reason that this minister should be condemned, and that we cannot have confidence in him goes to the significant level of inconsistent information that he has provided to this House. The minister said that the identity of Mr Brahminy did not matter. It must matter when this program has been sold as a program specifically targeted in supporting indigenous children because of his indigenous experience. It does matter. The minister said that Mr Brahminy's identity was not part of the review. He gave a media interview on 2 October. It was not part of the review. When the Premier answered a question about it he said it was part of the review. Once again, an inconsistency.

The minister told us in September that those children were safe. We now know that that video was filmed in September. That must have been reported and the minister must have known so once again that is an inconsistency.

Whilst the member in her amendment said it was not relevant when you told the minister, it might have been because of the way Greens ministers operate. I can assure you, as a former minister for child protection that if I had such a significant issue that was in the media and it could reasonably be expected that the Premier would be asked questions about it, I would not want - which is this circumstance - the minister or my Premier getting information that I knew to be not true.

The only reason that the minister would not have advised is because the minister was happy for the Premier to give information that was not true. Maybe the Premier's office said that they do not want to know. Either way, I cannot imagine, having been a minister with that portfolio, having dealt with some significantly delicate issues, that you would have ensured

that anyone who was going to make a public comment on that issue would be as well informed as they could be.

Ms O'Connor - It is not clear that it was in the context of the media.

Ms O'BYRNE - I accept what you are saying.

Either the minister did not want the Premier to know so that he would be able to say things that were potentially not true - he would be able to say that and have a defence. Or, he actually failed in his responsibility to ensure that public information coming through the Government, that public information being provided to Government is true, so I think it does matter.

The issue has been raised that we should not be asking these questions because of the implications on children. Do not presume for a moment that we do not care. Do not presume or allege for a moment that we do not care about these children, and -

Government members interjecting.

Ms O'BYRNE - Do not interject. This matter is serious.

When we talk about those children, we have been careful with our language. I will caution you, as a former minister who has had to be responsible for the children you have backed before, and difficult cases, and stood on this on this side and defended things coming from this side of the House when you were here - some of the things you said on this side - be careful with the answers that you give, because comments you make, and comments of the Premier, would also be something you should reflect on quite seriously.

I would suggest you re-read your *Hansard* and be very careful of that, because we do not want to impact on those children, but you have an obligation in this House, in this parliament, to tell the truth. You have an obligation in this House and in this parliament to follow the conventions of your ministerial practices, and the Westminster system, which says that when you are asked a question, you have to answer truthfully.

That does not mean that you can use 'this is a child protection issue' to absolve yourself of your responsibility to this House. This is too serious to do that. Ministers before you have had difficult issues dealing with young people and have been able to answer questions in this House, so do not use it as a shield. Other ministers have managed to find a way through it. Do not do that. That is beyond the pale.

As I said, we have walked this path before. We have had issues in child protection that have made it into the media. They are Opposition questions, these members here in Opposition have questions, and when we were in Government we answered, and previous ministers in this Government have answered.

It is entirely appropriate for us to ask these questions, and we have framed every question carefully because we are aware of those circumstances, Madam Speaker. Every question has been framed very carefully to not identify children, and to not create ideation, and that is why you need to reflect very heavily on the commentary you made.

The motion before the House goes to whether we can have confidence in this minister. It does not go to whether we work hard. It is whether we can believe you when you talk to this House. It is whether we think you have acted with the best judgment in relation to the care of these children - and it is whether, when you are questioned by us, by media, or by someone else, that you do that truthfully.

I did miss one other thing that there is an inconsistency about. There was an investigation launched in February into concerns about care and the way the children were being punished and disciplined in that program. The Premier said that it was fully investigated, and that the person who had made the complaint had been advised. The Premier said that on *Hansard*. We have been contacted by the parent who made that allegation who says that is not true. We cannot keep having inconsistency from this minister and be expected to believe the things this minister tells us.

Everything we do here has to be based on fact. Do not answer the question if you do not want to answer the question; you get away with that all the time. Answer a different question because you do that all the time as well - but if you answer the question, you must answer it truthfully, and there has been too much inconsistency.

Whether the identity of Brahminy was included in the review, that was inconsistent. Whether the parent who made the complaint in February was advised, that was inconsistent. Whether the children were safe in September, when you have since admitted - we were aware there had been a visit in September; we were advised the incident took place in September - you have since admitted that within the days after leaving and saying that those children were safe, the child was able to access the vehicle. It does matter that they are able to access the vehicle. It matters because knowing the program needs, knowing the needs of those children, knowing that you have had children escape from the program in the past, your job is to ensure, and the program's job is to ensure, that you have mitigated all of those risks.

You changed your risk management around the risk behaviour. If you know that these are risks, you have to put things in place particularly if you have sent these children to the other end of our nation. If you have sent them to the other end of our nation, you must have an even greater level of oversight, because the ability for you to get a skewed version of facts is greater the further away you are from it.

We know the community would like to have children responded to and supported in appropriate programs on country. I commend the commentary of my other members here who have talked about how important that is. It is something the department has historically said is really important yet we continue to act in a way that does not provide that.

Minister, it has been a difficult week for you, and I know you say that you can take these slings and arrows. This is not about misfortune. It is not about how you feel about it and it is not about you being brave and accepting it. It is, in this parliament, in a parliamentary framework, about our ability to believe that you are able to do this job, and to be honest in your representations to this House.

If we cannot do that, then the very foundation of what we have in this parliament is called into question. You have better behaviour to model this on. The fact that despite the allegations that the CEO of this program, Mr Brahminy, is still there, despite concerns about if he is who he says he is, despite how he may have misrepresented his knowledge base, despite whether he

is truly Indigenous and running an Indigenous program, you have left him there. You have not acted around that. Yet we have seen Mr Rockliff in the Education portfolio, with an allegation of historical abuse, act immediately to stand somebody down.

Standing that somebody down is not saying that they do not have the right to be fully investigated, and have the matter investigated. It says that you will act to ensure that people are safe. That is what minister Rockliff did. That is why he made that step to stand that person down. There will be an investigation for that person, and that person may or may not be able to return to work. It will depend on the outcome of the investigation.

That should be the principle that is applied when there is ever a concern around someone who works with children particularly with our most vulnerable children and particularly with the children in this program.

The minister would have you believe that this is a sudden media beat-up, and that everybody has suddenly jumped on because it is a political thing, because we alleged he lied to parliament earlier this week and we wanted to gang up on him. That is what the minister would like to create as a framework.

There have been concerns with this program for a long time. There were issues raised when we had young people abscond from the program. There have been issues raised by parents. There have been issues raised by children saying they would like to come home. There was the issue raised in February about whether care was appropriate, and a parent who still does not know the outcome for that.

These issues were not suddenly presented for the Premier to find out about the video in the media after he had answered questions in Question Time.

You knew about the video beforehand. You did not need to see it. You could have at least have told him about it. You could have told him about what happened in September, so that when we ask the Premier questions - because we are not confident you are telling us the truth - at least the Premier has that information available. That is how you do it.

There is not a minister or former minister in this place who does not know that you have to make sure that anyone who is making comment on the issue that is in the public arena, the government needs to have the most information because if you deliberately send somebody out to tell a story and do not tell them what the facts are, you are acting deceitfully and dishonestly. The Premier can hand-on-heart say that he did not see it, and that may well be true, but you allowed the Premier to make public commentary on this and answer questions without giving him all the information.

Information in his question time brief is certainly different from the information that would have been in your question time brief. If that is the case, then that is a failing. If it is the same information, you need to think very seriously about how you conduct yourself as a minister and how you conduct your relationship with the Premier.

Mr Ferguson - Look at you with your stunts.

Ms O'BYRNE - To allege that this is a stunt, when there are children who are genuinely affected by it, when you have a minister who has again failed to be honest with this House, when none of you were prepared to accept a large enough motion so that you could all get up

and defend him and own some of this, then that speaks volumes about how much you know, and how much you are prepared to support.

Mr Ferguson interjecting.

Ms O'BYRNE - I am sorry. You gagged the debate until 5 o'clock because you are too gutless to stand up and defend your minister, and then when a member makes a contribution, you interject. I am sick of the bully-boy behaviour that happens back there. Stand up and be accountable.

Mr Jaensch is a minister of the Crown. With that comes a responsibility to this House.

Mr FERGUSON (Bass - Leader of Government Business) - On indulgence, I inform the House that the Government will be voting against the amendment because we will have not a bar of any of this stunt.

Time expired.

Amendment negatived.

Question - That the motion be agreed to - put -

The House divided -

AYES 11

Dr Broad (Teller)
Ms Butler
Ms Dow
Ms Haddad
Ms Houston
Mr O'Byrne
Ms O'Byrne
Ms O'Connor
Ms Standen
Ms White
Dr Woodruff

NOES 13

Ms Archer
Mr Barnett
Ms Courtney
Mr Ellis
Mr Ferguson
Mr Gutwein
Mr Jaensch
Ms Ogilvie
Mrs Petrusma
Mr Rockliff
Mr Shelton
Mr Street (Teller)
Mr Tucker

Motion negatived.

MOTION

The 2020-21 Federal Budget

[5.04 p.m.]

Mr ELLIS (Braddon - Motion) - Madam Speaker, I move -

That the House -

- (1) Commends the Morrison Federal Liberal Government on its 2020-21 Federal Budget, delivered on 6 October 2020 by the Federal Treasurer the Hon. Josh Frydenberg MP, which will rebuild the economy, create jobs, and secure Australia's future.
- (2) Acknowledges that, in the face of the massive impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, the 2020-21 Federal Budget will provide real benefits to support Tasmanian workers, families, businesses and communities.
- (3) Notes that the 2020-21 Federal Budget includes -
 - (a) significant personal tax relief measures;
 - (b) tax incentives and concessions for businesses;
 - (c) substantial support for new apprentices and trainees;
 - (d) more transport, water and energy infrastructure project funding;
and
 - (e) support payments for aged and disability pensioners and other vulnerable Tasmanians.
- (4) Recognises that the partnership between the Federal and State Liberal Governments, including the 2020-21 Federal Budget, continues to deliver strong benefits for Tasmania.

Madam Speaker, I rise to speak about this historic federal budget. It is the most important federal budget in Australia in my lifetime and perhaps in many generations.

The federal Treasurer, the honourable Josh Frydenberg, said on the night that so many Australians are doing it tough at the moment and, sadly, through no fault of their own. Coronavirus has upended the lives of many of our people. Life is very different from how it looked this time last year and when the last federal budget was handed down. It is a crisis of significant scale, reach and impact and touches the lives of every person in Australia and to that end every person in Tasmania. The federal budget has significant benefits for Tasmania as we look to rebuild and recover from the coronavirus pandemic, both in terms of the health crisis and also the economic recession that it has caused.

Today I will speak about key areas including jobs and tax, health, infrastructure, agriculture and energy, and education and training.

On this first matter of jobs and tax, this budget delivered significant tax cuts right across the board for Tasmanians in all walks of life. It has been really heartening to see a government that knows that it is the people who make the money who understand best how to spend it for their families and for themselves. It is about the autonomy of the individual and their families to decide how best that they want to spend their hard-earned money. They earned it. They did the work, they were up early, they did the long shifts, they are pulling the overtime. Those are

the people who are caring for our sick and our elderly. Those are the people who are building our houses, our roads and our bridges, who are educating the next generation. Those are the people who understand how best to spend their money. It is not government.

The government does not 'get' the lives of each individual person in the way that they do. That is why we believe it is so important to see tax cuts go into the hands of everyday Tasmanians. There are tax cuts for 165 000 Tasmanians and their families. The average Tasmanian full-time worker will receive about \$1080 back in their pockets every year. That is an extraordinary lift to any family budget. Those who have done it tough in their life and have done the hard work and raised kids know what that sort of impact will make on their family budget at the end of the year. We are talking a new washing machine, or making car registration that much easier to afford. We are talking private health insurance and to be able to pay school fees. Those are the kind of things that can make such a monumental difference to the lives of everyday Tasmanians, the lives of everyday Australians: to have the independence and the ability to spend your own money that you earn, that you put on your table, and that you can look your kids in the eye and say that next year is going to be better than this year because we earned it.

These are people who are tradies, paramedics; they are people who are getting the job done right around our state. Those people deserve every tax cut that they get because they earned it.

The budget has also enabled the Tasmanian Freight Equalisation Scheme to continue. This scheme has been wonderful, particularly for my electorate of Braddon. It was extended to exports in 2014. The benefits that has made across our economy in the north-west coast has been extraordinary. We are fundamentally linked across Bass Strait. For the Tasmanian Freight Equalisation Scheme to be extended to exports so that people like Harvest Moon, who are producing some of the best onions and carrots in the world, can get that scheme when it needs to be trans-shipped through Melbourne and overseas has made a fundamental difference to the way they do business and the way they can serve markets both here and around the world. It is about finding a home for your product at a good price.

One of the things about the Tasmanian Freight Equalisation Scheme is that it supports blue collar jobs right across our economy, whether those people are farmers who are working in our vegetable processing facilities in Forth, or people who are working in our forestry industry, people like Norske Skog, and right across our economy. Tasmania is fundamentally a place that makes things and we get the job done. We put food on the table by meeting the needs of people right around the world.

Extending the Tasmanian Freight Equalisation Scheme and continuing it for exports, as this Liberal Government has achieved for Tasmania is a fantastic result. It supported the viability of so many of our businesses in the primary sector and the secondary manufacturing sector, and will have a huge impact in terms of job security and job prospects for young and old Tasmanians.

I will also talk about JobMaker Hiring Credit, which will support young Tasmanians to get a job. It is about supporting those people to get some experience and get a job. Not so long ago, I found it tough to get that first job because I did not have the experience people were asking for.

That little bit of incentive that has come through JobMaker Hiring Credit will make all the difference in the world for those kids, for them to be able to say that - look, I do not have the experience but I am willing to work my guts out, I am willing to go the extra mile to do what it takes and I am keen to learn.

For those people who are 35 and under - my age bracket - this is about you. This is about you being able to step up into the workforce, to be able to save up. Once it might have been for an overseas holiday, but to be able to save up for a deposit for a house, or to support a family, to be able to pay for that next TAFE course or think about going to university, or to buy your first car - those are the kind of extraordinary, life-changing opportunities that everyday Tasmanians can have when they are able to get a job, and when we are able to support them through JobMaker Hiring Credit.

One of the fantastic things to come out of this federal Budget in a time of pandemic has been to know that our young people are supported, that there is a federal government that is going to back in their future and support them into their first job, and make life just that little bit easier for them when they rock up to that job interview and say - 'I don't have experience but I am willing to learn, I am willing to work flat out'.

It is also putting more money in the pockets of people who are on a fixed income. We are talking 72 000 aged pensioners in Tasmania who are going to receive two \$250 bonuses this year, to go with the \$750 bonuses they received last year. We know many of those people still have extraordinary calls on their income. There are people who are supporting grandchildren who need that extra cash and they are doing it tough. To be able to say to them, 'There is more money, the cheque is in the mail and we are backing you, we are supporting you', takes the pressure off. It makes life that little bit easier. It also stimulates our small business because we know these people are keen to spend the money and put it back in the economy. That money is fantastic for small businesses - people in retail, in hospitality. People in the main street of Devonport, people in the main street of Burnie - some of them have had the worst year they have ever had. Some are doing okay, but it has been incredibly difficult for a lot of people as they have had to close their doors.

We know the devastation that was caused by the lock-down following the outbreak in north-west Tasmania. People were so grateful that we were able to beat the virus once it got out into our community. However, hard decisions were made and a lot of that fell on to our retailers and our hospitality people. To be able to put a little bit more money back in their pockets is going to make a massive difference to them, as well as our pensioners.

While we are at it, 27 000 people are on disability support pensions and are in a similar boat. We know you are doing it tough but we want to support you and we want to get you through.

The instant asset write-off is one of the federal Liberal Government policy innovations and has changed the game for many small tradies and small businesses. They are able to invest in the kind of equipment that will make their staff more productive. People working in hospitality will be able to buy the new oven, or the new coffee machine. Those little investments can make life that little bit easier, and that is what this Budget is about. The instant asset write-off has now been expanded, for businesses that are growing and medium-sized businesses, which are one of the big drivers of job creation in Australia and in Tasmania. We know the instant asset write off will basically cover almost every business in Tasmania - up to

99 per cent of Tasmanian businesses. That is a fantastic outcome because it means they can invest, and write it off against their tax. They can continue to grow, employ people and give them higher wages - and that is what we want to see particularly in a global pandemic.

Health has been one of the critical areas that the federal government and the Tasmanian government have been investing in. We have seen unprecedented investment into health because we know that we are in the middle of a global pandemic. That is what this is all about. It is being able to make sure that we have enough nurses on the ground. It is about making sure that we have enough paramedics to get people to hospital safely. We have put 1500 new jobs in the health system in Tasmania since 2014. That is 750 nurses - in contrast to sacking a nurse a day for nine months, as the Opposition did. It is 230 new doctors. This year alone we have put \$287 million into the health system. That is a record. It has never been achieved before in Tasmania.

I have to say that is \$72 million of new money, an increased spend, and \$48.1 million was coronavirus support as well. We know that can make such a huge difference because if we are able to respond in a timely manner, we can get on top of the coronavirus pandemic as we did in north-west Tasmania. We know what happens when we support our nurses, our paramedics and our doctors to do their fantastic work.

People in aged care have been on the front line of this pandemic right around the country. Those people are being supported by wonderful measures, including wage support for direct aged care workers. In the middle of the pandemic, particularly when things were kicking off in Melbourne, it was hard to say to people, especially people who were over 50 - can you come to work today; we need your support. We know you come in and do this every day, you put yourself on the front line, and you put yourself in harm's way, but we want to give that extra little bit of financial incentive to show we value you, and so you can step up - because the work you do is saving lives, it is changing lives and it is making our world a better place.

Anything we can do to support our hard working aged care workers, our nurses in our hospitals, and our doctors who are caring for people in their GP practices is wonderful - and that is what this federal budget delivers. Health, in particular, is a sector that many women work in. It is predominantly a female-based industry at the moment, and to support all those new jobs through this budget and support the people they care for is fantastic for Tasmania and for Australia.

I now turn to infrastructure, and this has been perhaps the big headline of this budget because it is about stimulating our economy. It is about keeping tradies in jobs. It is about supporting their families, reducing congestion on our roads and our bridges, and making sure we can get the energy our economy needs - particularly here in Tasmania, which is an energy super-power in the making. That will have an enormous benefit for every day Tasmanians, for people working in our manufacturing industries and for young people looking to get a job.

Part of our \$3.1 billion construction blitz in Tasmania, the biggest on record, supports 15 000 jobs for tradies and the people who work in the construction sector. That is massive. We know when things are growing in the construction sector they are able to take on apprentices. When there is that pipeline of work stretching out ahead of you, you can say I can take on the young bloke at the footy club for the next four years because I know that work is coming. I know the work is there and we can train him up, we can get him to step up and hopefully he will be able to take on the business as well one day. That is the kind of life

changing impact that investing in infrastructure can make. It is about futures for our young people as well as stimulating our economy right now.

There is \$400 million of funding for road and bridges in various packages in Tasmania. We are talking right across the state in our critical infrastructure, including \$59 million for the Midland Highway. I know many members in the north-west and the north spend a heck a lot of time on that highway. It is wonderful to see that the old goat track is really starting to shine now. We are talking massive safety upgrades that will make sure people can safely get to work, and get home, and that our truckies are not going to be putting people's lives at risk because the roads are not good enough. Those kinds of things make an enormous difference for the people who do the hard work who are working 12 to 14 hour shifts on our roads. Every little bit of safety upgrade counts. It is part of a \$500 million upgrade to the Midland Highway. It is truly staggering to see the amount of work being done, the number of graders and bulldozers and people getting out there in high-viz and making a dollar. It is fantastic to see.

We are talking \$12 million to upgrade freight bridges right around Tasmania. In my electorate of Braddon, we have seen a lot of investment in our bridges, particularly with the construction of the major wind farms that have been built down the west coast and the scale of the build that is underway.

The energy projects that are going to power Tasmania for generations to come require a heck of a lot of upgrades including to quite small bridges in tiny towns. To be able to put that money into the west coast among the people I used to work with and work for is great.

We are also talking about \$130 million for the Tasman Bridge here in Hobart. Some 72 000 people travel across that bridge every day. That is an extraordinary number in a state like Tasmania, and to be able to do that in a safe manner, to be able to get home and get to work in a way that does not take forever and a day, knowing you will get home safe is a brilliant outcome. The funding will also improve the amenity of the bridge. Part of the upgrades will help pedestrians and cyclists who use the bridge. It is not really my speed, as someone who has quite a significant fear of heights, but if you want to do that, good luck to you. We will make sure we are supporting that exercise to be done safely as well.

The Bass Highway between Deloraine and Devonport will receive \$30 million, and that is an area close to my heart. Significant investment needs to be made in that road because it takes a lot of produce. It is one of the most productive areas of our state. We are talking agriculture, manufacturing and forestry. We want to get our product to port and on to market and upgrade those roads in a way that makes the drive a bit more comfortable for our truckies, and safer for the people who are using that road. That is why we are investing in infrastructure. It is fantastic to see support from the federal government as well.

That is part of a major upgrade that is happening across the Bass Highway, along that corridor. I was delighted to see work has commenced in my old home town of Boat Harbour. Congratulations to the minister on making that happen and seeing that roll out across the north-west coast, out to Marrawah. It is an extraordinarily productive part of our economy and to be able to recognise it with a road that is fit to purpose is a truly generational upgrade and is taking the north-west to the next level.

The \$187 million duplication of the Midway Point and Sorell corridors is about backing families who want to come into Hobart but also want to be able to live out in that area. It is a

fantastic place and has beautiful amenity. People want to live in a growing suburb like Sorell but then also come into town, and send their kids into town as well. If we can upgrade that infrastructure it takes a bit of pressure off families. Getting home more quickly and safely makes life a lot easier for young, growing families who have a lot of pressures on their time. It is brilliant to see.

We have also seen significant upgrades to primary industries, water and energy in this budget. The minister is very fond of saying water is liquid gold. Agriculture in Australia and in Tasmania is simply a story of 'just add water'. We know the transformative effect of water on the landscape in Tasmania, particularly around the Midlands and in the south here, where it does not rain quite as much as the beautiful paradise that is the north-west coast. To be able to see a bit of green coming down that upgraded Midland Highway is a beautiful thing. We know that it benefits all Tasmanians as we grow, as we are able to feed the country, feed the world -

Government members interjecting.

Mr ELLIS - I hear my colleague from Franklin interjecting. I will not go into what I said to him about how good the north-west coast is the other day, but we have a plan to grow our agricultural farm gate to \$10 billion a year by 2050, and that requires enormous investment to make it happen, to make our farmers more productive, to make the people who labour on that land work better, and to be able to put in high-value crops to have that surety that comes with water, and knowing that you can actually grow on land that has potential. It is called the Pipeline to Prosperity, and for a very good reason. The federal budget will see \$328.4 million to support agricultural exports, and that will significantly benefit Tasmania.

We were also talking innovative and world-leading projects, like the Marinus Link, which has been mentioned many times in this place before. I will speak briefly about it in the case of the federal budget of \$250 million - one of three critical national transmission projects. We want to make Australia's electricity grid work better, and Battery of the Nation will go a long way to doing that, but we also want to make sure that Tasmanians have jobs for the future.

These are great-paying jobs, they are blue collar jobs, and they are a way for people to really set themselves and their families up with a good full-time job. It is highly technical, highly skilled, and really run for the future.

There is \$70 million for the development of hydrogen at Bell Bay. We know this is one of the 'blue sky' areas for Tasmania's economy and Tasmania's future because if we can tap into the growing market for hydrogen around the world in countries that are manufacturing things in places like Japan, and if we are able to use that as well in Tasmania, and to really step up our economy into this new growth sector, then we are going to see enormous benefits for local manufacturers, for our energy producers, and to the entire state, because Tasmania is a state that is built on energy production, and built on manufacturing.

Hydrogen just makes sense. That is why we want to see it in Bell Bay, and why I want to see it as well in my electorate - particularly in Burnie, which I believe has enormous potential to be one of the great hydrogen hubs, not just of Tasmania and Australia, but of the world.

Madam Speaker, this is one of the things about this budget. While it is about tackling the COVID-19 pandemic and the devastating effects it has had on many people, it is also about

building for the future. It is about building back better. It is about growing our state and providing jobs for our young people.

I will finish on the benefits of this budget for Tasmania in terms of education. We know education is a path to a better life - whether you are doing a trade, whether you are doing a certificate 3, or whether you are doing a university degree. It can take you all around the world, it can help you save for a house, set up your family, and have a comfortable life. Those people who have been able to do vocational education will attest to it, and those people who have done higher education than that know it as well. I know many in this place are very passionate about it. We will see things like the JobTrainer program, which will deliver up to 7000 additional free or low-cost training places at a critical time for Tasmania, and a critical time for Tasmania's young people. Those kinds of things about putting people in a place where they can learn, where they can grow, when they can take on the jobs of the future, and that really is a visionary thing.

To see that being delivered in critical areas where we know the economy is going to be growing in Tasmania - we are talking places like building and construction, where I used to work; tourism and hospitality; health; aged care and disability; aquaculture and agriculture; advanced manufacturing - and a big shout out to the guys down in Strahan, probably enjoying the wonderful weather this time of year. They are all absolute standouts of the north-west economy, and the economy of Tasmania more generally.

To be able to guide young people into careers in those critical areas of growth and need - 7000 new young people will be able to take on those jobs - surely it means that Tasmania's future is in good hands.

It is vital that we support our apprentices and our trainees as well. The federal government delivers 100 000 new apprenticeships and traineeships, and perhaps I might close in saying that doing an apprenticeship was the best thing I ever did, except for getting engaged to my fiancée, of course. It is certainly a lot nicer to be engaged to Margot but, behind that, being able to do an apprenticeship really set me up for life. It opened a lot of doors. It taught me values. It taught me hard work, and it made me able to take on the challenges that come with life - whether that is a global pandemic, whether that is hopefully starting a family - so I am glad and delighted to see the support for Tasmanian apprentices and our trainees, because you will not regret it. Two or three years in, you will probably hate it, but once you are done it will really set you up for life.

The federal budget has enormous benefits for Tasmanians across the board in terms of jobs, taxes and the money that is going back into people's pockets at a very difficult time: whether it is the health care that people need at a time when a virus is ravaging places across the world; the infrastructure so that people can get to work in good time and get home safely; the agriculture, the energy and the water that will set Tasmania up for generations to come, and the education that is providing a pathway for our young people's future.

I commend the Treasurer and the federal Liberal Government for what has been an extraordinary budget for extraordinary times. I am looking forward to our Premier and Treasurer delivering a Tasmanian State Budget that can equal or perhaps even better it.

[5.32 p.m.]

Ms OGILVIE (Clark) - Madam Speaker, I rise to assist in this conversation on the federal budget. At the outset I thank my very own accountant, who has helped prepare some materials regarding what it actually means, and what it might mean for various groups of people. So, Scanlon Richardson, thank you very much.

Obviously, we have had a hit to the economy with the pandemic, and to kickstart things after this massive close-down - not just in Tasmania, but nationally and internationally - our federal government has released what could only be described as a huge spending and tax cut budget for 2020.

I thought I would summarise what that means for different groups. In my view - and there has been quite a bit of media commentary around this - it is a good budget for younger people, people still working, and business owners. I will come to other groups that perhaps have not done so well out of it in a moment.

Self-funded retirees, who make up a fair proportion of retirees in Tasmania, do not receive anything directly, but there is hope that the share market will improve. During the pandemic, elements of the share market did very well - the telecommunications sector, obviously, with digital and work-from-home. Companies like Harvey Norman and our minerals industry continue to plough on, so it was a very patchy outcome in relation to what the share market was doing. My understanding is we have pretty much recovered to about 70 per cent or more of where we were prior to the pandemic, and let us not forget there was a bull run going on for a couple of decades now. The self-funded retirees will be hoping the share market improves due to the budget stimulus which has the potential to kick start things. If that does happen then they would be looking at gains over the next 12 months or so. Even if it is just on paper it still feels good. Let us hope that they hang on to those shares and do not cash them in at the wrong time.

The massive government spending, tax cuts and wages subsidies should lead to higher spending through the economy and greater business investment. This comes to the question of confidence. We hope a little bit in the Keynesian way that pump-priming the economy and getting cash and confidence into people's bank accounts is a good idea. Pushing up confidence, job creation activities and more economic growth is obviously a net positive for our economy, both within the state and nationally. It will put company revenue and profit on a program of increasing revenue generation and share prices will ultimately go up if that indeed happens.

Most self-funded retirees depend on the share market for growth. That is where they generally have their funds invested, particularly those who have self-managed superannuation funds and there are quite a few of those. They depend on the share market for the growth of their income. We note at the moment that term deposits are only paying around 1 per cent interest which is not huge. This budget only indirectly helps self-funded retirees.

There a number of key areas that are helpful for local businesses. As you know I have an interest in small business as a small professional myself, but there are pros and cons to what is being proposed.

The first part is tax loss or carry back. Some new arrangements have been put into place regarding ability to manage tax losses. If your business is making losses now because of the COVID-19 recession, you can get a tax refund out of the taxes you have paid on profits going

back to the 2019 year, so that is helpful. You can use this carry back loss provision for other financial years, 2021-22. My understanding though is this only applies to companies, to corporate structures. People who are in partnerships or other sorts of small business arrangements may not be able to access this benefit - partnership trusts, sole traders. We have seen some of those gaps happen previously. I have lobbied hard for those who but for want of a corporate structure are running the same sort of business but do not get access to those tax returns.

Specifically, it is my understanding, a company can carry back losses from the 2020-21 and 2021-22 financial years to offset previously taxed profits and so you can do a bit of an adjustment in the 2019-20 and 2020-21 financial years. The tax refund would be available as a choice to be made when the company lodges its 2020-21 and 2021-22 tax returns. It sounds boring but it is actually really important because cashflow obviously is king for small businesses. If you have paid tax and suffered recessionary losses, you can adjust those things but only if you are a company.

I will be writing to the Prime Minister on this issue and requesting some fairness for small businesses that are not run under company structures.

The Australian Government is encouraging businesses to spend. Spending is good. It keeps the money going around. It creates confidence and it creates jobs. This measure allows businesses with a turnover of less \$5 billion to claim a full upfront tax deduction for the cost of new business assets. These are pretty large companies that are able to get some activity going. There is no cost cap with this measure. It is not limited like the previous \$150 000 instant asset write-off that is in place until 31 December 2020. It applies to the purchase of capital assets from 6 October 2020 and first used or installed by 30 June 2022.

I am hoping we will see some expansion of corporate activity. I hope that will lead to activity here in Tasmania as well. We do have offices of probably our top 10 national companies here or at least our Victoria/Tasmania office structure as well.

What this means if you want to buy a new truck for \$60 000 you will get a 100 per cent tax deduction in year one, so this is a good thing. Companies that wish to go ahead and do that need to remember that they do not get that \$60 000 in tax back; it just changes your marginal rate. For businesses with a turnover under \$50 million, this also applies to second-hand assets, so that is also helpful.

In relation to small business pooling, small business entities that have a turnover of less than \$10 million, using the simplified depreciation rules, can claim as an expense, the balance of their simplified depreciation for the end of the 2020-21 year. That is helpful because it gives business owners a tax deduction for the full amount of non-depreciated assets they have purchased in prior years. Again, that is a good offset and will help with cashflow. The JobMaker hiring credit will be available to eligible employers over 12 months from 7 October for each additional new job they create for an eligible employee, so this is positive. Employers will receive \$200 per week for hiring someone aged 16 to 29 and \$100 per week for taking on someone aged 30 to 35.

Here is where one of the gaps are. I am quite concerned about those who are over the age of 50 or 55 who will be and are already, finding it difficult in this jobs market. We need to look at that issue in particular.

The JobMaker Hiring Credit will be paid quarterly in arrears, again cashflow is the issue there, and will be available for 12-months from the date of employment with a maximum amount of \$10 400 per additional new position created. To be eligible, the employee will need to have worked a minimum of 20 hours per week averaged over a quarter and have received the JobSeeker payment, youth allowance or parenting payment for at least one month out of the three months, prior to when they are employed. We are looking at a particular set of people and the limitations on accessing this mechanism relate to having been on JobSeeker payment, youth allowance or parenting payment.

Employers will need to prove that the new employee will increase overall employee head count and payroll, so no fudging the books. We need to get people into jobs and this is intended to do that.

Boosting apprenticeship commencements - we have heard a bit about that from the previous speaker. A business that takes on new or recommencing Australian apprentices will be eligible for a 50 per cent wage subsidy. That is a big number. The subsidy is paid in arrears and is available for wages paid from 5 October 2020 to 30 September 2021 up to a maximum of \$7000 per quarter. The maximum cap is actually quite low so that is something to watch out for.

A number of FBT changes have been announced, including the removal of FBT on car parking and portable electronic devices from 1 April 2021, and on retraining and reskilling costs for employees from 2 October. There is a little bit of wriggle room there as well. People can get a bit of upgrading happening. I am not sure that the car-parking issue is one particularly for Tasmania but is certainly a national initiative; in Sydney and Melbourne you can imagine that would make a big difference.

The federal government has changed its mind on previously proposed cuts to research and development tax incentives, R&D. For small companies with a turnover of less than \$20 million, the refundable R&D tax offset will be set at 18.5 per cent above the company tax rate and there will not be any annual cash refunds. The R&D laws are, as you would all appreciate, quite complex. Companies that are involved in the business of R&D, and we do have quite a few in the state, both in the technical sector and the minerals sector, will need to have a good look at that.

The generation of intellectual property, knowledge and know-how and the transferability of that is something that Tasmanians do particularly well. Our science and research sectors, particularly CSIRO, and what we do in and around Antarctic Ocean research shows that we can cut it at the global scale and a global level with these things

Personal tax cuts are on the table and, in an attempt to re-kickstart the economy, the federal government has introduced tax cuts totalling \$50 billion backdated to 1 July. That is a big figure as well but we need to understand who gets those cuts and where they land in different segments of our economy. Broadly speaking, there are two key parts to it: an offset which will get paid in a lump sum after July next year when you lodge your return; and an immediate reduction in the tax taken from your wages as soon as the legislation passes parliament. In most cases that will happen automatically when tax returns are lodged.

I have a range of figures here, just very briefly, for interest. If you are on a taxable income of \$40 000, the change in tax is minus 12.9 per cent. If you are on a taxable income

of \$200 000, the change in tax is minus 3.6 per cent. They have obviously tried to manage or massage the range of taxation figures to match where they think the greatest need lies.

Just to put it in perspective, to put it into a local context, if your average teacher's wage is around \$90 000, a couple who both teach could expect a tax cut of up to \$3000-odd. That is helpful. But one of the questions for our economy and what will happen next is, do people bank and keep that tax cut? Do they save for a rainy day, or do they have the confidence to get out there and spend that money? I would be putting mine on my mortgage.

A payment of \$250 in December and another in March will be made to individuals receiving age or other pensions. That is too low. It is just not enough money. It will not make a foundational or fundamental difference to pension and healthcare card holders. It should be much higher. The payment will be exempt from tax, and not counted as income support for any other income support payments. It is important to make sure that we do not overburden those pension payment rules and to push people over caps, but it is a bit paltry for our great nation to be giving aged care pensioners \$500, and that is really what it comes down to.

Superannuation: under the stapling of accounts measure, an individual super account will be stapled to them. I do not know if stapling is the right word, but it will follow them as they change jobs. I started my career in superannuation law in Keating's newly instituted superannuation commission in Canberra. I have said it before, and I will say it again: the biggest failing of our superannuation system is that it is a dud for women. It is not good enough for women. We want a fair go with the money too. It is time to have a good hard look at superannuation, and understand that women's working lives are very different from men's working lives. We have caring responsibilities. Those things happen, and it affects this bottom line. It is something we should be a bit ashamed about, and we need to address that.

Capital gains tax is removed from so-called granny flats. Currently, if you sell your family home and you have entered into a formal lease or agreement with a granny flat arrangement with an elderly parent or relative, there is a risk that you would be charged capital gains tax. The budget has now included a measure to clarify that this will not apply. I know that matters to quite a few people. In Mt Nelson in particular we have a lot of people who have those secondary residences up there.

I will leave it at that. I know another speaker wants to go. That was a hardcore romp through the tax changes of the budget. It was worth doing. The message is that not everybody is getting a fair go.

[5.49 p.m.]

Dr WOODRUFF (Franklin) - Mr Deputy Speaker, I will try to leave a few minutes for the other member for Franklin to speak. This is an important issue, and I can say at the outset that the Greens will not be supporting this motion. The Scott Morrison Government should not be commended for this budget, and we do not believe it is going to deliver strong benefits for Tasmania. Quite the reverse.

It certainly was a budget delivered in exceptional circumstances. The pandemic has not only hit the economy hard, it has exposed the fault lines that already existed, particularly the social fault lines. We have insecure work, we have poverty, we have rampant privatisation, we have incredible socialisation, and extremely underfunded public services. A budget that ought

to have been the most important budget since World War II has been, if anything, reinforcing those fault lines, and is going to make them far, far bigger.

The earth's climate is breaking up around us and we are living through a mass extinction event. Nature is being destroyed at a record pace and the ecological systems that the economy and our society depend on are in absolute crisis.

On top of that, wage growth is at record lows. We have the proportion of the national income going to company profits being at record heights. The end result is wealth inequality that is entrenched in Australia. It is significant, it is rising, and it will be increased with this budget.

There are record low interest rates, record high household debt, failing home ownership - the lowest level since the 1950s in Australia now - record low workforce participation. People want to work, but with low wages growth and high company profits, the jobs are not there to pay to keep up with the price of survival, so people are moving into poverty, moving into lower income brackets every single day. More and more people are getting less and less, despite the fact that we are told the government is making greater and greater efforts.

Meanwhile, the big corporations, the super-wealthy who own and run them, are getting a great deal out of this budget. Thanks to neo-liberalism, we have entered the pandemic with an underfunded healthcare system, with an underfunded and privatised childcare system, with an underfunded and privatised and barely regulated aged care system, and we have seen that play out across the country. It has been decades, but in the last five years cruel things have been exacted on the aged care system, as they have been on our education system.

The universities in Australia have been under attack from the Morrison Government, this budget has doubled-down and we are looking at a record number of people in our university sector being turned off. This is the sector that should be there - that will drive the intelligence, the experimentation, the inventiveness, the initiative that Australia has been known for. It has been gutted budget by budget by the federal Liberal Government, and Mr Ellis really should know that in order for people to make a buck, in order for families to be able to give children what they want for their future, there has to be funding going into education. The reverse is happening.

We have 40 per cent of our workforce in insecure work, entrenched rates of high unemployment and underemployment, and a social safety net that is far below what people can survive.

This year's budget - how did it stack up? What did it provide? It was an opportunity for a great postwar budget. It was an opportunity to build a nation, and there certainly were Greens there at the federal level giving all the information that the Morrison Government could possibly need. All the evidence is there of what should be done.

Instead of looking after the lives of good people, and providing hope for children for the future, what did we get? We got nothing to respect nature and climate, and we got nothing from this Prime Minister or this Treasurer or this federal government to give hope for the poor, and to give hope for children. It is a neo-liberal train wreck of a budget. It is going to impoverish poor people. It is stealing the hopes and dreams of young people. It is entrenching

wealth inequality, underemployment, unemployment, and it is going to line the pockets of big corporates and the super-rich.

We cannot support this motion. We might support the intent of Mr Ellis in hoping that the federal government would have done something different, but the reality is so far from what Mr Ellis has put up in the motion before us today. It is so far from doing anything fundamental that working-class Australians need, and children need for their future.

Mr Deputy Speaker, the government could have used this to do something about the real issues in the country. It is a fantastic budget for coal companies. It is a fantastic budget for gas companies. It is a great budget for the banks. It is a bonanza for the arms manufacturers. It is a great budget for the federal government's mates, and it sure does deliver for the government's political donors. But, if you are a First Nation's person, if you are a woman, if you are under-employed, if you are unemployed, if you are struggling to pay the bills, or you are worried about the climate crisis, or the biodiversity crisis, or the threat of bushfires in the coming summer, this is not a budget that will offer you any hope.

We reject this budget. We reject the fact it does nothing to fix or to address the climate emergency. On no basis would we ever support this motion. We recognise that budgets are about choices. This federal government had a choice: it does reflect its priorities. We reject those choices, and we reject those priorities.

We want to build an economy that works for people, not the other way around. We want to build an economy that respects nature, that respects our ecosystems, that respects our climate, that does not see natural places merely as resources to be dug up and burned and profited from, or as dumping grounds for toxic chemicals.

We have a plan that responds to the magnitude of the challenges we face as a planet, and that is based on evidence and reality. That is the choice that parliament can make. The federal Liberal Party with the support of the Labor Party, does not make those choices on a daily basis, but that is what the Greens always stand for and will always continue to stand for.

[5.56 p.m.]

Mr O'BYRNE (Franklin) - Madam Deputy Speaker, we do not support this motion. It is self-congratulatory and it demonstrates the lack of vision and the mediocrity of the modern Liberal Party in this country. Budgets need to be a budget for the time and the needs of not only the economy, but the community. We know that this budget is a narrow-cast, mediocre attempt at responding to the biggest economic crisis we have faced, not only in our lifetime, but in the last 100 years. We know, cynically, what they are doing is they are saving the whole range of their big announcements for the next budget, for the budget next year, leading into a federal election. What was needed from a federal Liberal budget was to deliver significant initiatives, microeconomic reform, infrastructure spending, labour productivity improving measures that would make a tangible difference for the Australian economy, and rebuild it.

What this budget will do is ensure that the recession will be deeper and it will be longer. There is no plan to respond to the recession and there is no plan to respond to kickstart the Australian economy. Most of the infrastructure investments announced were reannouncements of infrastructure projects that they had already announced in previous years. When you look at the profiling of the investment, it is in the out years. It is not in the next 12 to 18 months where we need it now; it is in the out years, so we will not see the benefit. The use-it-or-lose-

it principle for funding through infrastructure grant programs is a major problem for this government because you cannot build it.

The Hobart Airport upgrade is a prime example. You announced it in 2015 and every 12 months a gaggle of Liberal politicians join together and talk about the next stage and the re-announcement of these projects.

The member who moved this motion said the tax cuts were a great thing for the Australian community. That in of itself is not the problem. The average worker will receive \$50 a week in a tax cut, but those people on JobKeeper lose \$300 a fortnight. Budgets need to be a budget for the time. We have 11 000 Tasmanians who have lost their jobs since the pandemic started. We have 60 000 Tasmanians who are receiving JobKeeper in Tasmania. So what do you do? The tax cuts do nothing for those people who are on JobKeeper. They do nothing for those people who have lost their jobs. Where is the investment in the job creation? Where is the vision? Where is the investment in childcare? Lifting labour productivity, where is child care? Where is aged care? Where is disability care? Where is the investment in those large employers in the community that lift labour productivity? They create jobs and allow people to conduct and engage in the productive economy.

The irony of saying 'our investments are fast-tracked': the seventieth announcement on the fast track of Marinus; they will get to business financial close by 2024. Well, well done. Well done, fast tracking four years and that is your COVID-19 response? This is just embarrassing.

Time expired.

Motion agreed to.

ADJOURNMENT

The Critically Endangered Swift Parrot

[6.01 p.m.]

Dr WOODRUFF (Franklin) - Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to speak about a fantastic event I attended last Saturday which was a very spirited and passionate rally of people on the parliamentary lawns to protect the critically endangered swift parrot.

That special beautiful little parrot is one of the most charming, whimsical and colourful parrots in the world. It is certainly the fastest little parrot in the world. Sadly, five years ago on Saturday it is now listed as critically endangered. It was hoped with the listing of that parrot as being critically endangered that that would innovate this Government into swinging behind the sorts of recovery plan needed to protect the swift parrot but the rally of people on Saturday was because it is clear that the situation for the swift parrot is going downhill. It is on the head of this Liberal Government and its policies and its continued destruction of the habitat of the swift parrot that that bird remains extremely threatened. The swift parrot is on the brink of extinction. We are lucky to be home to that little bird. It flies here every year from lower mainland states to feed on flowering nectar of large gums and to breed in the hollows of very large gums.

Thanks to our glorious forests, particularly in the southern forest and the eastern forests of Tasmania, that bird has made its way for untold millennia to Tasmania to continue its breeding and survival. It is a gift that it visits us. We have a responsibility to look after it. We know that every single nesting tree matters and every single flowering gum that the swift parrot feeds from also matters.

It moves around. Flowering gums flower in different places in different years. Therefore, it is more important than ever that all of those trees the swift parrot uses are retained but instead this Government has been changing planning schemes apace and doing everything it can to make land clearing easier. It has been weakening federal protections and it has been working with the federal government to create a one-stop shop to weaken our environmental laws.

We have a minister for the Environment who is signing on the blocking of tree hollows so that the swift parrot will not be in those trees when they are chopped down for road widening up in the north-east but in so doing, it is a death by a thousand cuts for that little parrot because if they cannot nest in the tree hollows then they will not be able to breed. There will be no chicks and there will be no generations of swift parrots. Day-on-day decisions are being taken by the minister for the Environment to hasten the extinction of this bird.

The front line in the war on wildlife of this Government has to be the continual spoon-feeding of the mendicant native forest logging industry. When the Liberals came to government just before the swift parrot was listed as critically endangered, they came with a promise to ramp up forestry logging. We have seen loggers back into carbon-rich biodiverse old-growth forests and many of those forests are a critical habitat for the swift parrot.

On top of that the 2019 fires destroyed an enormous amount of habitat in southern forests that the swift parrot would have nested in or fed from but that did not stop Forestry Tasmania from going into those forests. In fact, they have gone into the southern forest with a vengeance since the 2019 fires.

The Liberals have tried to legitimise these smash-and-grab logging operations that they endorse by attempting to get Forest Stewardship Certification. The Government has tried twice since they have been in this place in government, and they have failed twice. Why is that? They keep logging swift parrot habitat.

This Government will never get Forest Stewardship Certification while it continues to log this swift parrot habitat, but thank goodness we have the organisations that were there on Saturday, like the Bob Brown Foundation, Forestry Watch, the Wilderness Society, TreeProject, Extinction Rebellion, Doctors for the Environment, the North East Bioregional Network -

Dr Broad - They are all the same thing.

Dr WOODRUFF - Dr Broad is piping up that they are all the same. He should get out more. He should meet some of these people. Has Dr Broad met and spoken to the two wonderful ANU researchers who are here in Tasmania studying the swift parrot habitat, Dr Dejan Stojanovic and Dr Matthew Webb? They are the hallmarks of the difficult bird group. They call themselves difficult to study, and difficult it seems to save under the policy of this Liberal Government.

We need to have a robust planning system. We need strong federal laws so that we have independent checks and balances. We reject the move to establish bilateral agreements with the federal government that would reduce the federal government's role as taking approvals under the EPBC act. Most of all, most critically of all for the swift parrot habitat, we have to end native forest logging in Tasmania.

The Greens will not stop until we do everything we can to protect the swift parrot habitat, and we will fight with everything we have, because they are such special, colourful, beautiful little birds.

Time expired.

Pregnancy and Infant Loss Remembrance Month Bears of Hope

[6.07 p.m.]

Mrs PETRUSMA (Franklin) - Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise tonight to speak about how October is Pregnancy and Infant Loss Remembrance Month, and tomorrow, 15 October, is International Pregnancy and Infant Loss Remembrance Day, where bereaved parents from Tasmania, Australia and around the world pause to remember their babies who have sadly passed away.

This annual day of remembrance is a significant one honouring the approximately 106 000 babies who lose their lives to miscarriage, still birth and newborn deaths in Australia every year - with one baby, sadly, dying in Australia about every three and a half minutes.

One in every four pregnancies in Australia tragically ends in loss, but despite these alarmingly high figures, pregnancy and infant loss are still topics that most people are reluctant to talk about.

For those of us who have experienced such a loss, it is often too painful to speak about, and for those who have not, it can be hard to even know where to start or what to say to a bereaved parent, as the topic is so impossibly sad that people tend not to want to talk about it at all.

That is why Pregnancy and Infant Loss Remembrance Month and Remembrance Day tomorrow is so very important. A major goal this month is to get people talking about the issue, to make it visible, and to challenge our reluctance as a society to look this issue in the eye. As reporter Tim Martain, in his excellent article in the *Mercury*, states -

For mums and dads, the loss of a baby is not some abstract idea or vague lurking fear. It is a real thing and it shatters many lives.

In 2002, my husband Tim and I lost a baby. I woke up having contractions and significant blood loss far too early in our pregnancy, and after an agonising wait at the doctors and having ultrasounds with the contractions getting worse and worse, we were informed that our baby, our daughter, had tragically died - and the grief was further compounded by being in labour for another 16 hours.

Back in 2002 there was not the support for grieving parents that there is today, that is being offered through incredible organisations such as Bears of Hope Pregnancy and Infant Loss Support in Tasmania, which provides information on counselling, grief support and organising a funeral, as well as a teddy bear to take home, so that parents' arms are not empty when they leave the hospital.

These bears are a gesture so simple and yet so meaningful, and serve as a link between bereaved families, a symbol of shared pain and understanding and acknowledgement that even in their darkest time these parents are not alone.

Bears of Hope was cofounded by Amanda Bowles and Toni Watson, two women who understand that pain and the need for connection only too well. Like me, what they found many years ago was that there was very little assistance available that was targeted specifically towards the grief and heartbreak that families experience, especially as we live in a culture in which people still rarely speak openly about miscarriage or stillbirth.

Bears of Hope helps to fill that gap, so that parents are less alone and less isolated. This is also vitally important for something as culturally entrenched as what Amanda Bowles calls the 'magic 12-week barrier', which has its roots in extremely old and outdated attitudes that the loss of a baby earlier than 12-weeks' gestation is not really the loss of a proper baby. For this reason, many women who miscarry in the early stages are subject to the assumption that their loss is not that big a deal, because it happened early in their pregnancy.

For that mum, that dad, they still had hopes and dreams for their baby. They probably had a name picked out, and grieved the loss of that baby as keenly as any other bereaved parent. Tragically, many of the surrounding events that occur after the loss can also leave parents further traumatised.

For me, I had a very close friend who gave birth to their beautiful baby daughter the day that we lost ours, which made the loss even harder when we were together, as I was still in grief, but at the same time feeling incredibly guilty that it was so hard for me to hold her baby and to look at my friend's baby without wanting to cry at the same time.

That is why this month is so important, as it educates us all to never underestimate or minimise the ongoing trauma of losing a baby, whether early or full term, and to beware of using phrases that begin with 'at least'.

I have had so many well-meaning people say to me, at least you can always have another baby, at least it happened early, at least you already have other children. Yes, at the time I did already have two children, and yes, I did go on to have another two more children, but none of these words give any comfort. They just cause more pain.

As Tim Martain stated, 'while parents might get stronger and more practised at carrying their grief, its weight is never any less', and it is well documented that women suffer post-traumatic stress disorder and post-natal depression as their emotions are triggered by many unexpected things. Anniversaries of the loss, their due date, babies with similar names - or for me, despite the fact that I was very blessed to fall pregnant again three months later and our family is so very blessed with another beautiful daughter, there is not a year goes by when I do not think about our other beautiful daughter, Danielle Joy, on her birthday, who I look forward to seeing again one day.

A bereaved parent is still a parent. They are still a mum, they are still a dad, and they still love their baby even if they cannot hold them. This is why in 2015, this Government officially launched recognition of loss certificates in Tasmania, which families can apply for, for free, from the Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages.

Our family has one for Danielle, and every time I look at it, like her middle name, it brings me a lot of Joy. For these certificates, I acknowledge the advocacy of Maria Bond in her role as Tasmanian coordinator for Bears of Hope. Back in 2014, alongside Dr Vanessa Goodwin, myself, former premier Will Hodgman and other MPs such as the member for Clark, Ms Ogilvie - and I am sure other members in this House - we worked to formally recognise these babies that are lost in early pregnancy, therefore helping parents through their difficult grieving process.

This remembrance month is usually marked with fundraising walks and remembrance services. However, due to COVID-19, these have now moved online, so I ask people to check out the Bears of Hope Facebook page, which features the annual Wave of Light remembrance event, which will be happening tomorrow night, where people are encouraged to light a candle and to share their photos on Facebook.

Finally, I commend Bears of Hope, SANDS, and all the other great organisations that provide support to parents at their time of utmost grief.

Pregnancy and Infant Loss Remembrance Month Bears of Hope

[6.13 p.m.]

Ms OGILVIE (Clark) - Mr Deputy Speaker, I add my thanks for that contribution from Jacquie Petrusma. I was not going to say anything until you made that beautiful speech.

I was thinking whether I should speak about this as well, but I will because it has been such an awful year for so many people - but for those who have experienced a loss during this year, doubly bad. When you lose a child, it resets your entire planet. It is a very difficult thing. Pregnancy loss - in my case, neonatal loss - my daughter, Violet, was five days old. It was a very difficult time, and it takes a lot to get through that.

I say today it is one of the reasons that I worry about what we say in this place, when I know people who are having a difficult time are watching as well. We need to be careful about our words and about how we speak in relation to issues that can trigger things and with vulnerable people or people who are not having such a great time. We need to think about the standards we set in this place. I know it all ends up on social media. We have to be very careful about that.

I want to thank Mrs Petrusma. I had a lot to do with Maria Bond helping her set up Bears of Hope after my experience. You are right, there was not much around but now it is better. It does not take away the pain or the hurt but there is help available now as well.

I believe the official day is tomorrow. It is a little sad that it is online in a sense because the physical gathering of people who have a shared experience of loss is really powerful and very much a healing thing. We can all light our candles at home and reach out to each other.

Before there was Bears of Hope and other organisations there were women who had gone before. I was very fortunate and I will name her. It was Mrs Groom, Matthew's mother, who reached out to me through Calvary Hospital when that situation happened to me. I was forever grateful for that kindness and also the kindness of people in this place recognising me.

That was a little bit off the cuff but I did want to say I agree with you. It is a very difficult thing. No matter how old your child is, there is a sense that your child should not go before you. It is part of the reason I find the discussions around death and dying so personally difficult and it is a trigger thing for me. I thought why not put that on the record and then you would all know. I will wrap it up at that. I know other people want to speak. To all the mothers out there, great job, keep going. If you have had a hard time things get easier.

Norm Britton - Tribute

[6.17 p.m.]

Dr BROAD (Braddon) - Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise this evening to talk about Leslie Norman Brittain, best known to everybody as Norm Britton. The gentle giant and the huge presence passed away on 1 October, barely two weeks ago and his funeral was held on Wednesday 7 October just past.

Norm was a gentle giant and a huge presence in so many people's lives. He was also a life member of the Australian Labor Party. He spent so much time over numerous election campaigns, putting up election signs, helping people campaign and getting them elected too, I might add. He was a hard worker for so many community groups like the Penguin Surf Club, the Burnie Harness Racing Club and many more.

The funeral was very well attended by a big cross-section of the community in Burnie, especially those people he worked with at the Burnie Paper Mill over many years.

Norm Britton was a doer. He was not somebody who stood by and let everybody else do everything. When he put his mind to something, he did not just talk about it, he acted. Right up until just before he died, he was still campaigning. The campaign that I was involved with him just before he died was to do with trying to get a new saleyard opened on the north-west coast. He was at a meeting that I attended with Geoff Atkinson. The three of us discussed the need for a saleyard on the north-west coast and from that, largely due to Norm's effort, a committee got together. We held the first meeting at the Penguin Surf Club which was well attended by over 200 farmers. Norm, unfortunately, had just become too unwell to attend. That happened suddenly. Just to give you a bit of an idea of what Norm was like, he had arranged the hall hire of the Penguin Surf Club and he had also paid for the venue hire. That is how dedicated he was. He was campaigning for issues that he strongly believed in right until the very end.

One of his favourite sayings was that there are those who do and those that let them. That was certainly discussed at his funeral. That was the ethos that he lived by.

It was a very good service. There was a range of speakers including his daughters, Rosie and Janet. Former Labor leader, Bryan Green, and long-term member for Braddon was part of the eulogy service. He went through the things that Norm had done and how involved he was in the union movement representing the FEDFA at the paper mill. Bryan recounted stories of how important Norm Britton was in leading the workers, improving their wages and conditions, and also his pivotal role during the paper mill dispute of the 1990s, and then after that helping Bryan get elected and helping throughout many election campaigns afterwards.

It was a great funeral. It was a celebration of his life. One of the bits that I really liked was his favourite poem which was 'The Man from Ironbark' by A.B. (Banjo) Patterson. Norm was one who would give advice. He was frank and fearless. He would give you that advice whether you needed it or not but it was always done in a very respectful manner. I will miss Norm because there are times when you need someone like Norm to tell you like it is, like they see it, so that you can think about things in a different way. I will really miss Norm for that.

My sincere condolences must go to his wife, Helen and daughters. Janet and Rosie, to his son-in-law, Tim, and especially to his grandsons, Frank, Sid and Lenny. He was a huge part of their lives and we know that they will miss him as will the rest of his family because he was such a family man. That certainly came through during his whole funeral.

Afterwards we talked about why Norm Britton did not become a member of parliament. Why he did not become a senator or something along those lines because he definitely had the ability to do that, such was his presence and his power. When we thought about it, it was perhaps because of his love for his family and him not wanting to be away from them. His family was certainly central to his life and his work and all credit to him.

Sincere condolences also should go to his brothers, Neville and Raymond, and to his sister, Aileen. Norm will be missed. I will miss Norm - a life member of the Labor Party, a life member of other community organisations. He was a gentle giant and someone who was well respected by everyone and will be sorely missed.

Norm Britton - Tribute
Marcus Bower - Tribute

[6.22 p.m.]

Ms O'BYRNE (Bass) - Mr Deputy Speaker, I will add my voice to that of Dr Broad. Norm was an absolute character. You might not have thought you needed to hear what he had to say but, I tell you what, we probably did.

I rise tonight because last week the Launceston and Tasmanian community lost an incredible educator, a fine thespian and a truly lovely human with the passing of Marcus Bower after a long illness.

Marcus was diagnosed six years ago with cancer and over the whole time he never complained. In fact, he did some really fine work in his last few years whilst he was a metastatic melanoma stage four patient. Marcus saw himself as living with cancer and not dying from it.

The Theatre Council of Tasmania published the following statement -

The Council is deeply saddened by the news that Marcus Bower has passed away following an extended illness.

Marcus was a much loved and respected leader within Launceston's theatre community having contributed as an actor, director, drama teacher, theatre reviewer, writer and mentor to countless students and performers over the years.

He worked with numerous Tasmanian theatre companies including CentrStage, Three River Theatre, Launceston Players, Old Nick Company and the Launceston Musical Society, including serving as President and as a committee member for many organisations.

A theatre critic for *The Examiner* newspaper for over 25 years, he also adjudicated at Deloraine's Festival of One Act plays and wrote and directed an annual satirical review at the Royal Oak Hotel on an off for about 30 years.

In 2014 Marcus received an award from the Launceston City Council in recognition of his service to cultural heritage and the arts. Marcus was a former member of the TCT steering committee and we were thrilled to honour him at our last year's Tasmanian Theatre Awards with the Lifetime Achievement Award.

We join with Tasmania's theatre community in offering our heartfelt sympathy to Susie and other family members and friends. We feel privileged to have known Marcus and thank him for his enormous contribution to Tasmanian theatre.

This year's Scotch Oakburn College recognised his contribution to the performing arts at that school by honouring him by naming their school theatrical company after him.

Marcus was part of the committee to drive the establishment of a small theatre in Launceston many years ago and hence the Earl Arts Centre was established. We cannot imagine Launceston without that facility now.

More recently over the past several years he has been part of the working committee with Don Wing, Geoff Hockley, Belinda King and others, looking into the viability of finding a space and funding for middle-sized theatre for Launceston like similar sized regional cities have in Victoria. With the advent of COVID-19 this has currently been put on hold, but I have no doubt this will be achieved.

It has been mentioned that he was selfless. Last year when he was acknowledged with the Lifetime Achievement Award for his contribution to theatre in Tasmania, he dedicated it to his wife. He also proclaimed that his best productions had been in 1995 and 1998 - the birth of his two much-loved children Belle and Dom. His family and friends are planning to farewell him on Friday with a private service at home, which will be live-streamed to family across Australia and Europe. The Friends of Theatre North have offered the Princess Theatre, and Peter Hammond has offered to help organise a fitting public celebration of his life to be held before the end of the year. As Kerry Gay said so perfectly - 'Launceston is in mourning and

we will come together to mourn but also to honour and very much to laugh because that is what Marcus would have wanted us to do. Think of the wittiest thing you ever heard him say and be happy'.

I am sure all who knew, loved and respected Marcus join with me in sending love and strength to Suzie, Belle and Dom. Vale, Marcus, you delightfully funny man.

Brett Johns - Tribute

[6.26 p.m.]

Mr STREET (Franklin) - Mr Deputy Speaker, there are any number of privileges in this job but certainly one of them is to do what I am doing tonight, and that is to stand up and express my admiration for somebody who has unfortunately passed away. Tonight, I want to talk about Brett Johns who passed away earlier this month at the tragically young age of 59.

I have been a member at North West Bay Golf Club at Margate since I was about 12-years old -

Ms Archer - And you are still not good at golf.

Mr STREET - I am not as good as Brett, I will give you the tip.

Brett is a life member at that club but I actually got to know Brett while he was the pro at Kingston Beach and I played the occasional social round there. He was a giant in the Tasmanian golf community. When you go to North West Bay clubrooms and have a look at the club champion board, you will see that in the late 1970s Brett won three club championships before the age of 21. Then there is a two-year gap in 1981 and 1982 and I have often looked at that board and thought somebody must have got the better of him and played extremely well to do it. It is only since he tragically passed away that I discovered he went out to Royal Hobart and won their club championship.

After 1982 he came back and won another seven club championships in a row at North West Bay. I do not think it is an insult to anybody else who is on that board since 1990 that if Brett had kept playing in that club championship he would have still been winning it right up until his death.

In addition to his achievements at North West Bay Golf Club, Brett won the Tasmanian amateur six times and his crowning achievement was to win the Australian amateur out at Royal Hobart. He is one of only three Tasmanians to do it - another one being Peter Toogood who a lot of people would know - it is a very famous name down at Kingston, certainly down at Kingston Beach Golf Club but also in the Tasmanian golf community. The third Tasmanian is Mathew Goggin who went on to forge a pretty good career on the pro tour. That puts Brett in exalted company.

When people pass away, we tend to talk about them and we forget about their negative qualities or the things that they might have done wrong. We concentrate on the things they did right. The simple fact is that I do not actually have to do that with Brett. Brett was one of the nicest human beings I have ever come into contact with, not just in sport but in life. He was the most generous human being you would ever meet, and the friendliest.

A couple of quick stories just to demonstrate that. If I won the Australian Amateur Golf Tournament there would be a shelf inside my front door at home that the trophy would sit on so that every human being who ever came to my house would see that I had won the Australian Amateur Golf Championship. What did Brett do? - Brett donated the trophy back to the North West Bay Golf Club and it is presented each year to the club champion at North West Bay. No ego about it; he just gave the most important trophy in his entire career to his home golf club.

Repair works and maintenance on clubs and equipment was the way he made a living. A member at North West Bay told me last week that he took an old set of clubs he was no longer using to Brett, and asked Brett if he would be able to cut them down and reshape them for one of his grandchildren to get started in golf. He left them with Brett and went back a week later. Not only had Brett cut the clubs down, he had put new grips on all of them and cleaned them. They were as good as new. When the gentleman asked Brett how much money he owed for the work, he refused to take anything for it and said, 'That's my contribution to your grandson getting involved in this great sport'.

There should be more people like Brett Johns. We would all be better off as a community if there were more people like Brett Johns. The age of 59 is tragically young. He had so much more life to live, he had so much more to give to both the golf and wider community and I can only pass on my condolences to his son, Nick, who is also a very good golfer, and the extended Johns family. Rest in peace, Brett.

Veterinary Imaging Tasmania Blueline Laundry

[6.31 p.m.]

Ms ARCHER (Clark - Minister for Justice) - Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise on the adjournment tonight to speak to two matters. First, I will talk about Tasmania's first computer tomography, or CT imaging, scanning facility exclusively for pets, named Veterinary Imaging Tasmania. I was fortunate to visit the North Hobart Veterinary Hospital, and it is an initiative of a number of vets coming together. It is a facility that all veterinary practices will be able to utilise. Yes, the sick jokes about cat scans and things like that have all been said on the day but I did have a bit of a problem. I forgot I was allergic to cats, even my own, on the day and I left feeling quite sneezy after doing media with a big ginger cat.

It was particularly important for me to be at the event because it is the veterinary practice I take my own cat to. She has not been a well little thing for quite some time and in fact will not recover, so we are enjoying our days at the moment with our own pet. I mention that because Tasmanians, like many people around our country, love their pets and, of course, we want the best outcome when they are unwell. This type of initiative now provides the expertise that is required for all animals who need medical attention.

The capacity of the machine is quite large - it takes any being of 120 kilograms. It is actually a human CAT scan but can be used for animals and it can be utilised on many large animals. It was created by the demand in the veterinary profession for diagnostic equipment. This new state-of-the-art CT scanning facility represents a private investment of approximately \$500 000. It is a significant advancement in diagnostic capability for the profession, and will allow animals of all descriptions to receive appropriate care because of faster and better diagnosis.

It also demonstrates the confidence that Tasmanian businesses still have in our economy to invest in projects like this. It is a significant investment and my warm congratulations to Dr Jennifer Cormack, Dr Manty Arnott, Dr Andrew Dudgeon, Dr Rob Callaway and Craig Glennon as the investors in Veterinary Imaging Tasmania.

I have also visited the Blueline Laundry. Recently there was an article in the media focusing on what Blueline Laundry has been able to achieve, particularly in our culturally and linguistically diverse communities and people with disabilities, but particularly regarding our CALD communities.

Quite often we do not recognise the professional qualifications of people coming from another country. I heard the story of one of their employees who was able to transition into an IT position, one for which she was well qualified. She was so happy to be able to apply for and achieve that job position when it became vacant. It was a really nice story where the employer had given an existing employee that opportunity and recognising those qualifications.

I wanted to also talk about Blueline Laundry. Most of us know that it is located in New Town just near Lenah Valley as you come down the hill from the school. It has a significant history in Tasmania, 127 years of service to our community. It commenced operations in 1893 as Bay View Laundry. The service was first developed by the Sisters of the Good Shepherd to provide employment for disadvantaged women and girls. Since then Blueline Laundry has evolved to be Tasmania's largest fully commercial and competitive laundry.

It has faced some significant issues and challenges, as all businesses have during COVID-19. It faced two unprecedented COVID challenges. First, the immediate viability of a commercial laundry enterprise and, second, managing a vulnerable workforce through stand downs and the increased risks of laundering potentially infectious linen from hospitals, aged care homes and quarantined hospitals, which is a large proportion of their work.

Within four weeks the effect of COVID-19 had severely impacted and changed this business. The core operation serving hospitals and aged care facilities continued. However, the hospitality industry disappeared instantly when Tasmania went into lock down and closed its borders, resulting in the laundry losing 83 per cent of its business. Overnight Blueline was forced to stand down 60 per cent of its workforce, some of the most vulnerable people in our community. The CEO, Michael Silvester, who I know quite well from a number of positions that he has held, and he is wonderful in this position, outlined to me that the sudden emergence and virulent spread of COVID-19 highlighted that Blueline's protocols to identify, control and manage the laundry processes of infectious linen are highly valued during a pandemic outbreak. As a laundry experienced in servicing the major public and private hospitals and aged care facilities statewide, Blueline quickly became an adviser to public health in bedding procedures critical for the state's pandemic response in suppressing community transmission.

The laundry has continued to provide a vital service to our community during this difficult and challenging period. It has adapted and modified its work practices to not only continue to engage its workers but provide important laundry services to our frontline workers through the businesses that are involved and our hospitals and aged care facilities. It is valued and appreciated by all Tasmanians, but particularly the Government.

In my role as minister responsible for Workplace Health and Safety going out there and seeing the operation was a great pleasure. It was a really fun hour that I spent there. I thank

the staff and employees of the laundry for responding and embracing the challenges of COVID-19.

Norm Britton - Tribute

[6.38 p.m.]

Ms DOW (Braddon) - Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise tonight to pay my respects to Leslie Norman Britton, or as many of us knew him, Norm Britton, who sadly died on 1 October this year.

I had the great privilege of attending Norm's funeral last week in Burnie and celebrating his life and achievements, as I know a number of other members in this also did.

Norm was a large than life individual whose reputation preceded him and who had a profound influence on the lives of many. I want to take this opportunity to extend my sincere condolences and thoughts to Norm's family. Firstly, his brothers, Neville and Raymond, and their respective families, and his sister, Aileen and her family. To his wife, Helen, daughter Rosie and daughter Janet, and her husband Tim.

Norm held his family dear and had a very special relationship with his grandsons, whom I also extend my sincere condolences to - Frank, Sid and Lenny. You can all be very proud of your brother, husband, father and pop's achievements. I know that he will be sadly missed. I recall many a story Norm has told me over time about his grandsons where he would conclude a story with a wry chuckle. There was always a sparkle in his eye.

Norm was born on 16 November 1946 and he grew up on a farm at Rhianna. He was a practical person who could turn his hand to anything and had an affinity for tractors. It was in these childhood days that Norm's brothers and sister saw his strength of character take shape.

I first met Norm through the Burnie branch of the ALP. Norm was a stalwart of the Australian Labor Party and a highly valued life member. Upon receiving his life membership Norm ended his speech with, 'I have always been Labor and will be Labor until the day I die'. He received a standing ovation at state conference.

To be awarded life membership of the Labor Party is the highest honour. It is only awarded after 25 years or more of active involvement in our movement. Norm Britton certainly deserved this honour.

Norm volunteered hour upon hour to the ALP. He was a formidable doorknocker. I reckon over time he lost count of how many election signs he put up across our electorate. He supported many Labor candidates and was involved in policy work at a state and national level. Norm always made quite the impression. I had the great privilege of knowing and working with Norm for many years, not only through his association with the Burnie branch of the ALP but also in the many community organisations which he was passionately involved in.

These many community involvements included the Penguin Surf Life Saving Club, the North West Regional Hospital community advisory board, the Upper Burnie Primary School Parents and Friends Association and the Burnie Harness Racing Club. Norm was instrumental in the lighting project at the Wivenhoe oval enabling night races at Burnie. If he put his mind

to something he got it done. These were just a few of the community groups Norm was involved in.

Former Tasmanian Labor leader, Bryan Green, spoke passionately at Norm's funeral about his effectiveness as a union leader, his distinct ability to draw workers together, negotiate articulately and work with others to reach consensus or strike a deal. Their friendship and time together at the Burnie pulp and paper mill was fondly remembered by Brian and many of those who attended his funeral last week.

Norm has been described as a no-nonsense unionist. He was a life member of the FEDFA which is now the CFMEU, senior shop steward, Burnie sub-branch, Burnie trades and labor council and ALP delegate.

Among his achievements are the 35-hour working week and super and he played a prominent role in the strike at the mill in the 1990s. Norm was a truly unselfish unionist who made a great difference to the life of many and never expected anything in return.

Norm possessed incredible strength and many of us have experienced his wrath when he disagreed or felt there had been an injustice. The great thing about Norm is you always knew where you stood with him. I greatly respected him greatly for this.

The north west coast and our community is indeed a lesser place without Norm Britton's passion, determination and commitment to social justice and the greater good. He was one of a kind. He was a gentle but hard man who commanded respect. I will miss his regular phone calls about various issues, and our discussions at branch meetings. I regret not having had the opportunity to say goodbye.

Norm was active in the community right up until his untimely death, being involved in the local farmers group, working to lobby for and deliver a sale yard for the north west coast. It is a shame that he will not be around to reap the rewards of his hard work and see an outcome for that group that he was so heavily involved with. Rest easy Norm and thank you.

Crimestoppers Tasmania

[6.43 p.m.]

Mr SHELTON (Lyons - Minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Management) - Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise this evening to talk about a fantastic group chaired by David Daniels. That is Crimestoppers Tasmania.

I had the pleasure of presenting two international awards to Crimestoppers Tasmania earlier this week. Each year Crimestoppers International recognises a number of individuals, programs, activities and campaigns from around the world for excellence and for their contribution to the achievements of Crimestoppers International's vision.

In presenting that I extended a huge congratulations to Crimestoppers Tasmania and to the chair, David Daniels. The two awards were the media print award, which was a special feature recognising Crimestoppers Tasmania's 25 years of service and showcased in their 25th anniversary publication. I will talk more about their 25 years in a moment.

The second award was a specialised training award for Crimestoppers Tasmania which led the community retail safety campaign to combat anti-social behaviour, violence and theft around shopping precincts.

These were international awards. Crime Stoppers is an international organisation. They are in continents and countries such as USA, Canada, Caribbean, Bermuda, Latin America, Europe and here in Australia and New Zealand and across Pacific Islands and also in Africa. For Crime Stoppers Tasmania to win these awards was quite an achievement. Congratulations have to go to the team for putting this presentation together and for the excellent work they have done for Tasmania over the years.

International experts judged the entries from Crime Stoppers all around the world. Some of the criteria were the quality of evidence presented to support the nominations and initiatives capacity for potential to prevent, reduce or solve crime, the ability for an initiative to be adapted for use by other Crime Stoppers programs, the sustainability of the initiatives and outcomes and how innovative the initiative is and to what degree the initiative contributed to the community awareness about Crime Stoppers.

It was a fantastic effort by the Chair, David Daniels and the CEO, Maria Leckie for their work in gaining that recognition. I acknowledge the fact that the Commissioner, Darren Hine was a lot younger policeman 25 years ago, who was one of the instigators around Crime Stoppers Tasmania and allowed it to progress through the 25 years.

Crime Stoppers is a recognised entity in Tasmania and the brand is very strong. Some facts and figures over that 25 years. Crime Stoppers has been helping keep the state safe for 25 years with 50 000 anonymous reports received. The evidence is in the results: 17 000 recorded offences; 4000 arrests; \$7.3 million worth of drugs seized; and \$5.1 million of recovered property.

It is a non-profit organisation, an independent organisation, community focused and provides anonymous ability for people to highlight any crime in their area. In case you have forgotten the number, 1800 333 000. Along with that, it is a not for profit and the sponsors of Crime Stoppers have been fantastic. I understand that the Federal Group have been with Crime Stoppers for the full 25 years. Congratulations to everybody and anybody who has been involved in Crime Stoppers over that 25 years.

Heritage Tasmania

[6.48 p.m.]

Ms STANDEN (Franklin) - Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise as a friend of Cultural Heritage Management within this state, to once again highlight an issue impacting the hardworking, dedicated people at Heritage Tasmania and the very many Tasmanians with an interest in heritage in this state.

Another week, and another damning Right to Information request about Heritage Tasmania. Since we last sat in this place, more evidence has come to light regarding this Liberal Government's appalling treatment of Heritage Tasmania staff. Tellingly, I understand that this RTI was submitted by a member of the public. You know that there are serious problems with government transparency when a community member requests information of this nature.

I suggest that the Heritage minister, Ms Archer, has no clue on how much concern there is in the community about heritage management in Tasmania. The RTI contains a critical piece of information about the resignation of Heritage Tasmania's former registration manager, David Scott, in 2017. This is a professional of nearly 30 years' experience in the sector. Some members who have been here longer than I, will recall that Mr Scott at the time raised serious concerns about bullying, harassment and the health of his co-workers at Heritage Tasmania. The RTI has revealed that there are no records in relation to an investigation by DPIPWE. This begs the question: was anything actually done about the issues raised in Mr Scott's resignation letter? Why was there not a paper-trail? Didn't Mr Scott's damning assessment of heritage under the Liberals ring alarm bells? Why isn't there further action being taken right now on this historic issue that continues to plague the culture at Heritage Tasmania?

But, Mr Deputy Speaker, the plot thickens. In Estimates on 5 June 2017, then-deputy secretary, Mr Tim Baker, when questioned about action taken as a result of Mr Scott's letter, said that -

I can tell you that the matter was reviewed and dealt with and there has been some structural changes in Heritage Tasmania.

It begs the question: how was the matter reviewed? How can we have faith that this matter has received the scrutiny it deserved? Why is there no evidence of this review? I am worried that this Government has swept Mr Scott's serious allegations under the carpet.

Just this week I received a letter from Cultural Heritage Practitioners Tasmania that outlined a range of concerns relating to this historic resignation and the matters arising in the RTI. They said in their letter to me -

Cultural Heritage Practitioners Tasmania wrote to DPIPWE in December 2015 seeking an update of any outcomes of any investigations regarding the points raised in Mr Scott's letter. CHPT's letter was unanswered.

We understand that you are aware of recent media attention on certain management issues within Heritage Tasmania and of other RTI disclosures over the past year or so which are of relevance to some of Mr Scott's points.

The letter goes on to cite that issue that there were no records located in relation to an investigation by DPIPWE. They go on to say -

Cultural Heritage Practitioners Tasmania finds it incomprehensible that DPIPWE appear to have not investigated this (seemingly serious) matter - there being 'no records located', given that Mr Scott's letter was addressed to DPIPWE (also noting the CHPT letter) ... there are a number of matters in that letter that clearly require review and action by DPIPWE.

They conclude by saying -

We consider that the recent actions taken to address staff concerns as indicated recently in the media do not address the substantive concerns raised in David Scott's letter.

This Government is no friend of transparency. It is clear that they cannot be trusted with heritage management and have little concern for decent public servants. I have said it before and I say it again now - the conga line of Heritage ministers under this Liberal Government are no friend of the staff at Heritage Tasmania.

Five years might have elapsed but I want to reassure the staff at Heritage Tasmania, members of the Cultural Heritage Practitioners Tasmania organisation, David Scott, and all Tasmanians with an interest in heritage that I will be continuing to pursue these serious concerns and take them very seriously.

Norm Britton - Tribute Mental Health Week

[6.53 p.m.]

Mr ROCKLIFF (Braddon - Minister for Mental Health and Wellbeing) - Mr Deputy Speaker, I draw the attention of the House to Mental Health Week which was last week but, before I do - and my contribution will be reasonably short to allow Ms White to make her contribution prior to 7 o'clock.

I also want to place on record my condolences to the family and friends of Mr Norm Britton. It has been articulated by Dr Broad and Ms Dow today, the life achievements of Mr Britton, and I recognise Mr Britton was not a supporter of our side of politics but I had met Norm on a number of occasions. I think probably the first time was in the 2002 campaign where he was supporting Mr Green at the time and then probably had a conversation at the declaration of the poll day back then.

I saw him around the traps and particularly his involvement with the Burnie Harness Racing Club, which I had some engagement with for some time, particularly as minister for Racing. I acknowledge Norm's tremendous contribution to his community across a number of organisations and offer my condolences to his family and friends.

I want to talk about Mental Health Week which was last week - I recognise that. Mental Health Day was on 10 October and it is an important week which highlights the role we all play in looking after our own mental health and supporting others to do the same. It has been a challenging year, 2020, and it has raised awareness about mental health last week. It could not be more important given the challenging year.

The theme for Mental Health Week this year was 'We all have a role to play'. It was an important opportunity for all Tasmanians to get out and about, reconnect with their local community, check in with family and friends, and participate in events across the state or join in online to support their mental health and wellbeing - many ways to get involved and I will not go through them all.

Odd Socks Day was on Friday 9 October, as an example, and that was a national mental health anti-stigma campaign, developed and run by Grow Australia. Wearing odd socks shows that anyone can have an odd day. The intent of odd socks is to reduce stigma, discrimination and demonstrate that people who are struggling with their mental health are not alone.

If any Tasmanian is feeling stressed or anxious about the future, or simply in need of a friendly and understanding voice to talk things over for advice, information, comfort and reassurance, I want them to know that help and support is available. I encourage all Tasmanians to consider how we can support one another to build stronger connections to each other and within our community, not just during special awareness days but every day.

Check in with your own mental health, check in with a neighbour, check in with a friend, check in with what is happening in your community, and check in for a mental health check up with a trusted health professional like your GP. I thank all those involved in the mental health sector, whether public or private community organisations, for the wonderful support, often under difficult circumstances, for many, many Tasmanians.

Members - Hear, hear.

East Coast - Visitor Information Centres

[6.56 p.m.]

Ms WHITE (Lyons - Leader of the Opposition) - Mr Deputy Speaker, I wanted to rise and speak about visitor information centres on the east coast. Members would remember that the Glamorgan Spring Bay Council earlier this year decided that they were going to close them and then decided to continue to operate them until the end of October.

The state Government at that time commissioned a survey that was undertaken through the Department of State Growth with the survey closing on 2 July. They only provided three weeks for the community and businesses to provide feedback to that survey and yet more than three months' later there has been no response to the participants of that survey who engaged in that process because they understand how important the visitor economy is to Tasmania but particularly to the east coast.

The east coast community relies very heavily on tourism. In fact, it is the fifth most tourism dependent region in the nation. Last financial year, tourism contributed \$146.4 million to the east coast. The closure of those visitor information centres has resulted in an impact on the 10 individuals who worked there. Despite the council saying they would operate them until the end of October, I am sad to report that the Bicheno Centre has already closed and that has had an impact on that local community.

The question I have for the Government is: why is it taking so long for them to provide the results of that survey which was undertaken and closed on 2 July? For the Bicheno Visitor Information Centre it is too late for that employee who has now lost their job. Also, why have they refused to engage with the council about how those services could continue to be operated?

We know that the Triabunna Centre will now be leased by Parks and Wildlife and there are concerns with respect to that because staff who are currently on Maria Island will be pulled off Maria Island to staff that visitor information centre in Triabunna. Those workers are very concerned and I share that concern. The Government promised it would get involved to support the east coast community when the council said it was going to close these centres.

I would like to know what they are doing because as we get closer to the end of October these centres, particularly that question hangs around what is going to happen in Swansea. We

have already seen the Bicheno Centre closed and the lease arrangement transferred to Parks and Wildlife but that is having an impact on other services.

The Department of State Growth needs to provide an update. In fact, the Minister for Tourism, Peter Gutwein, should provide an update and say whether he remains committed to visitor information centres being available to access visitors to the east coast given the impact that has been felt by that community already with COVID-19 this year and the heavy dependence that community has on tourism visitation, and particularly out of respect to those staff who have lost their jobs and were relying on the state Government survey to provide some clarity about what the model would look like. Sadly, that has not happened.

The House adjourned at 7 p.m.