



**PARLIAMENT OF TASMANIA**

**HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY**

**REPORT OF DEBATES**

**Thursday 2 March 2023**

**REVISED EDITION**



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**Thursday 2 March 2023**

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

## **QUESTIONS**

### **Minister for Racing - Alleged Misleading Statement**

#### **Ms WHITE question to PREMIER, Mr ROCKLIFF**

[10.01 a.m.]

When you became Premier after Peter Gutwein resigned, you pledged you would lead a Government with integrity. Nearly a year later, and after nearly a decade in office, your Government's integrity has fallen to a new and shameful low. Madeleine Ogilvie admitted yesterday that she was told on 1 July that the CEO of Tasracing was being sacked by the board. Five days later on 6 July, she told Tasmanians the CEO was leaving - and I quote - 'to spend more time with his family'. In a subsequent parliamentary hearing, Ms Ogilvie was asked about that media statement and she said:

My clear recollection is the advice I received is that he would return for family reasons.

She has admitted that she deliberately misled the public and knowingly misled the parliament. If she had any integrity, she would resign. If you had any integrity, you would make her. Why haven't you?

#### **ANSWER**

Mr Speaker, I thank the member for her question. If the member cared about Tasmanians and what Tasmanians care about, she might be asking questions regarding matters of substance, not about the semantics of a media release.

I have full confidence in our Minister for Racing, as I do all our team, who display high integrity day in and day out. That is my expectation. Not only that, they are working very diligently for the people of Tasmania, focusing on the issues that matter.

This morning I was at a local community pharmacy talking about our policy, our commitment and our actions about reducing red tape in health to the benefit of consumers, ensuring that medications are more accessible through a pharmacy. That was my focus this morning and part of the state of the state contribution earlier this week.

I was in a school yesterday -

**Ms WHITE** - Point of order, Mr Speaker, going to standing order 45. There could not be a more serious issue than that before you right now. I ask you to draw the attention of the Premier to the question, which goes to the integrity of his Government and failure of his ministers to uphold integrity. He has completely skirted around the issue.

**Mr SPEAKER** - I will accept the point of order on relevance but that is not an opportunity to repeat or add issues to the question. I note the Premier talked about integrity initially, and I am interested in what else the Premier has to say.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - Thank you. I could speak of many matters around our Government.

**Ms O'Byrne** - Do you support the minister?

**Mr SPEAKER** - Order.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - I support every single member of our team.

**Ms O'Byrne** - Do you support that minister?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - Every single member of our team -

**Ms White** - Do you support the Racing minister?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - and every minister in our team. As I was trying to explain, I was with minister Jaensch yesterday at a primary school talking about literacy -

**Ms O'Byrne** - Why don't you say the words?

**Mr SPEAKER** - Member for Bass, order.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - I have spoken in parliament on the matters that concern the member. As the minister has said, the departure of Mr Eriksson is an employment matter for the Tasracing board. The minister and Tasracing released a media statement in which the former CEO noted, amongst other things, that he was leaving and that he would be returning to Sydney to be with his family. The minister, in her subsequent media release, simply repeated those comments. Neither the Tasracing media release nor the minister's media release specified whether his departure was due to a resignation or a termination. It would be unusual and inappropriate to do so. Tasracing's operational decisions, including employment matters, are appropriately issues for the board, not the minister.

Our Government will be focusing on the issues that Tasmanians truly care about and that is growing our economy and setting very clear targets in terms of jobs growth. We are very proud of the employment we have created over the course of the last nine years: 54 000 more jobs with a clear target of 20 000 more jobs over the course of the next five years. We are reducing waiting lists. We are cutting red tape in health to make medications more accessible to health consumers. We are investing in our schools, investing in our police service, and investing in housing. These are the issues that Tasmanians care about.

They do not care about the grubby politics of the Labor Party, which has learned nothing. They were asking questions towards the end of last year and nothing has changed.

**Ms Finlay** - You have a minister who intentionally did not tell the truth.

**Mr SPEAKER** - Order.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - Grubby politics. You are a toxic outfit. That is why you have had members resign from your parliamentary Labor Party - because of the toxic culture within your team.

I have a very capable and united team that is continuing to deliver for Tasmanians.

### **Minister for Racing - Alleged Misleading Statement**

#### **Ms WHITE question to PREMIER, Mr ROCKLIFF**

[10.07 a.m.]

Madeleine Ogilvie did not deceive the parliament just once. In a scene remarkably reminiscent of former mining minister, Adam Brooks, Madeleine Ogilvie was pressed further after her first false statement. She fumbled around and tried to claim that at the time of the CEO's departure she was vaguely aware - and I quote again - 'that a cultural survey was ongoing'. The truth is that she knew the survey had been completed and that was the reason for the CEO's sacking. She tried to cover up the fact she had already misled parliament. She was then given a third opportunity to correct the record. Instead, she said her 6 July statement was - and I quote again - 'a reflection of what I was advised'. None of this was true and she knew it. She then spent all summer continuing to mislead Tasmanians and has not taken any of the many opportunities available to her this week to correct the record.

Premier, are you really willing to let your Government's credibility be dragged down by this minister's unacceptable conduct, or are you just so weak that you cannot do anything about a minister who has been caught deliberately misleading parliament on multiple occasions?

#### **ANSWER**

Mr Speaker, I thank the member for the question. I answered a number of questions yesterday and again today. I have nothing further to add. I am very confident we have a very capable, hardworking and committed team. Every single member of our team, across each and every electorate across Tasmania -

**Opposition members** interjecting.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - I would look at your own side, Ms White. You are the toxic party. You are the party that has been taken over and is in administration and controlled by your federal colleagues.

**Opposition members** interjecting.

**Mr SPEAKER** - Order.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - You are the party that is being controlled by your federal colleagues.

We will focus on the issues that matter to Tasmanians: growing our economy, creating jobs, investing in healthcare, investing in schools and literacy and education, public housing, supporting -

**Opposition members** interjecting.

**Mr SPEAKER** - Order. Leader of the Opposition, order.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - Thank you, Mr Speaker. These matters have been well canvassed. I am sure Tasmanians would much prefer us to be talking in parliament about growing the economy, investing in the front line of our health services, talking about professional development of our teachers in our schools, our literacy programs, our \$1.5 billion investment into housing, 10 000 homes by 2032 - not the grubby politics.

You really think Tasmanians care about grubby politics. They do not. What they care about is a government getting on with the job and getting things done.

**Government members** - Hear, hear.

### **Bracknell Hall Funding - Actions of Mr Mark Shelton MP**

[10.11 a.m.]

**Ms O'CONNOR** (Clark - Leader of the Greens) - Mr Speaker, I seek leave to move a motion without notice for the purpose of moving the suspension of Standing Orders to allow for questions to be asked of and answered by the Speaker.

**Mr SPEAKER** - Ms O'Connor, we are in Question Time at the moment and you cannot -

**Ms O'CONNOR** - I understand that but I have moved to seek leave. I believe I can seek leave to have a debate to suspend Standing Orders to ask questions of the Speaker.

**Mr SPEAKER** - When Question Time is called on it is an hour and Question Time takes precedence.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - I know that. I understand. I have sought leave to suspend the Standing Orders so questions can be asked of the Speaker forthwith.

**Mr SPEAKER** - You cannot do that. This is Question Time. You need to ask questions.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - I believe, Mr Speaker, that you are conflicted in making this ruling.

**Mr SPEAKER** - I have just taken advice on my ruling.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - Mr Speaker, I have a number of questions to ask. It would be better that they were asked of and answered by you. I am not certain that your ruling is correct. I believe I can seek the leave of the House to suspend Standing Orders.

**Mr SPEAKER** - I have just made a ruling on that, based on advice. If you do not have a question to ask the Government then I need to move on in my questioning -

**Mr Winter** - You are looking pretty ordinary over there.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - I will tell you what looks ordinary -



**Mr SPEAKER** - Order.

**Ms O'CONNOR question to PREMIER, Mr ROCKLIFF**

[10.12 a.m.]

Yesterday under questioning and during debate neither you, nor any of your colleagues, provided a single piece of evidence demonstrating why Mark Shelton MP's involvement in arranging \$400 000 in funding for Bracknell Hall was not a breach of the Code of Conduct of the Members of Parliament of Tasmania.

Your response in this matter was one of the most pathetic parliamentary performances we have seen in recent years. You dishonestly tried to suggest Mr Shelton's actions were the same as any MP advocating for community needs, despite the fact he had a direct private interest in this project. As the Integrity Commission says, a conflict of interest arises when a public official exercises their duties and functions influenced by their private interests.

Your failure to take this matter seriously goes to your own integrity, which was already under a cloud after you misled parliament last year over the local community's facilities fund and refused to correct the record.

Premier, so we are really clear, do you agree with your Treasurer, who said yesterday that Mr Shelton has done, and I quote, 'Nothing wrong'.

**ANSWER**

Mr Speaker, I thank Ms O'Connor for her question. I will never apologise, or make any apologies for members of parliament doing their job and advocating for local communities. After all, that is what we are here to do. That is what we are elected to do.

I encourage all members of parliament - certainly I am encouraging our team to get out and about amongst rural and regional Tasmanians, speak to your local communities and get things done. Invest in areas and get things done.

**Ms O'Connor** - So you are saying Mr Shelton has done nothing wrong?

**Mr SPEAKER** - Order.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - Invest in key infrastructure projects, which, largely, community organisations put forward. I mentioned one just yesterday, with the George Town Community Hub, born of the local community -

**Ms O'CONNOR** - Point of order, Mr Speaker, Standing Order 45, relevance. I have asked the Premier if he agrees with the Treasurer that the member for Lyons, Mr Shelton, has done nothing wrong in relation to his conflict of interest. Do you agree with what the Treasurer said yesterday?

**Members** interjecting.

**Ms O'Connor** - Do you agree with what the Treasurer said yesterday?

**Mr SPEAKER** - Order.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - Thank you for the question. These matters were canvassed in this parliament yesterday -

**Dr Woodruff** - Do you support your Treasurer?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - Of course I support the Treasurer, for heaven's sake.

**Dr Woodruff** - Do you support what he said?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - Of course I do.

**Dr Woodruff** - That the member for Lyons has done nothing wrong.

**Mr SPEAKER** - Order.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - Mr Shelton is a hard-working local member but all our local members are delivering for the rural and regional communities.

**Dr Woodruff** - No problem with integrity? Nothing to see.

**Mr SPEAKER** - Order, member for Franklin. Order.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - I am proud of the work that our team are doing day in, day out, representing Tasmanians, focusing on their needs at a local level, ensuring that when they are out and about, they are engaging with their communities, talking to their communities about their particular needs. Why would they not come back and advocate for it?

**Members** interjecting.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - Again, this is grubby politics.

**Dr Woodruff** - You are grubby for not recognising integrity.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - Tasmanians expect their parliament to talk about the needs that they care about.

**Ms O'Connor** - Integrity in politics.

**Mr SPEAKER** - Order, member for Clark.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - Cost of living, housing, health care, schools growing our economy, a clear direction with regard to jobs targets is what they care about. They do not care about the grubby politics of those opposite who have nothing more to contribute than personal attacks on individual members. I will have nothing of it.

## **Tasmanian Trades Strategy**

### **Mr YOUNG question to MINISTER for TRADE, Mr ROCKLIFF**

[10.16 a.m.]

Can you please outline to the House the role of the Tasmanian Trade Strategy and the Government's plan to build Tasmania's future, ensuring our businesses, including our many amazing regional businesses, continue to succeed on the international stage.

### **ANSWER**

Mr Speaker, I thank the member for Franklin for his question and interest in this matter and support for small business, not only in the electorate of Franklin but across the wonderful state of Tasmania.

Tasmania has what the world wants, not only through our world-class visitor economy which has seen visitors to our island spend in record levels in the 12 months to December last year but also in our significant boost in exports with our total exports at a record level of \$6 billion to September last year. We have truly secured our identity in the global economy but we must not become complacent.

Through the Tasmanian Trade Strategy, we are striving to grow our trade both domestically and internationally, and it is working. Our agri-food sector has grown to \$3.52 billion, putting us on track to reach our target of \$10 billion by 2050. We have a clear focus on building capability for small- to medium-sized businesses, value-adding to existing businesses and expanding our international influence.

Our trade mission plan is one way that we are delivering support in Tasmanian businesses to showcase their capabilities and opening doors to connect with international buyers, distributors and trading partners by leveraging the premium Tasmanian brand.

**Ms White** - Did you see the national accounts figures yesterday? The economy is not doing very well.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - Talking down Tasmania again, I see.

**Ms White** - You don't believe the national accounts data now?

**Mr SPEAKER** - Order.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - With many global borders now open and countries worldwide actively and aggressively seeking to reclaim and grow their market share through in-person trade missions, delegations of business events is important for Tasmania to take a proactive approach in this competitive environment. We know these missions result in a real and tangible result for our Tasmanian businesses.

For example, the New Zealand trade mission last year saw the launch of a trans-Tasman shipping link by BioMar between Tasmania and Nelson, which presents significant opportunities for Tasmanian businesses exporting across the Tasman Sea. Our distilling delegates have all experienced commercial outcomes as a result of participating in the mission,

with four Tasmanian businesses securing contracts worth more than \$1.1 million and more contracts and negotiations as a result. This is all backed up by the additional Air New Zealand direct flight between Hobart and Auckland.

There are similar results from our five-day mission and other market activities to Singapore and Vietnam last year, with Tasmanian businesses such as Storm and India, Tasmanian Tonic Company and Hartshorn Distillery securing contracts and featuring in some of Singapore's premium grocers, including Little Farms, Huber's Butcher and Pure Tas.

Additionally, an MOU was signed between the Vietnam Maritime University and the University of Tasmania to foster international cooperation in maritime education and research.

Our Government's next trade and investment mission will begin on 6 March and will see a delegation of business representatives travel to Japan and the Republic of Korea. In Korea there will be engagement on the Antarctic and Southern Ocean, advanced manufacturing, maritime and defence, and investment in government programs as well as meetings with senior enterprise executives across defence, maritime, energy and aerospace.

In Japan, a food and beverage program aligned with FOODEX 2023, a world-leading showcase of food and beverage, will be a highlight as well as Antarctic investment, international education and government programs. We intend to explore new relations and understand what connections there may be for trade and partnerships between our jurisdictions.

There is no doubt that our significant economic, environmental, social and community game changer lies in our globally leading renewable energy strategy. It has attracted interest from around the globe from proponents wanting to invest in Tasmania. Under our plan, we are developing new renewable energy capacity, which we will need not only to keep downward pressure on prices but also ensure our energy system continues to grow with our expanding population and economy. We must be able to support our existing industries and attract new ones. That is why we are progressing with our partnership with the federal government on Marinus Link, with a clear pathway to a final investment decision in late 2024.

The Tasmanian Liberal Government is getting things done, building a strong economy and a caring community. Our successful trade strategy is just one way that we are backing Tassie businesses to succeed.

### **Metro Tasmania - Cancelled Services and Ticketing System**

**Mr O'BYRNE question to MINISTER for INFRASTRUCTURE and TRANSPORT,  
Mr FERGUSON**

[10.22 a.m.]

After well over 1000 Metro services have been cancelled over the last few weeks, commuters are fed up with you and your Government's inaction. Your Government's failings on public transport extend well beyond the issue that Metro is currently facing.

Your Government promised commuters a new common ticketing scheme to replace the antiquated Greencard system as an election commitment in 2018. This new ticketing scheme has been delayed every single year of the last four years while the project costs has quadrupled

from just over \$7 million to \$30 million. You still cannot say how much has been spent on the project to date or when commuters can expect to use it. Much like your mythical underground bus mall, this project is yet another example of your Government completely failing to deliver for the travelling public.

How can Tasmanians possibly believe that your Government takes public transport seriously when all you have managed to do is break these promises while watching Metro being run into the ground?

## **ANSWER**

Mr Speaker, I appreciate the question from Mr O'Byrne. To his credit, he has asked a question that is important for Tasmanians, unlike the Labor Party that he seeks to lead again one day. That is a real issue.

I will deal with the cancellations matter and I will also answer your questions around common ticketing, because it is a very exciting project this Government is funding and driving. The RTBU begged the Labor Party to copy us at the last election but you, as shadow minister, Mr O'Byrne, did not copy our policy. You were left in our dust.

Every day there are any service cancellations across the Metro network is regrettable. At the moment, it is confined to the southern area and I hope it stays that way. We are working with Metro on their recruitment. Metro has increased its intake of new drivers from 12 to 20 and they have reduced the training from, I think, eight weeks down to six weeks, with a more intense focus on helping those new recruits to get on the road as soon and as safely as can be achieved.

Mr O'Byrne, to your credit, you have been pursuing this issue because it is of public interest. It would be good if there was more interest in this real issue for Tasmanians by Labor and the Greens. However, as you have persisted, I must be persistent in my responses.

We have to deal with this. There is a national shortage of heavy-vehicle licensed drivers, 25 000 in the transport industry across the country, both buses and trucks. There is a skills shortage. In fact, to put it more accurately, there is a labour shortage because of the very strong level of employment in our country. Tasmania is enjoying strong economic times as well. There are so few people unable to get any work in Tasmania now that it is harder to recruit.

Nonetheless, as the RTBU said to me last Tuesday, one week ago, they have actually complimented Metro on their recruitment efforts in a labour-constrained market. However, as I have indicated, retention is a challenge. That is what we are doing.

Ms Dow, if you had a serious interest in this, I invite you to ask a question.

**Ms Dow** - That is why you are so hopeless. Why? You never answer questions.

**Mr SPEAKER** - Order.

**Mr FERGUSON** - You are all very touchy over there because you only have stunts. Through Metro Tasmania, and in collaboration with the Department of State Growth, we are progressing the ticketing solution that will apply to all GA operators in Tasmania including our

Derwent ferry service, so that customers can have a better experience and more reliability in planning their journeys. Also, of course, a payment system that goes with that.

We have designed it to be inclusive of real-time information. The system will integrate with network planning and timetabling systems to allow for the design and implementation of data-driven network improvements. Passengers will be able to pay fares by credit card, phone, or smart watch. It will be easier to transfer between services and operators, such as, for example, Manions' from Legana to Metro across to the northern suburbs of Launceston, or in Hobart, say, from Geilston Bay across the Tasman maybe to use the Derwent ferry service on their further journeys. That is in place.

I would love to tell you everything I know about this, Mr O'Byrne, because Metro has been briefing me on a regular basis about progress with a vendor but I am in the position, which I think you would be familiar with, that I am not at liberty to tell the House or the public exactly what vendor is currently being negotiated with by the department and by Metro. We look forward to an announcement.

I can say that the Government has made an in-principle decision to work with another jurisdiction and its common ticketing provider. There are two parties at play here, subject to resolution of acceptable commercial terms. We will not sign until we get an acceptable agreement that meets the needs of our travellers and is acceptable to the vendor. I look forward to having more to say about this.

I appreciate your interest and your impatience on it because we are all wanting to see that be achieved. Without wanting to be as political as you have been, I ask the question: why did you not copy our policy to invest in this system, Mr O'Byrne?

**Mr O'Byrne** - How much have you invested? \$7 million to \$30 million?

**Mr FERGUSON** - We are putting a big effort in dealing with the real issues of Tasmanians. One of them is a ticketing system that has long since passed its use-by date. We are a small jurisdiction and it is difficult to rush through a vendor solution. You might actually be paying a lot more than \$31 million, which in my mind is a lot of money. We want to extract maximum value. You will be pleased to know, Mr O'Byrne, that we do believe we have secured a vendor. We are partnering with another jurisdiction. It is very positive.

**Ms White** - What is the return on that investment? Answer the question and sit down. Some other state is fixing it and you are piggybacking.

**Mr FERGUSON** - I will not sit down until I have finished answering the question, Ms White. It is not actually up to you any more who runs the toxic party. Mr O'Byrne, I swear to you as soon as I can say more I look forward to doing so because I am as excited about it as you are.

## **Racing Integrity - Oversight by Minister for Racing**

### **Mr WINTER question to PREMIER, Mr ROCKLIFF**

[10.29 a.m.]

It has been almost a year since the Monteith review was released, which made major recommendations to improve integrity, including the abolishment of the Office of Racing Integrity. Since that time there remain serious allegations surrounding the racing industry, for which Ms Ogilvie is responsible and you say you have confidence in.

Given that this minister has been caught out trying to cover up the sacking of the CEO and overseeing an unacceptable culture within Tasracing, how can we have confidence that she is properly overseeing and protecting the integrity of Tasmanian racing? Do you have confidence that the Office of Racing Integrity has the capacity to protect Tasmanian racing from corruption and poor animal welfare standards?

### **ANSWER**

Mr Speaker, I have been to a number of racing meetings more recently and the industry is going very well. I remember as Racing minister putting in place, in conjunction with Tasbreeders representatives, an innovative breeding program which encourages investment in the industry. We are a strong supporter of the racing industry.

The racing industry contributes some \$185 million per annum to the Tasmanian economy, with 38 per cent of that directly benefiting our regional communities. There are over 5800 people participating in the racing industry including breeders, owners and trainers, racing club staff, jockeys and drivers. The industry sustains around 1500 FTE jobs, 64 per cent a direct result of the racing activity.

Of course probity and integrity are important in the racing industry, underpinning confidence in racing across all three codes in the state. Integrity functions are defined in the Racing Regulations Act 2004, which has not been substantively reviewed since its inception. The Tasmanian Liberal Government was pleased it received and publicly released the independent review into Tasmania's Racing Regulations Act 2004. The Government noted and supported in principle the recommendations within the report and has publicly released a detailed response to each of the recommendations and the work is continuing. A bill will be drafted and go out before consultation, I am advised, and our minister will work closely with the industry on these important changes.

I am also advised that, as I would expect, the Minister for Racing is absolutely committed to implement the Government's response to the Monteith review and my advice is that a bill will be passed this calendar year.

**Mr WINTER** - Point of order, Mr Speaker, under Standing Order 45. The question to the Premier was does he have confidence in the Office of Racing Integrity? I just ask you before he sits down - very disappointing, Mr Speaker.

## **Minister for Racing - Investigation into Alleged Animal Cruelty**

**Ms JOHNSTON question to MINISTER for RACING, Ms OGILVIE**

[10.33 a.m.]

In anticipation of your likely response, I want to acknowledge your offer to me of a private briefing on any racing matter. However, the issues I raise are of significant community concern to people I represent and indeed you represent. They want to hear you stand up in this place and answer the questions on the public record.

In recent correspondence you confirmed that the investigations into both the animal cruelty incidences at Spreyton, where a horse was allegedly whipped approximately 43 times in a sandpit, and at Brighton, where a horse was allegedly beaten with a PVC pipe, are apparently still ongoing. Why does it take over seven months to conduct an investigation? Do you think it is appropriate that both these trainers have been allowed to continue to train during these lengthy investigations, potentially putting more horses at risk of abuse and cruelty?

### **ANSWER**

Mr Speaker, it is a very important question. We have exchanged correspondence and I thank you for that and yes, anytime you want a briefing, of course.

I am advised that the Office of Racing Integrity has received these reports alleging the mistreatment of horses at facilities in the north-west and in the south of the state. The Office of Racing Integrity is an independent regulator that conducts investigations and inquiries in accordance with accepted practice and departmental compliance of policies with respect to the legislation and the rules they administer.

Where warranted, information may be referred to other regulators to allow them to either collaborate with the Office of Racing Integrity or to pursue investigations independently with respect to legislation they administer. This might include RSPCA Tasmania or Biosecurity Tasmania or relevant local governments. Whether any referral is made to the Office of Racing Integrity is based on the information that they have before them.

I cannot comment on any matter, as you would understand, that is the subject of an ongoing investigation. It would be inappropriate to do so and potentially prejudice the investigation or compromise procedural fairness for individuals.

**Mr Winter** - Do you have confidence in ORI?

**Mr SPEAKER** - Order.

**Ms OGILVIE** - I am advised, as you know, and we have exchanged correspondence on this matter, that the incident that occurred at the Spreyton racecourse was referred to the RSPCA by the Office of Racing Integrity and of course they have my confidence.



## **Electricity Prices - Closure of Rebate Scheme**

### **Mr WINTER question to PREMIER, Mr ROCKLIFF**

[10.36 a.m.]

Can you confirm that the energy hardship scheme you announced on Tuesday is closed to businesses that had not recontracted by the end of that same day? After a decade in office, have you really lost so much respect for business that you thought you could get away with announcing a support scheme to deal with hardship arising from your own broken promise that was only open to businesses that recontracted within an hour of your speech? What are customers contracting now supposed to do?

### **ANSWER**

Mr Speaker, we are very pleased with our announcement across a range of areas, whether that be supporting mums and dads, pensioners, those on fixed incomes and those doing it tough, with our Winter Bill Buster payment last year, which I know has been welcomed by a number of people. Our \$33 million, as outlined in the revised report, in partnership with the federal government concerning energy prices - my advice is that the peak around energy prices, particularly as it affects contracted customers, was towards the end of last year and the forward projections are softening in terms of prices. What we are about is supporting, through a hardship payment of some \$20 000, those businesses that experienced hardship.

**Mr Winter** - Because of your broken promise.

**Mr SPEAKER** - Member for Franklin, order. You have been spoken to a number of times today.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - We are working through those matters now with Treasury. We are working through the criteria now to ensure it is well targeted and that that support, where it is most needed, gets there. Whether it is small businesses, medium businesses, mums and dads, families or those many people on fixed and low incomes, I will always be in their corner, thinking of innovative ways where we can support them through difficult times and we have demonstrated that clearly over the course of the last 12 months. Over the forward Estimates, we have over \$300 million in terms of our support for vulnerable Tasmanians, and that support will continue.

## **Primary Industries - Supporting Sustainable Growth**

### **Mrs ALEXANDER question to MINISTER for PRIMARY INDUSTRIES and WATER, Ms PALMER**

[10.39 a.m.]

Can you update the House on how the Tasmanian Liberal Government is building the state's future by supporting sustainable growth in our primary industries, creating strong economy, and supporting regional jobs?

## ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I thank the member for Bass for the question. I am proud to be part of a government that prioritises people and their livelihoods and is focused on getting things done across regional Tasmania. We understand the importance of our agriculture and fishery sectors to our regional communities, the Tasmanian brand and the Tasmanian economy.

In recognition of the threats posed to the sustainability of our iconic abalone fishery by the invasive sea urchin *Centrostephanus*, I am delighted that we have announced the continuation of funding to the Abalone Industry Reinvestment Fund.

We have already delivered over \$5 million to the fund over the past five years to support urchin control and enhancement of abalone stocks. Industry's overwhelmingly positive response to the announcement extension makes it abundantly clear how important this fund and the work it supports, is for Tasmania and the abalone fishery.

We have reaffirmed our commitment to a sustainable rock lobster fishery on the East Coast of Tasmania with an extension of funding for the successful trans-location program to help rebuild stocks. We are working to deliver a Tasmanian salmon industry plan to ensure our salmon industry, the largest primary producer in Tasmania and the largest seafood industry sector in Australia, can continue to be sustainable, resilient and innovative well into the future and can meet the expectations of our community.

Driving around the state, you can see how our collective investment in irrigation is transforming agriculture and land use and is supporting thriving regional communities. With 18 irrigation schemes now in place around the state, more farmers than ever before have access to reliable irrigation water. Over the next five years, additional irrigation projects valued at more than \$1.5 billion are estimated to deliver 3500 jobs, more than \$350 million in on-farm investment and 130 000 megalitres of highly reliable irrigation water.

Our farmers now have confidence to invest in producing high-value crops and we are tracking well towards our ambitious goal of growing the farmgate value of the primary production sector to \$10 billion by 2050.

Investment in agricultural research, development and extension that delivers on-farm benefits is another key part of our strategy for achieving the sustainable growth necessary to reach this target. We have already allocated \$3.6 million under the Agricultural Development Fund and Agricultural Innovation Fund programs to leverage investment in eight co-funded projects, such as the project to prevent and control blueberry rust and another to use asparagopsis seaweed in animal feed to reduce methane emissions and through the revised Estimates report, we have committed ongoing funding to assure these programs can continue.

We have provided additional funding for the Strategic Industry Partnership Program to support peak industry bodies and organisations to undertake projects that support development of the agri-food industry sector. Through enhanced biosecurity measures at our borders, we are protecting what we value most. We are taking steps to strengthen our front line against disease and pest incursions with the recruitment of five new biosecurity inspectors. The contracts of a further seven officers have been extended to bolster our efforts and maintain community awareness and compliance.

I am proud of the actions we took last year to protect our borders. With the increased risk of foot and mouth disease in Indonesia, now it is important that we maintain our focus on protecting our industries and the livelihoods of Tasmanians. This is what we are doing. Together with those in our primary production sector, we are focused on building a stronger, more diverse economy which will benefit all Tasmanians right across the state.

### **Electricity Prices - Rebate Scheme**

#### **Mr WINTER question to PREMIER, Mr ROCKLIFF**

[10.44 a.m.]

Pure Food Eggs is a leader in our primary production sector. The business produces nearly 4 million cartons of eggs each year. The CEO, Kate Daley, is currently in the process of recontracting energy for the business. Because of your broken promise, they have been quoted three times their current contracted price for their new energy contract. Do you concede that your policy you announced only two days ago does nothing for businesses like Pure Food Eggs?

#### **ANSWER**

Mr Speaker, I thank the member for his question. We have demonstrated over the course of the past 12 months that when it comes to the increase in energy prices, as they have been right around the nation, we are one of the most competitive and amongst the lowest in Australia. What we are doing is ensuring -

**Ms Finlay** - Where were you and the ag minister on this?

**Mr SPEAKER** - Order.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - I am not going to speak of individual businesses, or circumstances in parliament.

**Ms Finlay** - How many do think are like this?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - But we are happy to engage, of course -

**Ms Finlay** - I am happy to engage. Leave everything too little, too late.

**Mr SPEAKER** - Order, member for Bass.

**Mr Winter** - He is happy to engage with the RSL as well.

**Mr SPEAKER** - Order.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - Thank you, Mr Speaker. Honestly.

When it comes to mums and dads, when it comes to small businesses, larger businesses, we fully understand the impact of energy prices. That is why we have worked closely with the

federal government, through our combined efforts if you like of some \$33 million as announced in the Revised Estimates Report more recently.

We always have our ear to the ground when it comes to supporting businesses. We have announced a hardship payment. It is targeted to the commercial and industrial customers who are outside of the independent regulators' price determination - that is those who use over 150 megawatts per year. This is because the group has not been included in the federal government's national Energy Bill Relief Plan. This group of businesses has faced greater volatility than those that are on regulated tariffs by virtue of how the regular list determination is calculated.

**Ms Finlay** - How many Tasmanian businesses will eligible for your program?

**Mr SPEAKER** - Member for Bass, order.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - The Tasmanian Government wants to make sure that these businesses also receive support where they need it, if as a result of the timing of the recontracting they have had a significant impact on the profitability. It is well targeted

**Ms Finlay** interjecting.

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### **Member Suspended**

### **Member for Bass - Ms Finlay**

**Mr SPEAKER** - Order, Member for Bass, you can leave the Chamber until after Question Time.

**Ms Finlay** withdrew.

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**Mr ROCKLIFF** - It is worth noting, Mr Speaker, that when members are disruptive in this House, they are not respecting the Tasmanian people. A member has left the Chamber and is not representing her electorate in the parliament.

**Members** interjecting.

**Mr SPEAKER** - Order.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - We are about ensuring that when it comes to the matters of cost of living, energy price increases, we are absolutely in the corner of businesses and always willing to engage and understand their concerns so we can act.

**Ms WHITE** - Point of order, Mr Speaker, standing order 45. Could you draw the Premier's attention to the question, which was about businesses that are still recontracting, that are excluded from accessing his scheme, and ask him to answer why that is the case?

**Mr SPEAKER** - The Premier has resumed his seat. On the point of order of relevance, I will always remind that the Premier was answering the question.

## **Community Sporting Infrastructure Investment**

### **Mr TUCKER question to MINISTER for SPORT and RECREATION**

[10.48 a.m.]

Can you update the House on how the Rockliff Liberal Government is building Tasmania's future in getting things done by investing in community sporting infrastructure to get more Tasmanians active? Is the minister aware of any alternative plans or policies?

### **ANSWER**

Mr Speaker, I thank the member, Mr Tucker, for that question. I know that he understands how important community sporting infrastructure is and the vital volunteers who keep it going in the many regional communities across his electorate of Lyons.

The Rockliff Liberal Government is taking important steps to address the growing need for community sporting facilities across the state. The Premier announced in his state of the state address that we are delivering an important package of grassroots community sport and recreation initiatives. These includes committing \$10 million over two years for a Tasmanian active infrastructure grants program to fund community sporting facility upgrades across the state.

Following the success of previous programs, such as Levelling the Playing Field and Improving the Playing Field, we are also providing \$2 million for immediate upgrades at the Moonah and Clarence sports centres. On top of delivering some immediate upgrades, we are also working to ensure that long-term demand for sporting infrastructure is met. Active Tasmania, which was formally Sport and Recreation, will be immediately charged with conducting a whole state facilities audit to determine what new or upgraded community sporting facilities are needed to keep up with demand. An Active 2030 strategy will also be developed to ensure that no Tasmanian misses out on the social and physical benefits of getting active, playing sports and participating in recreation activities.

The creation of Active Tasmania reflects the changing landscape and the many different ways Tasmanians are getting active and participating across the state. I want Tasmanians to know that things like parkrun and other less formal structured activity are just as legitimate and as important as the traditional established sports. Government investment in change rooms and toilets at a beach, for example, are as legitimate an investment in keeping Tasmanians active as improving the playing surface at a soccer or football field.

The Government will continue to support our vital regional communities and the volunteer spirit of the thousands of Tasmanians who are the lifeblood of local grassroots clubs. We will also ensure the opportunities brought about by the northern suburbs community hub development in Mowbray are fully realised to ensure community sports have a new home in the north of the state that they can be proud of. We will continue investing in vital community infrastructure that supports every Tasmanian to lead an active and healthy lifestyle.

The Government, through Events Tas, is supporting events that attract people to Tasmania, move Tasmanians and tourists around the state and get people talking about Tasmania through their own circles of influence. We have had a huge summer of events across

Tasmania, including 370 artists performing at the iconic MONA FOMA events in both Launceston and Hobart, and the popular Australian Wooden Boat Festival.

We are investing nearly \$6 million in support of 45 events that will have taken place between December of last year and March of this year. It is projected that these events will attract a total of 23 488 interstate and overseas visitors to our state, with a projected return on investment of 5.26 to 1, or nearly \$31 million. The annual hotel occupancy for January to December 2022 hit a new record of 76.24 per cent, narrowly beating the previous high of 76.16 per cent back in 2019. Business and industry are alive in Tasmania.

I was asked if I was aware of any alternative plans or policies. Unfortunately, the Leader of the Opposition had the opportunity yesterday but squibbed it. Labor has been in opposition for nearly 3300 days and has never delivered a properly costed and funded alternative budget. That means that all their plans and policies are just thought-bubbles. They are in administration and have been taken over by mainland Labor.

**Opposition members** interjecting.

**Mr SPEAKER** - Order.

**Mr STREET** - The noise coming from the other side is an indication that they do not like what I am talking about. There is confidence in Tasmania now that was never here under Labor and the Greens and we will not let that confidence fade.

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### **Recognition of Visitors**

**Mr SPEAKER** - Honourable members, I welcome the Dover District School's years 9 and 10 students to the Gallery.

**Members** - Hear, hear.

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### **Electricity Prices - Rebate Scheme Guidelines**

**Mr WINTER question to MINISTER for ENERGY and RENEWABLES, Mr BARNETT**

[10.53 a.m.]

Tasmanian businesses have been crying out for support since you broke your promise to cap power prices. You betrayed 100 years of investment in Hydro and subjected Tasmanian businesses to inflated mainland prices. Contracted customers are amongst the hardest hit, with many seeing prices double or even triple. Can you explain the guidelines in the eligibility criteria for your new \$20 000 hardship bail-out scheme?

**ANSWER**

Mr Speaker, I thank the member for his question. It is excellent to have a question on energy after all the whining and whingeing and talking Tasmania down over the entire summer period, and the criticisms and relentless negativity. It has taken three days to get a question

from the shadow. We know there is a toxic culture over there. We know there is a schism right down the middle of the Labor Party in terms of the push for the top job from Mr Winter. That is what this is about. This is another publicity stunt, pushing for the top job. We know what is going on, Mr Speaker. We know your federal counterparts do not have confidence in you; you remain in administration.

**Members** interjecting.

**Mr SPEAKER** - Order. I will give the Chamber a chance to calm down. I cannot hear the minister, so I presume that Hansard is having difficulty doing their work as well.

**Mr BARNETT** - Mr Speaker, there is a lot of anxiety on the other side when it comes to unity, because they are divided big time and it is a toxic culture, so they have concerns there.

**Mr WINTER** - Point of order, Mr Speaker.

**Mr Barnett** - How long has it taken?

**Mr WINTER** - You have been going for a minute and a half and you have gone nowhere near the question, which was asking about the guidelines around this -

**Mr SPEAKER** - I understand the question. The minister understands the question. I believe that if you had waited another 10 seconds, you might have allowed the minister to tease out your question.

**Mr BARNETT** - That is right, Mr Speaker. It is an attempt to waste time and it is not appreciated by those in the Chamber or anyone else.

Anyway, what we are on about is putting downward pressure on electricity prices. The announcement was very clear of up to \$20 000 in terms of a hardship payment. It was made clear. It is in a media release. It is in the public statement. From April last year through to 28 February this year, criteria has been developed by Treasury. That is on the public record.

**Opposition members** interjecting.

**Mr SPEAKER** - Order.

**Mr BARNETT** - You have asked a question and I am trying to answer it. As the Premier said, 150 megawatt hours, so those commercial industrial customers are entitled to apply for that hardship payment. That is because we are listening and we are monitoring, because we have a disposition to put downward pressure on electricity prices, unlike Labor and the Greens when they went up 65 per cent under their watch. Under our watch, they have gone down in real terms since 2014. That is the independent regulator's advice, not mine. You can have a look at the independent advice and check it out.

We are all about increasing supply. Our growing economy needs more supply. We cannot have a growing economy without more electricity and we are all about growing our electricity to support our growing economy and putting downward pressure wherever possible on electricity prices. My rhetorical question is why are state Labor not talking to federal Labor?

**Ms White** - What is the criteria for the grant program?

**Mr SPEAKER** - Order, Ms White. I will ask you to leave if you continue to interject.

**Mr BARNETT** - They promised a \$275 reduction by 2025 and we will hold them to account. I was at the Energy ministers' meeting last week and raised the issue again of power prices and how important it is, because cost of living is front and centre for us as a government, for residential customers, for small business customers, and we are on it. I raised it last week at the Energy ministers' meeting and we will get things done. We are negotiating now through the heads of government and through the treasurers. We have \$33 million in the budget for both residential customers and small business customers that need it. We are absolutely on it and we will continue to fight to deliver downward pressure on prices. We encourage state Labor to do the same.

### **Project Marinus - Transmission Costs**

**Mr WINTER question to PREMIER, Mr ROCKLIFF**

[10.58 a.m.]

Can you confirm that Tasmania's major industrials have been told in briefings from the Marinus Link team that Project Marinus could increase their transmission costs by approximately 40 per cent? After nearly a decade of promises from your Government about the benefits of the second interconnector, do you not think it is about time Tasmanians were told the truth about the cost to them for this project?

**ANSWER**

Mr Speaker, I was very pleased to work in partnership with the Labor Prime Minister of Australia, signing together in support of Marinus Link. We are going through a FID process at this present time when that final decision will be made. We are a believer in Marinus. Are you? Do you support Marinus or not?

**Members** interjecting.

**Mr SPEAKER** - Order.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - You were pretending to ask him a question so you did not have to answer my question.

**Ms WHITE** - Point of order, Mr Speaker.

**Members** interjecting.

**Mr SPEAKER** - Order. The House will come to order. There is a point of order.

**Ms WHITE** - Thank you, Mr Speaker, going to Standing Order 45, relevance. I draw your attention to the fact the Premier is inciting interjection from the Opposition, asking us questions when he has a question before him he has not addressed. Will transmission prices go up by 40 per cent by for our major industrial customers?



**Mr SPEAKER** - I understand the point of order. To the point of order under Standing Order 45, relevance, I do not know what the Premier is going to say, so I will allow him to continue with his answer.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - There will be many very concerned businesses in Tasmania when a major political party such as the Labor Party does not support Marinus, particularly when we have worked so diligently with the federal Labor Government, signing up to Marinus with the Prime Minister. That was a landmark decision of which you had both federal and state government working in partnership to lock in exciting economic and job opportunities for Tasmania in the renewables sector and help decarbonise the nation's energy supply. It will also attract some \$7 billion of investment in Tasmania.

**Mr WINTER** - Point of order, Mr Speaker. The question is whether the Premier can confirm a 40 per cent increase in transmission costs for our major industrials. I ask you to draw him back to the question.

**Mr SPEAKER** - I make the Premier aware of Standing Order 45, relevance, and if he can bear that in mind in his answer.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - Thank you, Mr Speaker. The member needs to answer very clearly -

**Ms White** - You do. I think you misunderstand what Question Time is about.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - do you support Marinus Link?

**Mr SPEAKER** - On the point of order -

**Mr Winter** - You have given me my final warning. If I am in here, I cannot interject. The Premier is now inciting me to interject. If I do, you will throw me out.

**Mr SPEAKER** - The Premier has the call.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - I am not going to insert myself into commercial-in-confidence negotiations.

This is a Labor Opposition intent on undermining confidence in Tasmania. Every day you come in here and you talk down Tasmania. You talk down Marinus Link, which is about enhancing our renewable energy self-sufficiency for Tasmania. Our connection to the national grid is critical to support our role in helping Australia and the rest of the world meet its emissions targets. We can sell excess energy when we have it and import if we need it, as I expressed in my state of the state Address. That is why Marinus is so important and why the federal Labor Government and the Tasmanian Liberal Government worked together on these matters because we understand the importance nationally and as a state government.

We understand the importance of that investment to Tasmania, ensuring access to greater diversity of renewable energy sources, putting downward pressure on electricity prices. With Marinus Link, Tasmanian households can expect annual energy bills to be \$60 to \$70 lower than they would otherwise have been without Marinus Link. That is why we have signed up and why we work diligently, hand in hand with the federal Labor government in the best interests of Tasmanians.

I am increasingly disheartened about the politics of those on the other side where they do nothing but undermine the confidence in our future renewable energy, and undermine the confidence in Tasmania. Everywhere I go, you are talking down Tasmania. Tasmanians do not like it. Not only do you talk down Tasmania, you have no solutions, only stunts. You have questions to answer as well when it comes to saying no, effectively, to the opportunity of a strong renewable energy future and attracting \$7 billion of investment here in Tasmania.

### **Community Grants - Approval Process**

#### **Ms O'CONNOR question to PREMIER, Mr ROCKLIFF**

[11.04 a.m.]

On 20 August 2021, well after the last state election, right-to-information documents confirm that a staff member in the then-premier's office, who is still there, wrote to Communities Tasmania to advise them, out of the blue, that the department had to provide funding for four new projects. We know that none of these projects went through any proper merit-based process because, until that point, the department was unaware of them.

Of these four projects, one of them was the grant to the JackJumpers, which has been under intense scrutiny for a potential conflict of interest. A second was the Bracknell Hall, which we know is associated with a clear conflict of interest. Now we are wondering about the other two grants.

Can you give us a rock-solid guarantee that no Liberal MPs or senior staff were involved in either of these projects prior to funding being approved behind closed doors, without transparency or proper process?

#### **ANSWER**

Mr Speaker, I thank the member for her question. Muckraking once again. We are members of parliament who get out and about and do our job right throughout the terms of parliament - four-year terms, as it has traditionally been since 1998. Our team are very good in working around their local communities, visiting not-for-profit organisations run by hard-working volunteers.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - Mr Speaker, Standing Order 45, relevance. This is a serious question. We have asked the Premier to give a rock-solid guarantee that no Liberal MPs or senior staff were involved in either of the two projects, the other grants, awarded funding without proper process.

**Mr SPEAKER** - I will remind the Premier of relevance, but the standing order does not allow you to repeat the question.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - I thank the member for the second question, same question as it was. I expect all our MPs to be out there, particularly when it comes to volunteer organisations.

**Ms O'Connor** - What about your senior staff?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - I do not mind you attacking staff, Ms O'Connor.

**Ms O'Connor** - I am not attacking staff. I am asking a question about whether staff were involved in extra funding grants.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - Yes, you are. I would never attack your staff and you know that. You can also get out of the gutter, if you like.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - Mr Speaker, point of order, Standing Order 45, relevance. Could the Premier address the question about whether any Liberal MPs or senior staff were involved in those two other secretly awarded grants?

**Mr SPEAKER** - Ms O'Connor, the Premier is trying to answer the question and he is being constantly interjected on. Please allow the Premier to answer the question, in silence.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - I do not understand why you do not support organisations that often require supports. They are often run by volunteers. They are hardworking people who volunteer their time to support their local community, like their local tennis club, bowls club, whatever it might be, out there working hard for their community. I expect our MPs to visit those organisations, get out and about. Those conversations they have where they say, 'we could really value equipment' or whatever it might be 'to support our volunteers and support this organisation represent this community'. That is my expectation of our MPs. They are all doing it and I am proud of them all.

### **Child Abuse - Civil Claims Process**

**Mr WOOD question to MINISTER for JUSTICE, Ms ARCHER**

[11.09 a.m.]

Can you provide the House with an update on the review of the structure and processes for the management of civil claims involving the State of Tasmania?

### **ANSWER**

Mr Speaker, I thank the member for his question and his continuing interest in this very important matter, as with all my team members.

As I have said before, the management of civil claims against the Tasmanian Government arising from child abuse requires a careful and considered approach to ensure that the process does not retraumatise victims/survivors of child abuse, in particular, institutional child sexual abuse. I have made my expectations very clear to the state's lawyers. I expect all legal practitioners acting on behalf of the state to deal with these matters sensitively. Their approach to claims must reflect contemporary understanding of the impact of trauma. The civil claims process should not and must not make victims/survivors feel that their experience of abuse has been dismissed or minimised. To do so is simply not acceptable. The Commission of Inquiry's work has provided us with an opportunity to hear the experiences of victims/survivors directly and we have listened to what victims/survivors and others have said about their experiences engaging with a civil litigation process. This is one of the reasons we signed up to the National Redress Scheme as an alternative to civil proceedings which can by their very nature be far more complex.

Last year, I committed to reviewing the management of civil litigation by the Office of the Solicitor-General with an extensive review of other Australian jurisdictions. That is something I have wanted to do for some time now. That review has now been completed and I have determined that the management and conduct of the state's civil litigation should be conducted by a new separate office. Currently, the management of all civil claims, for or against the State of Tasmania is undertaken by the Office of the Solicitor-General's litigation division.

Since I led progress on a range of reforms that improve access to justice for victims of child sexual abuse through the introduction of the Justice Legislation Amendment (Organisational Liability for Child Abuse) Act 2019, there have been higher numbers of civil claims related to child sexual abuse in particular, notwithstanding the National Redress Scheme to which we signed up. This is also the result stemming from the law reforms that we have made to ensure victims/survivors have better access to justice for child abuse claims.

Our reforms are expressly aimed at ensuring more victims/survivors are able to make civil claims for abuse than what was available in previous years. Whilst the Office of the Solicitor-General has appropriately undertaken training in trauma-informed practice and issued specific guidelines for the management of such claims, creating a separate office which can handle child sexual abuse matters in a timely and trauma-informed way for victims/survivors, is, as I have said, something I have wanted to achieve for some time now.

As Attorney-General, I was pleased to announce yesterday that I will establish a new separate state litigation office this year to take over the management of the entire state's civil litigation. The establishment of this new office will provide an opportunity to refresh the management of all civil litigation and ensure contemporary understanding of trauma and harm is embedded at all levels of the state's legal practice.

The new office will provide me, as Attorney-General, with advice as to specific guidelines and directions on the handling of civil claims, including any changes to ensure the processes are more victim-centric and trauma-informed. It is my expectation that the state's new approach on all civil proceedings will also ensure victim survivors feel listened to, understood, informed and supported throughout their civil litigation proceedings.

In closing, our Government acknowledges that it is highly likely that the Commission of Inquiry will make a number of recommendations regarding the management of child abuse civil claims. As I have said on numerous occasions, we will not wait for the final report of the commission if there are things we can do now to ensure that all matters involving allegations of child sexual abuse are dealt with sensitively and with the utmost respect and consideration for victims/survivors.

**Members** - Hear, hear.

**Time expired.**

## **SITTING DATES**

[11.15 a.m.]

**Mr STREET** (Franklin - Leader of the House) (by leave) - Mr Speaker, I move -

That the House at its rising adjourn till Tuesday, 21 March next, at 10 a.m.

**Motion agreed to.**

## **ORDER OF BUSINESS**

**Mr STREET** (Franklin - Leader of the House)(by leave) - Mr Speaker, I move -

That so much of Standing Orders be suspended as would prevent the debate of any question before the Chair at 1 p.m. today from automatically standing adjourned to enable debate on Notice of Motion No. 82 to take place at 2.30 p.m. followed by Notice of Motion No. 81 as listed on the blue.

**Motion agreed to.**

## **MOTION**

### **Leave to Move Motion to Suspend Standing Orders - Negatived**

[11.16 a.m.]

**Ms O'CONNOR** (Clark - Leader of the Greens) - Mr Speaker, I seek leave to move a motion without notice for the purpose of moving the suspension of Standing Orders to allow the Speaker to make a statement to the House regarding his involvement in securing and administering the Bracknell Hall grant.

Mr Speaker, there is only one person in this place who can provide real clarity on the disbursement of a million dollars in Commonwealth and state funds to the Bracknell Hall redevelopment, \$400 000 of that completely outside the election and any proper merits-based process and that, of course, is yourself.

The questions that we believe need to be answered in the public interest are; why does the Speaker not think his involvement in securing and administering the Bracknell Hall grant is a conflict of interest? Why did the Speaker, as the member for Lyons, not declare a conflict of interest in this matter? Did the Speaker, as the member for Lyons, have a personal or business relationship with anyone the Bracknell Hall funds were dispersed to?

**Mr SPEAKER** - Ms O'Connor, again, as I have done many times, in the seeking of leave you need to be explaining why the orders of the day should not take precedence and that your motion should.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - I have done that.

Mr Speaker, I encourage you, with the greatest of respect, to be quite careful about how you pull me up as I make the case. I am encouraging caution, particularly given what happened in here yesterday. I believe there is a series of questions that need to be answered in the public interest.

Was the Speaker, as the member for Lyons, informed by anyone in government that there were Local Communities Facilities Funds surplus funds? If so, who? Did the Speaker, as the member for Lyons, have privileged access to official information which he then used to advance his personal interest? How did the member for Lyons' meeting with the Meander Valley Council in early July 2021 come about? Was the meeting requested by the council or by the member for Lyons?

At that meeting with the general manager, did the member for Lyons encourage the council to submit a funding request? If so, did he make any indication about the prospects of such a request receiving funding? Did the member for Lyons have any contact with the general manager or any other council representative about the Bracknell Hall project funding request between 15 July 2021 and when council was advised they would receive funding? Did the member for Lyons contact the council to advise the funding request had been successful? If so, on what date and in what form - email, phone or in person?

Who did the member for Lyons lobby following the Meander Valley Council meeting? Given evidence of misconduct over the use of public funds to advance the member for Lyons' personal interests, does the Speaker believe he is a fit and proper person to hold the role of Speaker?

Mr Speaker, the Integrity Commission describes conflict of interest in the following way:

This risk arises when there is a conflict between the performance of a public duty and a private or personal interest. Having a conflict of interest is not necessarily wrong. In fact, having a conflict of interest is very common, especially in Tasmania. What is important is that conflicts of interest are properly managed when they occur.

The Integrity Commission further describes an actual conflict of interest as:

... when there is an immediate and tangible conflict between an official duty or responsibility in serving the public interest and a public sector employee's personal interests.

In other words, an actual conflict of interest is when an employee in a position to be influenced by their private interests when doing their job.

The Code of Conduct for Members of Parliament states:

A Member protects and upholds the public interest by taking all reasonable steps to avoid, disclose and manage any conflict of interest that arises, or is likely to arise, between their personal interests and their official duties. [ok]

A conflict of interest may be financial or non-financial and may be potential, actual or perceived.

The Code of Conduct also states:

A Member makes appropriate use of official information strictly for the purpose of performing their role as a Member of Parliament in the best interests of the public.

And:

A Member makes proper use of their office to represent and serve the community, conducting themselves in ways that maintains the trust and confidence of the public.

A Member must not use their influence as a Member to improperly appoint, obtain appointment, promotion, advancement, transfer or any other advantage or benefit on behalf of themselves or other persons.

Mr Speaker, we believe this House should be given the opportunity to hear from you in relation to this matter. We are concerned that as a member for Lyons you used your privileged access to official information to seek and gain funding for the Bracknell Hall redevelopment. The funding was for a project that failed to gain funding through a process that involved assessment criteria; that is, an application to the Tasmanian Community Fund, and the Bracknell Hall redevelopment did not get past stage 1 of a merits-based process. The funding was for a project overseen by a committee that included yourself, Mr Speaker, and three members of your family. The disbursement of this funding was in part administered by the committee, of which you yourself, Mr Speaker, and your family were members.

Mr Speaker, the Greens argue that you have a clear personal interest in the future of Bracknell Hall, given your and your family's membership of the committee. We are concerned that you used your position to influence the disbursement of grant funds. As a member of parliament and the Liberal Party, we are concerned that you had access to official information which you may have exploited for personal gain. Of course, if this matter had gone to the Privileges and Conduct Committee yesterday, there would have been an opportunity to get to the bottom of it. Unfortunately, Mr Speaker, because you used your casting vote to prevent any further debate on that matter, the Privileges and Conduct Committee will not have the opportunity to investigate this matter.

Mr Speaker, as a member of parliament you have an obligation to act in the best interests of the public. Instead, we are concerned that you used your influence to see government funding go to a project in which you had involvement in determining how the money would be spent, without any merits-based assessment.

**Time expired.**

[11.23 a.m.]

**Ms WHITE** (Lyons - Leader of the Opposition) - Mr Speaker, I can indicate that we will be supporting the seeking of leave. I believe it is appropriate, whether it be this debate or any other debate, that the parliament be able to examine what has happened, whether it be seeking of leave for a censure motion or a motion of this nature. That is unlike those on the other side, who no longer believe that the parliament should be able to examine what is before it and satisfy itself that the Code of Conduct has or has not been upheld. We know that this Government no longer values integrity and they will pick and choose which elements of the Code of Conduct apply to them at times when it suits them by the way they have been behaving.

This motion asks a number of very serious questions, Mr Speaker, and these questions need to be answered. There are 11 in total that have been listed in this motion that the community deserves to have answered. The parliament is the best place for us to have this debate; in fact, it is really the only place. What we have seen over the course of this week in parliament is a government that is desperate to cover up, desperate to run away from the scandals it is involved in, and desperate not to be scrutinised.

I am surprised the Government did not rise to their feet to contribute to this debate on the motion, as you would normally expect with the rotation in this place. I am not sure whether they intend to get up next or whether they are going to continue to pretend that this is not an issue. This is an issue. The Government will need to have a position on this. They will need to have a position both on the seeking of leave, but also more broadly we have a situation where this Government is happy to put its head in the sand on some serious issues around lack of integrity and lack of accountability and it cannot continue.

We have a Premier who claimed he was going to lead a government with integrity. He has failed. He has failed in his role to hold his ministers to a standard we would expect in executing the Code of Conduct in a way the public expects, but also he has failed in making sure the community can have confidence that the allocation of taxpayer money is done free from conflicts of interest and undertaken through a process where there is proper probity.

We do not have confidence that this Government has undertaken the allocation of funds in this instance in a way that bears scrutiny. That is why it is a matter before the Chair now. It is why it is a matter of public interest and why the media has been reporting it. If the Government continues to believe this is not an issue they need to really wake up to themselves. People care about how taxpayer money is spent. It is not Liberal Party money to be thrown around like confetti at election time. The Integrity Commission has called you out on this and yet here we are still debating whether we will be able to interrogate this issue in this parliament, the people's House. I bet my last cent that you will not support the seeking of leave today because you will do everything you possibly can to avoid scrutiny and avoid accountability to the people of Tasmania who voted for you. It is a disgrace.

If you have nothing to hide, get up and let us have the conversation. Answer the questions. There are 11 questions here. If you have nothing to hide, answer them. You will not because you are weak. You lack accountability and you lack integrity.

Mr Speaker, we will support the seeking of leave. We will support the asking of these questions. They deserve to be answered because the people of Tasmania deserve to have confidence that public money, their taxpayer money, is being spent wisely - and right now it stinks.

Mr Speaker, I am sure this issue is not going to go away today. I am sure the Government would like to think that it will. They will hope they can vote against this motion. I foreshadow that you, Mr Speaker, will cast a vote in this debate because we have seen you do that previously, and of course you will have a casting vote, given the make-up of the House and its slim majority, and that stinks too, Mr Speaker.

**Government members interjecting.**



**Ms WHITE** - It really does, because you are again going to be in a position where you are the judge of whether this parliament can scrutinise your activity as a member for Lyons, and that is wrong. No other workplace would allow a person who is under question to be the person who decides whether they are investigated. It is completely wrong. Talk about poor workplace culture - this is the best example right here. The parliament should be able to investigate these matters.

A seeking of leave motion is a pretty straightforward one, Mr Speaker. If the Government has nothing to hide and they think that everything is above board, let us have the debate. Answer the questions. If you are too scared to answer them that will tell the public everything they already think, which is that you lack integrity, there is something dodgy that happened here and it stinks.

[11.29 a.m.]

**Mr FERGUSON** (Bass - Treasurer) - Mr Speaker, I am going to have to regulate my emotions on this because I am really disappointed and quite angry to observe this appalling behaviour from Ms O'Connor and Ms White. It is frankly contemptible, Mr Speaker.

What I have just listened to very carefully has been 14 minutes of contemptible abuse of the forms of this House -

**Ms O'Connor** - No.

**Mr FERGUSON** - Yes, and you will listen to me when I say -

**Opposition members** interjecting.

**Mr FERGUSON** - We are not supposed to do that for a few reasons - just about 400 years of tradition of respecting the parliamentary role of the Speaker of the House who is here to preside over the rules and conduct of the debate and not supposed to be brought in to politics - the base politics of this place, which is in evidence today of toxic Labor and toxic Green, bringing their toxicity into this House.

**Members** interjecting.

**Mr FERGUSON** - What we have seen is that they have a lot to say. Have a turn at listening Ms Dow. What I have just witnessed done and perpetrated against you is contemptible, Mr Speaker.

**Members** interjecting.

**Mr SPEAKER** - Order, order. Deputy Leader of the Opposition, order.

**Mr FERGUSON** - Mr Speaker, I am very sorry that you have been subjected to this. It is only the Government's job on this occasion to defend you because the Speaker cannot defend himself from the Chair and should not.

**Ms O'Connor** - There is this motion which gives him the opportunity.

**Mr FERGUSON** - This is not the Hickey era anymore.

**Ms O'Connor** - They are giving him the opportunity.

**Mr SPEAKER** - Ms O'Connor, order.

**Mr FERGUSON** - I think we have a Speaker who understands the role and does it with distinction.

**Ms O'Connor** - Really?

**Mr FERGUSON** - He gives you a lot more courtesy than you deserve. You are not the Leader of the Greens. That is a title that you have concocted. You do not lead a party. You do not have four members, Ms O'Connor and yet our Speaker treats you with great respect. He defers to you the way that you expect to be deferred to as Leader of the Greens as you demand.

**Members** interjecting.

**Mr SPEAKER** - Order.

**Mr FERGUSON** - You are not the 'Leader of the Greens'. You have one person. You are the 'Leader of the Green' for goodness sake. He treats you a lot better, Mr Speaker through you, than you treat anyone else in this House. You are rude, you are obnoxious and you are quite horrible to people. You have a well-deserved title, Ms O'Connor, of being the biggest bully in this building. You have earned it. You abuse public servants in here for not wearing masks that match yours.

**Members** interjecting.

**Mr SPEAKER** - Order, member for Lyons, order.

**Mr FERGUSON** - You abused Ms Ogilvie for wearing a mask. What right do you have to criticise somebody in here for wearing a mask? Do not give me any more of that 'with the greatest of respect' nonsense. With the greatest respect, you are the least respectful person here. You treat people appallingly. You treat people rudely and you treat them low. You are unkind to them and you are mean. Then you stand up and try to put yourself out there as the loving party. You do not hate anybody: you said that yesterday.

I am quite appalled and I am very saddened that the Privileges Committee has been weaponised. I am very sad that the Integrity Committee has been weaponised.

This House, which is supposed to be a place of robust politics - no problems there - but I am sad that you are weaponising the time of this House that has been reserved today for important business. I will go through those items of business because I know it will be uncomfortable hearing for you.

**Ms O'Connor** - You don't think the potential misuse of \$400 000 is important business?

**Mr SPEAKER** - Order.

**Mr FERGUSON** - The important business of the future of our island state. The importance of recognising the victims of the awful, immeasurable scale of Syria and Türkiye.

**Ms White** - We will do that. We have agreed to that at 2.30 p.m.

**Mr FERGUSON** - Of course, inconvenient facts for those opposite who will not shut up, Mr Speaker. They will not stop. They have their say but will not let anyone else speak. The anniversary of the appalling attack by that monster, Putin, on the people of Ukraine.

**Ms White** - And we will debate that at 2.30 p.m.

**Mr SPEAKER** - Order.

**Ms O'BYRNE** - Point of order, Mr Speaker. I would not want the member to accidentally mislead this House. We have already passed a motion that says we will deal with both of those issues at 2.30 p.m. He knows that.

**Mr FERGUSON** - I really do not care for your comment, Ms O'Byrne, because what is occurring -

**Ms O'BYRNE** - Mr Speaker, I raised an issue with you. Minister Ferguson does not get to respond to points of order.

**Mr Ferguson** - You do not get to make a speech. It is just rudeness.

**Mr SPEAKER** - It is not a point of order. The House knows what motions have been passed and members can speak to whatever question they like, and answer the question how they like, I should say.

**Mr FERGUSON** - And I am sad about that.

**Members** interjecting.

**Mr SPEAKER** - Order, the Treasurer has the call.

**Mr FERGUSON** - What the Government will not be doing is supporting this stunt. It is a stunt and it is not a very good one.

**Ms O'Connor** - It is \$400 000 of public funds, mate.

**Mr SPEAKER** - Ms O'Connor, order.

**Mr FERGUSON** - It is not clever and it is not impressive. It ranks very low because it is rank. It is about as rank as that little demonstration we saw during Question Time when Ms O'Connor tried to derail Question Time.

As for the Labor Party, which puts itself out there as an alternative government, it shows the lack of integrity and decency they have in respecting the role of the Speaker and this House. It demonstrates that Labor is a toxic party. Bastian Seidel's opinion is interesting on this. You are toxic. You run a toxic brand, Ms White. It is so bad that he had to leave and you are trying to bring your toxic behaviours into this House to infect the House of Assembly, which is here to debate the future of our island state.

The Labor Party offers nothing. Ms White, whose speech yesterday could have been a sequel to the 'Four Men from Yorkshire' sketch - how the poor little rich kid, Ms White, who wants to put it out there about how poor she was growing up, did it tough, cooked in an oven from the tip, but offered no real vision for our state. So embarrassed was she by her speech, she deliberately put it off until the end of the day.

**Ms DOW** - Point of order, Mr Speaker.

**Mr FERGUSON** - I conclude my remarks because they are wasting my last 20 seconds. It is beneath contempt and I will have nothing of it.

**Ms O'Byrne** - Mr Speaker, you cannot allow that behaviour.

**Mr SPEAKER** - Order.

**Ms DOW** - Point of order, Mr Speaker. The point that I was going to make is about relevance and to speaking to the motion to seek leave that is before the House. That was a personal attack from a government that says they do not like personal attacks.

**Mr SPEAKER** - When a member of the Opposition stands to make a point of order with 20 seconds to go when a member is trying to contribute in a limited time, then you have to ask yourself the strategy around that.

**Ms O'BYRNE** - Point of order, Mr Speaker. Can you please explain what standing order you made that ruling under?

**Mr SPEAKER** - I did not make a ruling.

**Ms O'BYRNE** - You cannot fail to recognise members and you do so because you are worried about people's intent. Mr Speaker, you are the Speaker of this House and you must show impartiality.

**Mr SPEAKER** - I understand that. We are in a limited debate so we had best move on.

**Ms DOW** - Mr Speaker, point of indulgence. I was trying to make a point of order. I would like to speak and defend why I stood to call a point of order at that point in time in the debate because it was in direct relation to what the Deputy Premier was saying at the time. That was in accordance with timing. I can stand and do that, is my understanding.

**Mr Ferguson** - You cannot stand up and start talking, can you?

**Ms DOW** - Well, I just have.

**Mr Ferguson** - Yes, you have. Thank you for making the point.

**Mr SPEAKER** - Order.

[11.38 a.m.]

**Dr WOODRUFF** (Franklin) - What an amazing performance. That was a Golden Globe award-winning performance from the Treasurer. Such confected sadness, apoplectic sanctimony.

**Mr Ferguson** - I am very angry at what you did to our House.

**Mr SPEAKER** - Order.

**Dr WOODRUFF** - The most patrician I have ever seen Mr Ferguson in the Chamber, ticking us all off for wanting to uphold the standards of the House.

As the Treasurer said, 400 years of tradition, 400 years of parliament to defend. That is what we are here for. That is exactly why we are seeking leave to debate this motion because there is an army of unanswered questions waiting at the doors.

The member for Lyons has so many questions to answer and we have given many opportunities for the member of Lyons to do that. An amount of \$400 000 of public money walked out the door without a merit-based approach after having previously been knocked back for a development by the Tasmanian Communities Fund. It had been knocked back on a merit-based approach and then it walked out the door.

What we do know from Right to Information is there was a range of meetings, a range of letters and a range of conversations that were held, but we have so much more to find out. This is about the integrity of the Code of Conduct that we all sign. The member for Lyons is a member of the House. The fact the member for Lyons is also the Speaker gives that particular member immunity, it appears, from having to answer questions about whether there has been a breach of the Code of Conduct of this House. We maintain that there has obviously been a conflict of interest. There is obviously a failure to uphold the public interest in his actions when he did not take all reasonable steps to avoid, disclose and manage an obvious conflict of interest in his position and his family members' position on the Bracknell Hall committee.

He did not disclose it in the annual discretionary disclosure return statement. He could have done that at any time. Most importantly, he did not step aside and not go into the meeting with the Meander Valley Council GM. He should have said: 'I have an interest here. I am not going to take a letter that you have written and use it to secretly and sneakily extract \$400 000 from the public purse without a merits-based approach. Just put it forward next time, make the changes.'

It is a pity that the Bracknell Hall would have to be delayed in its development, which is what the Meander Valley Council recommended: 'Oh dear, we only received \$600 000 in federal funding from Scott Morrison. We were knocked back on the \$400 000 because we were so greedy we had to have it all done at the same time.'

Not like the rest of Tasmania. Not like the Cygnet Seadragons - they have been asking for a toilet for 10 years. They would have loved to have had a tiny part of that \$400 000. They have nowhere to change in the rain. Kids have to walk across the road. They have to get a key on the weekend because the Education department will not let them in there. It is a whole palaver they have been doing for a decade. Not a shekel has gone to them. Nowhere for parents to sit out of the rain.

But no, Bracknell Hall had to have it all at once. It was not enough that they received \$600 000. They had to wait for the next one but they were not prepared to wait so they did a sneaky process. There are so many questions that need to be asked. The only way we can do it is for the Speaker to vacate the Chair and for the member for Lyons, Mr Shelton, to answer those questions.

We have a right to understand why Mr Shelton does not think he has a direct interest in the process, why he would meet with the local council, why he was the one who received the funding request from them. Why would he play a role at all when it is such an obvious objective conflict of interest? A member of parliament seeking to gain money for a hall that he and his family are committee members of, who made the decision about the size of the project, the construction, the design, the layout, the comfort and the obvious benefit to them over other parts of the Tasmanian community, other areas in Lyons, who all might have liked to have had a say about their local facility that they would like to design and construct.

There are many competitive and merits-based opportunities for public funding, like the Tasmanian Community Fund. This hall fell over; it was not approved through that process. This was about a cosy arrangement to sidestep that merits-based process. This was about avoiding public scrutiny. This was about continuing the shovelling of money into Liberal members' pet projects, into things that advantage their families' interests in the community. We expect to hear from you in your role as the member for Lyons.

[11.45 a.m.]

**Mr STREET** (Franklin - Leader of the House) - Mr Speaker, we will not be supporting the seeking of leave. We need to make it clear that what occurred was a local member of parliament received a request for funding from the council in his electorate. He submitted the request to the premier and treasurer of the time, who made the decision to fund it. It was then listed in the supplementary appropriation bill that was tabled -

**Ms O'CONNOR** - Point of order, Mr Speaker. Mr Street has just misled the House. The Bracknell Hall redevelopment was not detailed in the supplementary appropriation bill; it was just a quantum of funding for Communities Tasmania.

**Mr STREET** - Mr Speaker, I will withdraw. The details are on the record. The amount was part of the supplementary appropriation bill.

**Dr WOODRUFF** - Point of order, Mr Speaker. The details are not on the record. It was not discussed in the debate of the supplementary appropriation bill -

**Mr Street** - I am not saying that it was. I said the details are on the record.

**Dr WOODRUFF** - It was never mentioned to parliament. We had no opportunity to vote on that matter.

**Mr SPEAKER** - This is not a debate. You have had an opportunity to have your say. Sit down, please.

**Mr STREET** - I did not say that the details were discussed in that debate. What I said was that the details of the project are on the record.

We will not be supporting the seeking of leave. We do not accept the premise of these questions. The last one says, 'Do you think, given the evidence of your misconduct ...'. I do not believe that there has been evidence of misconduct. It asks, 'whether you are a fit and proper person to hold the role of Speaker'. We absolutely believe that you are a fit and proper person to hold the role of Speaker.

**Ms White** - We are speaking on the seeking of leave.

**Mr STREET** - You simply have not made the case for the seeking of leave to ask these questions. We have made it clear what the orders of the day are and priorities for the Government, which is replies to the state of the state and the two motions that have been tabled for debate after lunch.

As a Government, we absolutely believe that you are fit and proper person to be the Speaker of this House. You have our confidence as a Government and we do not accept the premise of the questions that Ms O'Connor listed from 1 through to 11.

[11.47.a.m]

**Mr WINTER** (Franklin) - Mr Speaker, there was an interjection from the Deputy Premier that said the Speaker cannot defend himself. The point of this motion, as I understand it, is seeking leave to actually allow the Speaker to defend himself.

There are questions here. This is a seeking of leave. The question before us is: 'Are we going to allow these questions to be answered?' This is not a censure motion. It is not no confidence. It is a seeking of leave to allow these questions to be answered.

When I hear the interjection from the Deputy Premier saying, 'the Speaker cannot defend himself', the reason the Speaker cannot defend himself is because of the Government. The Government has decided that it does not want the Speaker to answer these questions. So, what are we to do? On the one hand we have the Deputy Premier saying the Speaker cannot defend himself but on the other hand he said that he is going to vote against the Speaker being able to defend himself.

These are really important questions. I do not know what answers you are going to provide. If this were to get to that point, it would be up to you to answer them. It seems to me to be a very unusual position for the Government to take. There is intense interest in this matter and, given the intense interest outside this place, it is important that the House consider the matter inside this House.

This is a seeking of leave. The Leader of the Greens has tabled this motion and suggested that this is something the House should deal with today. It is important that it is dealt with today. If the Government has no issues in terms of what the answers are, I do not understand why it will not just answer the questions. That is all the motion does. This is not a censure, this is not no confidence. It is just asking for some questions to be answered.

The Leader of Government Business said he does not agree with the context. That is fine. You can say that in the answer as well. This is a very simple matter. If there is nothing to hide, this is a very simple matter to clear up.

I note there was no comment from the member for Lyons yesterday. What an opportunity for the member for Lyons to ensure that this is cleared up if it is, in fact, the case, as the Government says, that there is nothing to hide here.

[11.50 a.m.]

**Mr O'BYRNE** (Franklin) - Mr Speaker, I believe it is in the Government's interest to allow this debate to occur. If the Government thinks, on day two of this issue being debated in this House, that it will go away by virtue of cutting this debate down today, they are surely mistaken.

In the public domain, there is much debate about this and much concern. There are many people who dismiss this by saying, 'Well, all politicians do the pork-barrelling in their campaigns, so it's okay', and we all get tarred with the same brush. This House gets tarred with that same brush. You have an opportunity, if you so believe the words you say in the debate on the suspension, to allow this debate to occur. If you believe what you say, you have an opportunity to clear that up. This is your chance. For the Leader of the House to say -

**Time expired.**

**Mr SPEAKER** - The question is that leave be granted.

**The House divided -**

**AYES 12**

Dr Broad  
Ms Butler (Teller)  
Ms Dow  
Ms Finlay  
Ms Haddad  
Ms Johnston  
Mr O'Byrne  
Ms O'Byrne  
Ms O'Connor  
Ms White  
Mr Winter  
Dr Woodruff

**NOES 12**

Mrs Alexander  
Ms Archer  
Mr Barnett  
Mr Ellis  
Mr Ferguson  
Mr Jaensch  
Ms Ogilvie  
Mr Rockliff  
Mr Street  
Mr Tucker  
Mr Wood  
Mr Young (Teller)

**Mr SPEAKER** - The result of the division being Ayes 12, Noes 12, in accordance with standing order 167, I cast my vote with the Noes.

**Motion negatived.**

**MOTION**

**Leave to Suspend Standing Orders - Negatived**

[11.55 a.m.]

**Ms O'CONNOR** (Clark - Leader of the Greens) - Mr Speaker, I seek leave to move -



That so much of the Standing Orders be suspended to debate the following motion.

That this House has no confidence in the Speaker on the following grounds:

- (1) Mr Shelton used his privileged access to official information to seek and gain \$400 000 in funding for Bracknell Hall;
- (2) the Bracknell Public Hall and Recreation Ground committee, of which Mr Shelton and members of his family are longstanding members, had direct involvement in deciding the concept, scope, design and budget for a project to build the new hall at Bracknell;
- (3) Mr Shelton has a clear personal interest in the future of Bracknell Hall, given his and his family's membership of the committee;
- (4) as a member of parliament and the Liberal Party, he had access to official information, which he appears to have exploited for this personal gain;
- (5) as a member of parliament, Mr Shelton has an obligation to act in the best interests of the public - instead, he used his influence to see government funds go to a project without any merit-based assessment in which he was closely involved in determining how the money was spent;
- (6) Mr Shelton has demonstrated a failure to avoid a conflict of interest, over \$400 000 in state funds, to advance a personal project in his home town of Bracknell; and
- (7) Mr Shelton is unfit to hold the office of Speaker of the House of Assembly.

Regrettably, Mr Speaker, you did not take the opportunity which the Greens provided you to give answers to the Tasmanian people about the circumstances surrounding the allocation of \$400 000 in public funds outside any proper process, without transparency, to the redevelopment of the Bracknell Hall. Indeed, in a perversity in this place, you used your casting vote, as you did yesterday, to avoid any debate on a referral to the Privileges and Conduct Committee. Today you used your casting vote to avoid having to answer any questions about the circumstances surrounding the allocation of very large sums of public funding to the Bracknell Hall redevelopment, a project in which you have a direct, personal interest.

It is wrong, Mr Speaker, that you have put yourself in this position by failing to declare a conflict of interest around the allocation of \$400 000 in public funds. You failed to avoid a conflict of interest around the allocation of that funding, and then yesterday in this place used your casting vote to prevent any further debate on a referral to the Privileges and Conduct Committee so that committee - of which of course you are a member - could investigate this matter of very significant public interest. I am concerned, as is Dr Woodruff, that you will again use your casting vote to avoid further debate on our want of confidence in you as Speaker.

Mr Speaker, the Liberals are either pretending they do not understand what a conflict of interest is or they are so grossly unaccustomed to the snout-in-trough approach to governing that they really do not see the issue. The performance we had this morning from the sanctimonious Deputy Premier was something else. We have had the Deputy Premier and Treasurer, and indeed the Premier after our question today, claim that you did nothing wrong in allowing your personal interest to interfere with your professional interest and professional responsibility to the people of Lyons.

The Greens recognise that what Mr Shelton has done in this case is obviously and objectively misconduct. This is not the same as a local member advocating for a community in need. This is a member advocating for a project in which they had a direct, private, personal interest. There can really be no argument about this.

As a member of the Bracknell Hall committee, along with numerous Shelton family members, the member for Lyons, Mark Shelton, has a direct, private, personal interest in the Bracknell Hall redevelopment. We have thousands of pages of documentary evidence, Mr Speaker - we have been working on this for a long time - along with statements

Documentary evidence together with statements made by Mr Rockcliff and Mr Street yesterday, clearly show Mr Shelton was involved in arranging \$400 000 of taxpayer funds for the Bracknell Hall outside of any proper process and in record time.

There would be so many community groups across the electorate of Lyons, across Tasmania, who would be thrilled to think that if they put forward a case for funding for their community needs that it would be turned around by government in a little over a month. But no, they do not have that benefit because they do not have the member for Lyons, Mr Shelton, living in their neighbourhood. If that is not a conflict of interest, what is? As the Integrity Commission says:

Careful and transparent management of conflicts of interest is essential for transparent and accountable decision-making in the public interest and public trust in government.

I note, for the purposes of *Hansard*, that Mr Shelton has now rightly excused himself from the Chair. We would argue that he should excuse himself from the vote.

Mr Deputy Speaker, is another member for Lyons. Now, we would not be having this conversation if Mr Shelton had avoided this conflict of interest or at the very least had appropriately disclosed or managed it, but he did not. Just as he did not take the opportunity that the Greens provided to him to answer those questions in the public interest about the allocation of \$400 000 out of the public account to his pet project. Instead, Mr Shelton let his private interest influence his actions in his capacity as a member of the state Government, meeting with the council, accepting their funding request and advocating for this request to be met by the then premier.

There is absolutely no doubt that this constitutes serious misconduct under the Code of Conduct for MPs. There is a further question about whether Mr Shelton used privileged access to official information about the budget development process to advance his own private interest. On top of all that, we have Mr Shelton's conduct yesterday, when he used his casting vote to avoid further scrutiny on this matter.

Mr Deputy Speaker, regardless of your interpretation of the Standing Orders, there is no question that a Speaker with integrity would have vacated the Chair during yesterday's debate. We are glad he has vacated it today.

**Time expired.**

[12.02 p.m.]

**Mr ROCKLIFF** (Braddon - Premier) - We will not be supporting this motion, Mr Deputy Speaker. We have full confidence in Mr Shelton, the Speaker of the House: I make that very clear. This is just rank slander, a besmirching of a family in northern Tasmania. It is personal. It is disgusting.

This week we have had to stand here for many hours, when Tasmanians expect the Parliament of Tasmania to focus on the issues that matter - the issues around our health care, education, the cost of living, growing our economy. What we have done this week because of both the Labor and Green oppositions is be embroiled in debate at a very personal level with personal attacks on individuals in this Chamber. Tasmanians expect more from their members of parliament.

I ask the member who has raised this just now, why are you so against local MPs advocating for their local communities? This is what Mr Shelton has done. He has stood up and advocated for his local community, like we all do, as I urge all our members to do on all sides of the House.

This is just gutter politics. Tasmanians do not respect it. When I am in the street, or the Exeter Show on the weekend or wherever across Tasmania, they let me know they hate it. They want us to concentrate on the issues that affect them, the cost of living, where they can see a government in their corner when it comes to putting downward pressure on power prices, when it comes to supporting organisations that support vulnerable Tasmanians. They see that in this Government. They understand that at the peak of the energy spike last year that we are in the corner of consumers supporting them with bill-buster payments, to support them through, particularly people on low and fixed incomes.

What they see is a government that advocates strongly for infrastructure right across Tasmania, supporting our tradies, getting in there and having a go, getting things done, not in the gutter like those opposite.

In this Chamber we should be debating the issues that Tasmanians really do care about. There are a number of issues that Tasmanians care about. I have mentioned a few. Health care is an issue that Tasmanians care about. What are we doing when it comes to health care? We are investing, working with our clinicians and our health professionals. Tasmanians can see the waiting lists come down. They can see that we are leading the nation in terms of elective surgery per capita. They can see, like this morning, a local community pharmacy cutting red tape to make it better for health consumers and access to health care. That is what they care about.

I was in a school yesterday, with minister Jaensch, talking about literacy, investing in teaching workforce, improving our kids' opportunities to spell, read, write, breaking down the barriers for student learning and engagement, as we have done. Parents of school kids care about the fact that we are supporting our kids with disability. They care about the fact that we

are implementing investments for trauma-informed practice, another barrier to child learning. They care about the fact when it comes to the importance of resourcing and phonological awareness for our kids in schools. They care about the fact that a government stands up and says very clearly that every school in Tasmania will do the nation's phonics check. They care about governments making those right decisions in the interests of them. That is what matters.

I was speaking on the radio about our \$5.6 billion worth of infrastructure investment. It fills the tradies with confidence because they know they have a future under this majority Liberal Government, a future that does invest in the key areas -

**Mr WINTER** - Point of order, under Standing Order 151. It is repetition. Tedious repetition and irrelevance. This is a seeking of leave motion on a want of confidence of the Speaker. The Premier has not been speaking about this for many minutes. I ask you to call him back to the questions before the House.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - Let me talk to you about relevance. You have none; none of you have any relevance. You have been taken over by your federal Labor Party. You are in administration. You are irrelevant.

What I am speaking about is what is relevant to Tasmanians: growing our economy; 20 000 jobs to be created over the course of the next five years; investing in health care, endoscopies, \$38 million to bring down those waiting lists; investing in literacy, early childhood, investing in that as well. Earlier access for our kids, like we have done with our years 11 and 12 program, which you irrelevant mob over there fought against hard. You fought against universal education every step of the way. You fight against everything we do in education.

Housing is relevant to the Tasmanian people: \$1.5 billion worth of investment, 10 000 homes created. We are proud of it.

**Opposition members** interjecting.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - The gutter politics of the Labor Party and the Greens will never be acceptable to this side of the House or the Tasmanian people.

[12.10 p.m.]

**Ms O'BYRNE** (Bass) - Oh, what a tangled web we weave when first we practice to deceive. I cannot believe that you have brought the House to this. I cannot believe that you have brought the good reputation of every single member of the parliament to this, because you failed to address the matters of concern before you.

Not once, Mr Premier, did you defend any of the concerns that we quite rightly have now, that have been brought about by the actions of members of your Government, that have been covered up by the actions of members of your Government, that have been allowed to get to a point where a Speaker appointed by your Government is now held by the community in a state of disrespect. In the *Mercury* today, or last night it might have been, an article read:

Speaker Mark Shelton has used his casting vote to avoid being investigated by a committee he is a member of over his role in securing grants from a

government he is a member of, on behalf of a community hall whose committee he is a member of.

**Mr Jaensch** - Would you have him not vote in the parliament?

**Ms O'BYRNE** - That is the significant concern that we have -

**Mr Jaensch** - Do you get to choose who gets to vote?

**Ms O'BYRNE** - Sorry, Mr Speaker, at what stage do I not get thrown out for interjecting? When I interject you throw me out. I ask that the same applies to the members over there who do nothing but interject on contributions and questions on this side and are not held to account. If nothing else during this debate, Mr Speaker, I ask that you apply the rule consistently across the House.

**Mr SPEAKER** - I believe I do.

**Ms O'BYRNE** - I am sure the record shows that, Mr Speaker. This is a really serious thing. A want of confidence motion in a Speaker is a rare thing. The ability to debate it is really important. It only requires a simple majority for us to be able to move to the next stage. That simple majority has not been afforded on any other vote that goes to the integrity and quality behaviour of members of the Government. It is not applied on any of those. It has been done before, a want of confidence in the Speaker. It is a very rare thing. In 1856, there was a motion regarding a Speaker arising from the personal behaviour of the then Speaker and whether it brought the House into disrepute.

Mr Speaker, the actions of your side of parliament that have been taken whilst you have been in the Chair have brought the role of Speaker into disrepute. The articles in the media show that. The news broadcast last night showed that. The commentary that we are seeing in the community shows that.

There is a really simple way to fix this. The Greens have given you one of those simple ways. You simply remove yourself from the Chair and take the opportunity to explain your side of the story. Mr Ferguson says the Speaker has no right to defend himself and that is the case if we are attacking the Speaker in their role as Speaker. The only way we can raise these concerns is by moving dissent or a want of confidence. Nothing should prevent an individual member of this House, no matter what role they have, from being responsible for other actions they take, being responsible for other actions they have taken and being responsible for other actions that are being covered up by members of this Government.

To not have faith that the business in this House is being conducted appropriately is a serious issue and every standing order adheres to that. When we are sworn into this place we sign up to a certain set of standards, including that:

Members of Parliament recognise that their actions have an impact on the lives of all Tasmanian people. Fulfilling their obligations and discharging their duties responsibly requires a commitment to the highest ethical standards to maintain and strengthen the democratic traditions of the state and the integrity of its institutions.

That is clearly not happening here. The code continues:

Compliance with the law may not always be enough to guarantee an acceptable standard of conduct. Members must not only act lawfully but in a manner that will withstand close public scrutiny.

Clearly we are not standing up to that.

The code is derived from some fundamental values, adopting and upholding the code that members of parliament share and support. As members of parliament, we have said that we will value ethical political practices that support the democratic traditions of our state and its institutions and the rejection of political corruption.

As members we are asked to conduct ourselves in parliament in ways that will protect the public interest and enhance public confidence and trust in parliament. The process by which these grants were secured does not enhance public confidence. The motion before us indicates that there are significant concerns about privileged access to information, the association that the member had with the organisation that was funded, for clear personal interest, the information that may have been used inappropriately, the obligation to act in the best interests of the public and a failure to avoid a conflict of interest. Most importantly for me, you have brought the role of Speaker into disrespect in our state.

I watched the news last night and I am sure you probably imagine that we were all going, 'What a great story'. Can you imagine how it is when you fundamentally believe in democracy and the processes of this House, whether or not you always agree with the outcome, which I do not, that you think it is okay for that kind of story to be on our news? That was on our news last night because of deliberate actions taken by this Government.

There is a clear pathway forward here. Stand up in your seat over there, which you can take during votes. If the Deputy Speaker assumes the Chair and the member takes his seat there, there is nothing to stop him participating in a debate. Former Speakers have taken their seat and contributed to debates before. You have every ability to do that but you are choosing not to.

The Deputy Premier will say that it is because the Chair cannot defend themselves. This was not an issue about the Chair until today when you made it about the Chair. This issue was always about the behaviour of a member of parliament and the granting of funds. By using the position that you are placed in as Speaker, you not only allowed that story to perpetuate as a rort and something that has been done because it is untrue, but you have used this office and damaged this office in the very way that you have done that.

You can shake your head, Mr Speaker, but you are supposed to be impartial. Erskine May says it and Odgers says it; every bit of information that talks about the Speaker says you must be impartial, particularly in this debate.

Mr Speaker, you have brought this House into disrepute and I am devastated by that. The only way out of this for you is to allow a proper investigation of the matters that have been raised. Your failure to do so embarrasses not only you and every member of this parliament but it brings shame upon the House of Assembly of the Tasmanian Parliament.

[12.17 p.m.]

**Mr FERGUSON** (Bass - Deputy Premier) - Mr Speaker, I think a lot of Tasmanians will have had a total gutful by now of this gutter politics from the Labor Party and the Greens. For those who have an interest in politics and follow the traditions and forms of our House, they will totally comprehend that what is occurring is nasty, inappropriate, wrong and unfair on the Speaker, who actually cannot defend himself.

**Opposition members** interjecting.

**Mr SPEAKER** - Order.

**Mr FERGUSON** - Can I have less rudeness? To cast our minds back in history, where you have seen a Speaker standing up and giving great speeches, that was always against the principles of this House.

I will not have the member who just resumed her seat lecturing us on Erskine May. We have very clear guidance here and we know our business. The question before this House right now is the nasty Greens leading the nasty, toxic Labor Party into an attack on our Speaker, who I will say again, has done nothing wrong. It would seem the only thing that has offended the Labor Party and the Greens about the member for Lyons, Mr Shelton, who is also our Speaker, is that he successfully and actively lobbied for his local community, and who could blame him for that? He helped to deliver a great result.

If you are unhappy with that project then you should attack the Government, you should attack the Treasurer, or the former treasurer who made the decision, the Premier, or the former premier who made the decision. Take your pick. Put your questions forward.

**Opposition members** interjecting.

**Mr SPEAKER** - Order.

**Mr FERGUSON** - The rudeness belies that they are caught out so they want to just make noise. The Speaker has no executive function in government.

**Dr Broad** interjecting.

**Mr FERGUSON** - Dr Broad, seriously?

**Dr Broad** - Yes, seriously.

**Mr FERGUSON** - It is not the point, you say.

**Dr Broad** - No.

**Mr SPEAKER** - Order.

**Mr FERGUSON** - Mr Speaker is now subject to a no-confidence motion which you are supporting and do not give me any rot that you are only supporting the debate because -

**Dr Broad** - No, seeking leave.

**Mr FERGUSON** - your colleague has just said that the Speaker has brought the House into disrepute. So do not give me any of that tommy-rot that you are only supporting the debate, because that is wrong.

I feel disappointed for Tasmanians that the Premier has called out this behaviour. They are preventing the House from considering the long-term future of our beautiful island state and the futures of our children, our communities and our families who need, indeed demand and deserve our full support through the opportunities that we have in front of us and the challenges as well. That is the business of this House.

Mr Speaker, you are quite properly asked by members of this House to manage the debate and to administer the Standing Orders. What is happening here is that some people are unhappy with Mr Shelton, the honourable member for Lyons - I emphasis 'the honourable' member for Lyons - for his great work in the community. I could barely imagine what the Meander Valley community would be like without the Shelton family, Mark, his wife Marilyn, their incredible children and their amazing parents, who have sowed into that community for decades. They should be praised for what they have done.

Mr Speaker, you have done nothing wrong in your role as Speaker or in your role as member for Lyons, and there is no case to answer.

Clearly, that has not been enough to stop the biggest bully in the House from bringing in a low no-confidence motion.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - Point of order, Mr Speaker.

**Mr Ferguson** - Very easily triggered, mind you. That shows a very thin skin.

**Mr SPEAKER** - Treasurer, that is not appropriate language to be used in the House so I ask you to withdraw that.

**Mr FERGUSON** - Mr Speaker, I withdraw. I find it interesting as well that you have just been subjected to the most awful tirade and yet the member is so easily triggered.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - Point of order. You are being dishonest again. I let you get away with it before but I will not cop it a second time.

**Mr SPEAKER** - Order.

**Mr FERGUSON** - I do not know what is going on. The member just stands up and starts talking.

Mr Speaker, this is an appalling motion. I would not expect any better from the Greens. They are a protest party. They are irrelevant. In fact, they are not really a party. They only have two members. They do not even have party status. As I said earlier today, they get a lot of generosity from our Speaker, who treats Ms O'Connor a lot better than she treats you, Mr Speaker, in your very gracious style.

I expect better of a mainstream alternative party in this state, the Labor Party. Fair enough, they are not allowed to run themselves. Fair enough, they are toxic. Fair enough, they



have been taken over by the feds but I would expect better. It is not asking too much to stop bringing the rank toxicity of the Labor Party before the floor of this House and a gentleman who is not, under the Standing Orders, allowed to defend himself. If you have a problem with a decision of the executive, the process is to bring the challenge before the minister responsible. That is normal politics and bring it on. Do not make this about us being scared of the puerile little debate that you want to bring on. That tough narrative from the Leader of the Opposition was pathetic.

This is not about allowing debate. If you sign up for this leave motion, you are signing up for the substance of the motion. I think your members have already given it away. They are in support of this motion. You have said, in an appalling contribution, to the Speaker, to his face, that he has brought this House into disrepute. Nothing could be further from the truth.

We will not have a bar of this awful, puerile, toxic politics contaminating this House. We will continue with the proper function of this House, which is to fight for the things that matter to Tasmanians: better health care, more housing, better access to elective surgery and endoscopies, dealing with a 20-year avoided decision on phonics, which I applaud the Premier and the minister for. Not your toxic politics. You are following the Greens and it again shows that you are tied at the hip and you are not running your party. You are controlled by Ms O'Connor. We will not support this seeking of leave.

### **Time expired.**

[12.24 p.m.]

**Dr WOODRUFF** (Franklin) - Mr Speaker, we have to seek the leave and have the leave granted to have the full and substantial debate about this matter. It is a tragedy that we are standing here having this discussion today. We should be talking about the issues that matter to Tasmanians. It should not be a question of democracy. There should be no question in Tasmanians' minds about the integrity of any member sitting in the Chamber. That it happens to also be the Speaker of the House is a terrible place that we have come to. That is exactly why we have to fully and comprehensively debate the substance of this motion.

The reason we have to do it is because the Liberals have hidden the information from the very beginning, well before the state election, but especially during the state election, when the Liberal Party cooked up the Local Communities Facilities Fund as an opportunity to pork-barrel their way back in, as they did in 2018 when they romped in on the dirty money of the gambling industry. This time they used the Tasmanian version of sports rorts. The Greens have spent two years unpacking what happened, thanks to the media interest and Tasmanians' interest, the people who hold a candle for democracy who understand that we could be living in Ukraine, or we could be living in Russia. We have the great privilege of living in a society governed by the rules of law and the integrity of people who come to this place to make the laws that govern us all. If we cannot have faith in the people who bring themselves here to represent us, then what do we have? We have hard times ahead.

I agree with the Treasurer that this is like chickenfeed compared to the issues we are facing. Except it is not. It is not about a game. I know that the Liberals have now turned everything into a game. They are even putting up Facebook posts of parliament, reporting the votes on a football stadium field with 'for' and 'against', like winners and losers. This is what the Liberals are doing. Everything is a game, everything is about footy, everything is about bread and circuses, just so we do not see what is really happening in Tasmania.

We are here, Mr Speaker, because we do not have confidence in you. We do not have confidence in you because you have failed at the hurdles. You did not take the opportunities to keep yourself out of the conversation in the first place. Then you hid your role and you did not disclose your interests. You did not disclose your involvement in the Bracknell Hall committee in your disclosure of interest. You did not uphold the code of conduct that we all signed up to. This is misconduct by every name.

It is a disgrace that we are here. Any Speaker with integrity would have vacated the Chair during the debate yesterday. Any Speaker with integrity would have had a conversation with his colleagues and would have said: 'Look, let's just go to parliamentary privilege, I am happy to be sent for us to have a conversation in the manner in which parliament provides for members to defend themselves.'

If you have nothing to hide, why did this not go to parliamentary privilege? Why did it just sail through? Why did you not say: 'I am actually voting with the move to take this to parliamentary privilege because I have nothing to hide, I have done nothing wrong, there has been no misconduct, I am happy to explain.' You did not do that, Mr Speaker, because you do have something to hide. That is exactly why we are here. You have been hiding it and your colleagues have been hiding it the whole way through.

We are talking about \$400 000 of Tasmanians' hard-earned money. When you are talking about people doing it tough, just remember that some of those people are forced to pay money that goes into state coffers and you spend it. Except you are taking \$400 000 of that and instead of putting it into other facilities or paramedics, doctors and nurses, it has gone to pump up the Bracknell Hall redevelopment again on top of the \$600 000 you got from Scott Morrison and that swanning around when he came here and had a special little chat with the Premier and probably with yourself at the same time. Mr Speaker, you have demonstrated you have none of those qualities -

**Time expired.**

**Mr SPEAKER** - The question is that leave be granted -

**The House divided -**

**AYES 12**

Dr Broad  
Ms Butler (Teller)  
Ms Dow  
Ms Finlay  
Ms Haddad  
Ms Johnston  
Mr O'Byrne  
Ms O'Byrne  
Ms O'Connor  
Ms White  
Mr Winter  
Dr Woodruff

**NOES 12**

Mrs Alexander  
Ms Archer  
Mr Barnett  
Mr Ellis  
Mr Ferguson  
Mr Jaensch  
Ms Ogilvie  
Mr Rockliff  
Mr Street  
Mr Tucker  
Mr Wood  
Mr Young (Teller)

**Mr SPEAKER** - The result of the division being Ayes 12, Noes 12, in accordance with Standing Order 167, I cast my vote with the Noes.

**Motion negatived.**

## **MOTION**

### **Disallowance of Member's Vote - Negatived**

[12.34 p.m.]

**Dr WOODRUFF** (Franklin) - Mr Speaker, under Standing Order 170, I move -

That the vote of the member for Lyons on the question of leave be disallowed as the member has a direct pecuniary interest in whether or not the House has confidence in him as this will directly affect his salary.

The question was that we have no confidence in the Speaker and that he is unfit to hold the office of Speaker of the House of Assembly. That is the question that you just voted against, but you have a personal and direct interest in retaining your role as Speaker of the House of Assembly. You get an extra \$49 065 dollars in salary, on top of being the member for Lyons, to hold the role of Speaker of the House of Assembly, in addition to the \$8411 extra you get in entertainment allowance. That is a total of \$57 476 extra that you get, Mr Speaker, for the virtue of holding the incredibly important privilege of being Speaker of the House of Assembly.

It is not often, and I hope it has never been the case before, that the Speaker of a House of Assembly in a Westminster system has voted on a matter about which he has direct personal pecuniary benefit. You did so just then, but you have done it three more times, so that was the fourth time you have voted to keep yourself from answering basic questions of integrity, answering for the misconduct which you have clearly and objectively undertaken in the series of events that led to an abuse of the use of \$400 000 of taxpayer money.

It is not just that you were involved in that, but it is your failure to recognise that as the grave act of misconduct it is and your refusal to disclose information, to hold that information from the public view, because you understand very well that if Tasmanians knew what you had done they would say it stinks. They would say it is not in the public interest to use your influence, your personal role, your privilege as a member of parliament and your additional privilege as the Speaker of Tasmania's House of Assembly, to garner funds for the benefit of yourself and your family members who are on the Bracknell Hall committee, and the continued benefit and feathering of the interests of those people there above a proper process of assessment that every other Tasmanian community has to undergo.

You have become the Speaker for feathering your own nest. You have no right to stay in that situation. You have to now answer to us. This is your opportunity. If the House votes to do this, you are required now to be heard. This is your opportunity to answer the question. You may have argued in the past that your role as Speaker did not enable you to do that, but this actually does give you the opportunity to answer to us why it is you think there has been no misconduct in your behaviour and why you do not think you are in breach of the Code of Conduct that you have signed up to, along with every other member here. Why do you think you should have a lower bar than everybody else in this Chamber? Why do you think you have

a right to put yourself in that role, when you should be the person in here who has the greater standard of integrity, who holds accountability and transparency as a standard for the rest of Tasmanians to look up to?

We should be proud of the person who is in this role. We should have utter confidence that they are always acting in the public interest. It is not just a game. This is not about winners and losers, except that if we do not have standards in this place, if we do not set standards, then we cannot expect anybody else to. If we are not leaders in the space of democracy, then other people will not follow.

As a member for Franklin, as a person people have voted for to be in this place, I expect my job is to work amongst colleagues and other elected members who uphold the Code of Conduct of this place.

We sit and we argue and we discuss every single word in the members Code of Conduct. Now it is at the point where you have to answer to it. This is your opportunity to answer the questions that were put in the previous motion. You get to do that and we expect to hear a full and frank account. We expect you will argue that you have done nothing wrong. We expect, if you answer every single question satisfactorily, if you have nothing to hide, you will have an answer for them. Where is the answer? We want to hear it. If there is nothing to hide, then tell us. Give us your answer because Tasmania is watching. The national media are watching. They expect Tasmania to have standards and not be a Hicksville banana republic. We will not let it get to that. We have something to defend and we are not going to rest while there is a stench in the Chamber.

[12.41.p.m]

**Mr STREET** (Franklin - Leader of the House) - Mr Speaker, I will be very brief. I have seen long bows drawn in the six years that I have been a member of this place but this might be the longest yet. The Deputy Premier referred to contemptible for the last motion. This is beneath contempt to suggest that as a member of this place you are not entitled to a vote.

The Government will not be supporting this motion.

[12.41.p.m]

**Ms O'CONNOR** (Clark - Leader of the Greens) - Mr Street, I am sorry you have been dragged into this but that was a pathetic, nonsensical, non-defence of the Speaker's most recent vote against the seeking of leave on a no confidence motion when it is very clear, under Standing Order 170, that the Speaker has a direct pecuniary interest in maintaining his role as Speaker.

Current parliamentary salary: there is an extra allowance here, as Dr Woodruff outlined, for the Speaker of the House of Assembly of \$49 000.65 on top of his member's salary and then the entertainment allowance of \$8411. That is a total of nearly \$60 000 that hangs in the balance that Mr Shelton voted to allow himself to keep.

Heaven's above, how out of touch are you people, that you do not see how corrupted that last vote was? How clearly it was in breach of the Standing Orders. How clearly disrespectful it was of the public interest and community expectations. That is an unambiguous and direct pecuniary interest that the Speaker had in the last vote.

Had the House voted on the seeking of leave, had we progressed the debate on no confidence, had the House agreed it had no confidence in the Speaker, the Speaker would have been nearly \$60 000 out of pocket. The Speaker just voted to keep \$57 476.

There is no lack of clarity in the Greens' mind, none at all: the Speaker should not have voted on the last motion. Standing Order 169:

No Member to vote if pecuniarily interested.

Members shall not be entitled to vote upon any question in which they have direct pecuniary interest, such interest being of an immediate and personal, and not merely of a general or remote description, and the vote of any Member so interested shall be disallowed, but any such Member shall not be precluded from proposing any Motion or Amendment relating to such Question.

There is no question at all under the Standing Orders and by the reasonable person's test that the Speaker of the House of Assembly should not have voted to save his own skin. That was the fourth time that the Speaker of the House of Assembly voted to save his backside. It is disgraceful that the Speaker has stayed in the Chair and used his casting vote to avoid referral to the Privileges Committee, to avoid being pulled up on pecuniary interest yesterday.

Again, on avoiding answering legitimate questions in the public interest and then killing off the seeking of leave for a debate on want of confidence in the Speaker. Have standards fallen so far that Government members and the Speaker of the House of Assembly cannot see that? For some Tasmanians \$60 000 is twice their annual salary. It is a lot of money and that is the sum that the Speaker just used his casting vote to keep being paid.

We are not talking here about trifling sums of money. We are talking about \$600 000 from the Commonwealth sports rorts program that was meant to go to the town of Westbury - also in Mr Shelton's electorate - that was then diverted to the Bracknell Hall redevelopment. Four hundred thousand dollars were hooked out of the Public Account without transparency, without oversight, without honesty, and without any other community in Tasmania being able to have access to those public funds. It was even hidden in the supplementary appropriation bill that came through here, which Mr Street referred to. There was no line item that said \$400 000 for the Bracknell Hall redevelopment.

This is a most shameful episode. We are in this position because at the last election the Tasmanian people in their wisdom decided not to give the Liberals any more than a one seat majority. At the very least, the Speaker should have excused himself from the Chair, and certainly on the last vote, on the seeking of leave for want of confidence, it was improper for the Speaker to use his casting vote to save his own skin.

I defy any member of the Government to argue that Standing Order 169 does not apply in this circumstance. It absolutely, unequivocally does. It is shameful, Mr Speaker. We have not had any answers from you as Speaker about the circumstances surrounding the \$400 000 that came out of the public account to go into a project with which Mr Shelton's family was intimately involved. The Speaker's vote on the last debate should be disallowed.

**Time expired.**

[12.49 p.m.]

**Ms O'BYRNE** (Bass) - Mr Speaker, this has been a difficult one for us to address. We had some discussion now and some perusing of the Standing Orders and listened very carefully to the contribution made by the minister who approached the table as the Leader of House in defence of the Speaker being able to cast his vote as the member for Lyons in that ballot.

Just as in the previous seeking-leave debate, when what was more telling was what the Premier did not say than what he did say, I think the same applies to what Mr Street presented to the House today in that he did not mount a defence that gave enough confidence to people in this House that this standing order was being applied appropriately and that there is a genuine understanding of what the standing order requires.

When we had a discussion yesterday about pecuniary interest, I made the point then that there is an assumption that pecuniary interest is always money or wages or dollars or cash in some form. The reality is that pecuniary interest could be something greater than that, such as something that advances a whole host of other wellbeing outcomes for the person who receives that amount of money. I do not think that was addressed appropriately in the debate yesterday. I do not think the Standing Orders necessarily give us enough of an understanding of what that means.

Mr Street has pretty much said that any member can cast any vote. The member who moved the motion, Dr Woodruff, has said that the amount of money received by you amounts to a pecuniary interest. I have gone through the *Companion*. I have looked at the Standing Orders and I have done a bit of searching around this debate. One of the reasons that ministers of the Crown are required to sign up to an additional code in relation to the conduct of their duties and the way that they conduct themselves, the ministerial code of conduct, is because they have a significant and greater capacity to effect change, because they have a significant and greater access to information.

What is not clear and what was not defended by the Government - I appreciate that as the Chair, you are not in a position to defend yourself; however, I imagine the Government would do that appropriately for you - was whether the same applies to position of Speaker, which is a position of the House and not of the Government. It leads us to a difficult situation because we do not know, as the member for Lyons, in his capacity as member for Lyons, not as Speaker, has not been in a position to explain what the process was. So we do not know how this action took place.

We know that the Greens have a number of documents that show an evidentiary pathway that does not look good. We know that the Government is saying, 'Everything is fine, do not look over here, we are completely fine, do not worry about it'. We are lacking an actual explanation of what took place.

When the Deputy Premier stood up and said, 'You should ask the former premier and the former treasurer', that is unrealistic because that person does not sit in this House any more. That gave me more of an inkling than almost anything else that something might be going wrong. Blaming somebody who is not here is not the defence of a government that believes they have conducted an appropriate process. That needs to be resolved because that is a fundamental flaw - whether or not the process has been conducted appropriately.

Mr Speaker, I do not know whether, as member for Lyons, as opposed to Speaker, you attend party meetings, or whether you attend different kinds of briefings that might be offered to anyone in the House. I do not know whether, as member for Lyons, as opposed to Speaker, you get access to information that is not readily available to anyone else. If any of those things are true, that means you may have access to information that allowed you to influence the outcome of the decision.

It may not be true. I have no idea. They are the sorts of questions that would have been resolved, first, had this been explained properly in the first place and, second, if we had been able to have a debate and sent it to the parliamentary House that deals with these issues.

Mr Ferguson kept talking about us weaponising this committee. The committee is there to make sure we do the right thing. Members of the Greens have been referred to that committee. I sat on this committee when we looked at that matter - I do not think you did, Mr Speaker - some years ago. Members of parliament go to that committee, evidence is taken and a decision is made. It is rare that a decision is made that does not reflect a genuine understanding of what took place and has clarified concerns that sit in this House.

Mr Speaker, I do not know what took place. That concerns me. I do know that every form of the House that allows us to investigate that has been blocked. I do know that by virtue of the other role you have as Speaker that you have been in the position of exercising your casting vote. All of that sheds a very dim light on the process.

As to the matter before us, which is Standing Order 170, it has not been argued effectively by the Government that there is any reason that Standing Order 170 would not apply because we have not defined what pecuniary interest is, we have not looked at whether or not you, as Speaker, are held to a different account than any other member of this House would be because of the additional money you receive from this House in the position elected by this House.

We do know that ministers who receive additional income are subject to a much higher standard of scrutiny. We all contend, as we have in the last few days, that the Premier does not use that very well and certainly has not called ministers to account. We have had the example raised of Ms Ogilvie. We have had the example when Mr Street clarified the record previously. I remember, very famously, the example of when former minister Groom admitted afterwards that he had knowingly walked to the lectern and told a lie. He admitted that it was a lie because he did not know what else to say. That was the matter of the TAFE building, if you recall, Mr Speaker. I do know there is a pattern of behaviour where people are not held to account. What we have here is a lamentable, very distressing explosion of that because of the coalescence of events.

We will support the standing order, even though I am not utterly convinced how Standing Order 170 applies. That is something the House needs to get a great understanding of.

**Ms O'Connor** - There are nearly 60 000 reasons it applies.

**Ms O'BYRNE** - I just do not know how it applies in terms of his election. That should be clarified because it does have an impact into the future for ministers. It is a good thing to understand. Most importantly, we should be doing this because this House cannot continue to look as farcical as we do while, in the Chair, you are using your casting vote in such a way.

[12.56 p.m.]

**Ms JOHNSTON** (Clark) - Mr Speaker, I have been relatively quiet during the series of debates this morning around this matter more broadly but obviously had a bit to say yesterday.

I am utterly frustrated, disgusted and embarrassed at the way this has unfolded today. In reflecting on the news last night, as I think the member for Bass indicated earlier in her contribution to the debate, it is quite embarrassing for all of us. People can see the lack of integrity and the lack of upholding integrity in this particular place.

It is obvious to me that a person who has had a complaint levelled against them cannot sit in judgment on whether that complaint is heard. That seems to me to be a common principle that surely everyone can agree on, whether it be in this place, any other workplace, any sporting organisation, committee or anything like that. It is just a basic principle of fairness.

It is obvious to me that on the last vote we held, which we are debating now, Standing Order 170, that there was a direct, immediate and personal conflict of interest. If the motion had been successful and we went to the substantive motion, to no confidence, there would have been an impact on yourself personally, as Speaker, and the benefit you derive from being Speaker.

It was obvious to me last night when I left this place that a glass of wine was much-needed after a long day. I went to the pub and the news was on. What were they talking about? This. It was obvious. The pub test was tested. They were all talking about it and that this just does not wash. The things they were saying about people in this place, about elected members generally, about how disgusted and ashamed they were, left me disheartened - and it is going to happen again tonight.

It bothers me that we cannot uphold integrity, decency and basic principles of fairness when complaints need to be heard and considered in this place. It bothers me greatly that we are dealing with basic conflicts of interest. If this happened in the local government sector - and I know there are many colleagues here who come from local government - there would be code of conduct complaint before the ink was even dry on the paper. The Local Government division would be up in arms about it. We would probably be prosecuted.

However, in this place, there does not seem to be any way of holding censures because with the awful situation where the Government has a one-seat majority, the Speaker is in the Chair and he casts with Government.

I have spent a long time trawling through the history of parliament to see if there is a similar situation and there has not been. Surely we can do the right thing in this particular instance. Surely we can go back out today once we finish sitting here in this place and hold our heads high and say, 'Look, we have had some difficulty, we actually have come to the right conclusion at the end of the day'.

If I go to that pub again tonight and have another glass of wine, I do not want to be told that I should be ashamed to be walking into this place - that is what has happened. It has brought this entire place and everyone who sits in it into disrepute. It is not good enough and I will be supporting the motion, Standing Order 170, today. I hope that we can hold our heads high at the end of the day.



**Mr SPEAKER** - The question is that the motion be agreed to?

**The House divided -**

**AYES 12**

Dr Broad  
Ms Butler (Teller)  
Ms Dow  
Ms Finlay  
Ms Haddad  
Ms Johnston  
Mr O'Byrne  
Ms O'Byrne  
Ms O'Connor  
Ms White  
Mr Winter  
Dr Woodruff

**NOES 12**

Mrs Alexander  
Ms Archer  
Mr Barnett  
Mr Ellis  
Mr Ferguson  
Mr Jaensch  
Ms Ogilvie  
Mr Rockliff  
Mr Street  
Mr Tucker  
Mr Wood  
Mr Young (Teller)

**Motion negatived.**

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

**MOTION**

**Russian Agression in Ukraine**

[2.30 p.m.]

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - (Braddon - Premier) - Mr Speaker, I move -

That the House of Assembly -

- (1) Join with Parliaments around Australia and continue to stand with the Ukrainian people against the illegal and unwarranted Russian aggression in Ukraine.
- (2) Recognise the sovereignty of Ukraine and the basic right of life and liberty for its people.
- (3) Condemn the violation of international conventions and the carrying out of acts of genocide and war crimes against the Ukrainian people that have led to many thousands of human deaths, countless casualties and the displacement of over 14 million Ukrainians.
- (4) Acknowledge the many Ukrainians we share our island with and join their community in despair of the conflict and atrocity 15 000 kilometres away from their Tasmanian homes.

- (5) Never take for granted the freedom and democracy we enjoy as Australians, and
- (6) Join the global demand that Russia withdraw from Ukraine's recognised sovereign territory and allow Ukrainians to recover and rebuild their place of peace and independence.

Mr Speaker, I rise to support the motion and do so with great sadness. First, I wish to acknowledge those in the Chamber today for this motion. We have with us a number of friends of the Association of Ukrainians in Tasmania - vice-president Ivan Shevchenko and joining him Iryna Artiukh, Robert Bilyk, Anna Harold and Elena Pliatsek, who are also members of the association. We welcome you with open arms and thank you. Our thoughts and hearts are with you and your friends and loved ones in Ukraine.

When the Tasmanian parliament stood united in supporting a similar motion on 3 March 2022, I, like all Tasmanians and Australians, sincerely hoped that we would not be here another 12 months on. We had all hoped that by this time the people of Ukraine would be enjoying peaceful freedom, as we do in this wonderful country. We had hoped that families would be reunited, that Ukrainians across the world would no longer fear for their safety or that of their loved ones, and that Ukraine would have embarked on a process of national recovery.

Unfortunately, while we looked forward to these hopes being realised, on this one-year anniversary, Ukrainians continue to face the threat of violence, disruption of their livelihoods and the attempted destruction of their society and culture. However, it is also with a great sense of hope that I reflect in this motion that the resilience of Ukraine and the Ukrainian people has shone brightly. Ukrainians have demonstrated great courage, resolve and commitment to the values that we also cherish. This has rallied communities across the world, including our own.

Last Thursday we saw the Tasman Bridge lit up in the blue and yellow of the Ukrainian flag as a symbol of our ongoing support. I was proud to request this display on behalf of the people of Tasmania as a demonstration of our enduring solidarity with the Ukrainian people. I said at the time that Ukraine will always have a friend in Tasmania and I repeat those words today.

Last Thursday's display followed the visit to Tasmania in January of the Ambassador of Ukraine. We welcomed the ambassador as a friend and I trust his visit demonstrated to him the genuine affection of Tasmanians for his country and our commitment to ongoing friendship. The connection between Ukraine and Tasmania will continue to remain very strong. I look forward to welcoming the ambassador and other visitors from Ukraine to Tasmania in the near future.

The Russian invasion of Ukraine is an illegal and unwarranted act of aggression. Our Government joins with other governments in Australia and abroad in denouncing it firmly, utterly and completely. The deliberate attempts to destroy the national, cultural, religious and democratic aspirations of the Ukrainian people are utterly unacceptable and a cause of deep sadness.

To the people of Ukraine, I wish to say today that we support you. We recognise your courage, we admire your strength and share your hopes for a peaceful future. The people of Ukraine have demonstrated their commitment to values that we share in Tasmania. In

responding to this motion, I move to pay tribute to this by reflecting on these values, which are a vital living part of Tasmania as they are a vital living part of Ukraine.

Ukraine is a diverse and multicultural society. As Tasmanians and Australians, we see every day how inclusive communities are stronger and more resilient. By recognising and valuing our differences, we are celebrating the things we share to secure the cultural, social and economic benefits of our diversity, our Australian and Tasmanian communities including people with strong links to Ukraine. We have over 100 people in Tasmania who were born in Ukraine and 785 people of Ukrainian ancestry. I say to you today that you are a vital part of our community and we value your links to Ukrainian communities, both in Ukraine and across the world. We recognise your investment in, and commitment to, Ukraine's ongoing struggle. I acknowledge in particular the pain, anxiety and frustration of Ukrainian Australians and Tasmanians with family, friends and loved ones in Ukraine.

I also recognise that Australia and Tasmania will always have in our hearts and thoughts the Ukrainian people. We remain committed to supporting Ukrainians and their family members. Tragically, many Ukrainians were forced to flee their country as a result of this conflict, and one can only walk in the shoes of those Ukrainians, something we have never had to do in the history of our country and most certainly in the wonderful State of Tasmania.

Tasmania was proactive in offering to assist the Australian Government with the resettlement of Ukrainian nationals. Since 23 February 2022 the Australian Government has granted over 10 000 visas to Ukrainian nationals in Ukraine and hundreds more to Ukrainian nationals elsewhere. I understand that nearly 5000 of these visa holders have since arrived in Australia.

While the majority of Ukrainian humanitarian entrants have been welcomed into mainland ports, dozens have made their way to Tasmania. The Migrant Resource Centre has been able to offer its support through the Department of Home Affairs' humanitarian resettlement program. Through this program, MRC Tasmania has been able to provide a range of support to those in need, including accommodation at its Multicultural Accommodation and Learning Centre, a site that the Tasmanian Government assisted MRC to acquire in 2020. As well as providing safe accommodation, the Multicultural Accommodation and Learning Centre is also able to provide for new humanitarian arrivals, including those from the Ukraine, with connections to employment opportunities.

I am aware that the Tasmanian Government-funded Safe Haven Hub has also assisted Ukrainian arrivals to access education and employment pathways, and their services remain available to those Ukrainians in Tasmania with work rights attached to their visas.

While Ukrainians who have arrived in Tasmania have done so under tragic circumstances, I know I join with all Tasmanians in welcoming each and every one of you to the State of Tasmania, and we do so with open arms. You bring our multicultural island to life and we have much to learn from your resilience and your enormous courage.

In August 2021 I was Acting Premier when Tasmania was asked to contribute to the national effort to evacuate people from Afghanistan, while actively responding to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. Tasmania welcomed a flight of Australians returning from the United Kingdom, which enabled other jurisdictions to receive people evacuated from Afghanistan. At the time our Government stood ready to assist.

As we did from the evacuation from Afghanistan, our Government stands behind the Australian Government in its ongoing efforts to support Ukraine. Alongside the Australian Government, we affirm the international condemnation of attacks on Ukrainian civilian populations and infrastructure and demand the withdrawal of Russian forces from Ukraine's recognised sovereign territory.

Since 2014, the Ukrainian people have demonstrated their commitment to the principles of democratic government. On this, the first anniversary of the full-scale invasion, we celebrate the progress that Ukraine has made to strengthen its democracy and express our hope and confidence that Ukraine's democracy will emerge from this conflict with even greater strength.

Events in Ukraine remind us of the inherent strength of democracy, the strength that comes from giving people a genuine voice. Good decisions are made through dialogue, through open and respectful disagreement and through doing the hard work to achieve agreement between our differences.

The world is more complex and connected than ever before and our communities face many challenges. We cannot solve these challenges through force and no one of us has the knowledge or wisdom to solve them alone. Good decisions are made through dialogue and consensus and not through fear.

Tasmanians are fortunate to enjoy a democratic system that is over 150 years old. As a community, we are custodians of the system, and our task is to work together to strengthen and extend the democratic rights of all Tasmanians. All of us here today, privileged to be the elective representatives of Tasmanians, have a particular obligation. Our Government is committed, as we all are in this parliament, to the ongoing Tasmanian democratic project, maintaining the freedoms of Tasmanians where they should be maintained and pursuing reform where they can be improved.

I also acknowledge that this time will continue to be difficult for many people. In addition to the many Tasmanians directly affected by the war in Ukraine, there are many others with experience of ongoing historical conflict in other parts of the world. I know that Tasmanians will join with me in extending empathy and support to these members of our community. We have all been affected by watching the events in Ukraine. We have been touched by sorrow and we have marvelled at the moments of joy and hope through such adversity.

There is also a time of uncertainty and anxiety for many. I encourage Tasmanians to renew their bonds, to help others who need it, to continue showing the generosity and kindness that have been so clearly on display over recent years. I also encourage Tasmanians who are uncertain, anxious or concerned to seek support. There is help available and please reach out if you need it.

In reflecting on this motion, I have reflected on the values that we share with the Ukrainian people. I acknowledge those who strive to uphold them and keep our community safe. I recognise the members of the Australian Defence Force, Tasmanian Emergency Services and other essential services who protect our communities. We do not take their efforts and sacrifice or the security that we enjoy for granted. I acknowledge those members of the Australian Defence Force deployed overseas, including those involved in providing training

support to Ukraine, members of the Tasmanian Emergency Services who assist beyond our state and our essential health care workers who have risen to the challenge in recent years.

All of us in this Tasmanian Parliament, whatever our various views of the world, whatever our beliefs, share a desire to make life better for Tasmanians and to protect and enhance the wonderful things about our state. However, our Tasmanian community is part of a national community and part of a global community.

Our thoughts are very much with the Ukrainian people who have been so utterly devastated over the past 12 months. We have all lived in hope that within 12 months, this battle, this fight, the saddest we see on our television screens, would be over. Tragically, they are not.

We also remind ourselves that 12 months on that we will never forget and we will always share with you the pain and suffering that I know your friends and your loved ones, who are in Ukraine, abroad and most certainly here in Australia and Tasmania will never forget the feelings that you are expressing and will always stand with you. Thank you.

[2.44 p.m.]

**Ms WHITE** (Lyons - Leader of the Opposition) - Mr Speaker, I rise in support of the motion before the parliament. I join with the Premier in welcoming our guests here to the Parliament of Tasmania.

Tasmania Labor shares in the anguish and the sorrow of all who have been affected by the war in Ukraine. We join parliaments across Australia and continue to stand with the people of Ukraine against the illegal and unwarranted Russian aggression in Ukraine. We recognise the sovereignty of Ukraine and the basic right of life and liberty for its people. We condemn the violation of international conventions and the carrying out of acts of genocide and war crimes against the Ukrainian people.

A year ago the world was united in shock as Russian President, Vladimir Putin, ignored international law and sent his forces into Ukraine. In the year since we have watched in horror as the Russian invasion causes widespread death and destruction across Ukraine, with cities under constant attack from rockets and drones, as Ukrainians flee their homes to seek safety in bomb shelters or wherever they can when bomb shelters have not been available. It is difficult to imagine the horror or terror of seeking safety and having nowhere to go.

We have seen people trapped in bomb shelters with air raid sirens screaming around them while their homes, their livelihoods and their communities were demolished. We watched with respect and awe as the people of Ukraine rose up against Russian aggression to defend themselves, their country and their sovereignty. It is to their credit that a war that Russia expected to win within days was instead met with strength and unwavering resolve by Ukrainians in the face of hundreds of thousands of deaths, untold casualties and the displacement of millions of people. We will continue to stand with them as they fight on against Russia's ongoing aggression.

From across the other side of the world it is difficult to comprehend the horror, the despair, the deprivation and uncertainty Ukrainians have been living with for the past 12 months. We see the images of death and destruction on TV, but we cannot truly know or feel the pain, their sadness, their fear or their courage, the pain and the sadness of millions of

displaced Ukrainians and, of course, of those who have lost loved ones to this senseless violence and aggression, the fear of those who fled the bloodshed to keep their families safe, and of those who remain as they live with constant air raids and atrocities, the courage of those who stayed to fight to defend their homeland and defend the freedom and democracy that they, and we, hold so dear.

From here in Tasmania, we recognise the devastating loss of life and the casualties and people who have lost their home and livelihoods. We share the world's resolve to bring these atrocities to an end and allow Ukrainians to recover and to rebuild their homeland. We support the Australian Government as it provides military assistance to Ukraine and further sanctions on Russia. Among our latest sanctions are those targeting those in the Russian Government who are helping to prolong the war, as well as those financing the war and those attempts to justify the war through lies and disinformation. Of course, that is how this war began, with lies and disinformation from President Putin.

Unfortunately, this has become one of scourges of the modern world, with lies and disinformation becoming more and more common, instead of honesty and authenticity. We see the results of that in Ukraine, with the untold casualties and what the United Nations Secretary-General, António Guterres, described as the most massive violation of human rights in the world today. The UN Human Rights Commission has documented cases of sexual violence, enforced disappearances, arbitrary detention and violations of the rights of prisoners of war. That is why the Universal Declaration of Human Rights is critical. As Mr Guterres said, the now 75-year old declaration is too often exploited for political gain, misused and abused, or just ignored.

We must work as a state and as a country and as a global community to uphold everyone's basic human rights. We, here in Tasmania and the rest of Australia, are incredibly lucky to live in a place that is not only beautiful, but also has a way of life based on the freedom and democracy that we all enjoy. We must never take that for granted and we must always fight for the principles that underpin our freedom and democracy. As we have seen in Ukraine, our freedom and democracy are not guaranteed. To the many Ukrainians we share our island with, we acknowledge and join you in your despair at the conflict and atrocities taking place in your homeland. We support the federal Government's expanded sanctions against Russia and the additional military assistance for Ukraine to support President Zelenskyy and the Ukrainian people and their extraordinary strength and courage as they continue to fight against Russia's unwanted aggression and their unprovoked and illegal invasion.

We join the global demand that Russia withdraw from Ukraine's recognised sovereign territory and allow Ukrainians to recover and rebuild a place of peace and independence. We will always stand on the side of truth, right, freedom and democracy. We will continue to support our friends in Ukraine as they stand up and fight for truth, life, freedom and democracy. We mourn with them as they mourn their loved ones. We honour them and pay tribute to them as they continue their courageous and determined fight. We stand with them as they defend their homeland and their sovereignty and we call on President Putin to end this war.

There is no existential threat to Russia. The threat comes from Russia from their illegal invasion of the sovereign territory of Ukraine. Russia, led by President Putin, can end this war. We urge him to do so and allow the people of Ukraine to again live their lives in freedom, safety and peace. I commend this motion to the House.

[2.51 p.m.]

**Ms O'CONNOR** (Clark - Leader of the Greens) - Mr Speaker, I rise on behalf of the Greens with a very heavy heart to support this motion. I recognise and pay my respects to the members of Tasmanian Ukrainian community who are here in the Chamber with us today and all people from Ukraine who are living in Tasmania now. On behalf of the Greens, I give my strength and love to the Ukrainian/Tasmanian community. We grieve with you.

I acknowledge the great suffering and the unimaginable loss of the Ukrainian people. I also recognise their great courage and determination and the extraordinary leadership of their democratically elected president, Volodymyr Zelenskyy who has taken strength in leadership to another level.

There are never any winners in war but a nation, a democratic, sovereign, independent, proud nation that has been illegally invaded, must be allowed to defend itself.

We have all seen the horrifying images coming out of Ukraine. We have seen the devastation, the murder of people in towns like Bucha and Mariupol. It is beyond our heart's capacity to really understand that suffering. Millions of people have been displaced. More than 100 000 Ukrainian people have been killed or wounded. Mothers, fathers, grandparents, aunts, uncles, brothers, and sisters. Children have been stolen from their families and spirited away into Russia to be illegally adopted.

We sometimes hear commentators saying that there needs to be a negotiated peace with Vladimir Putin. You cannot negotiate with psychopaths. Vladimir Putin is a despot with dreams of empire. Indeed, he is prepared to sacrifice his nation's own sons and daughters in this unjust war. Vladimir Putin should be tried for war crimes.

When we had this debate last year, perhaps people around the world might have thought with the might of Russia invading Ukraine that this would be a quick defeat but it has been the extraordinary fighting spirit of the Ukrainian people that has allowed them to defend themselves to this point against one of the world's superpowers. It is that courage and that determination and we should all recognise that the people of Ukraine are holding the line for democracy.

This is a battle that matters to the world and all sovereign democratic peoples need to stand with the people of Ukraine in their struggle. The Ukrainian people should not be asked to concede one inch of their sovereign territory in this illegal and unjust war.

I recognise that there are arguments to be had about arming the people of Ukraine, but the Tasmanian Greens have always recognised the need to give the Ukrainian people the arms that they need to defend their country against this illegal invasion. We stand with the Greens of Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine who last year implored democratic nations around the world to provide Ukraine with the arms that it needs to defend itself. In this letter that went to many leaders around the world, the Chairman of the Greens Party of Ukraine, the Chairman of the Greens Party of Georgia, the Chairman of the Greens Party of Moldova said:

Thirty years of presence of Russian troops on the territory of Moldova, the invasion of Georgia in 2008, eight years of a hybrid war with Ukraine and a new large-scale invasion on 24 February 24, characterize the foreign policy

of the Russian Federation much more convincingly than the 'peace-loving' demagoguery of its leaders.

With persistence worthy of a better cause, the Russian Government is imposing a senseless confrontation on Europe and the United States, trampling on all the achievements of the world community in the field of international security. At the same time, even in the conditions of extreme aggravation of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict, some states of the European Union take an ambivalent position, trying to treat Russia's claims 'with understanding'. It is sad that among them there are also countries participating in the Normandy Format negotiations, the meaning of which is not to appease the aggressor, but to restore the status quo.

We, the Greens of Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine are convinced that the solution of the problems created by Russia in relations with our countries and generating threats to common European interests is possible only in the conditions of unity and a tough position of the European Union with strict adherence to the norms and principles of international law, without immoral and destructive compromises in the name of business as usual. With regard to Russia, all possible measures of influence must be applied. The amorphous and palliative measures in the matter of protecting European values have no justification, as well as the manifestations of the 'Stockholm Syndrome' in relation to a terrorist state that today has taken the entire civilized world hostage.

Remaining committed to the principles of non violence, we are forced to admit that the only way to stop the current bloody marching of the aggressor across Ukraine is by using military force. Russia itself tightly closed the 'window of opportunity' in the sphere of diplomacy. We call on all European countries to recognize this cruel reality and ensure the supply of lethal weapons to Ukraine, where the battle between Good and Evil is taking place today, the outcome of which will determine the future of the continent and the whole world.

We call on the European Greens to show courage and solidarity in supporting our stance for a better common future.

We, together with the Ukrainian people yearn for, long for, that day when peace comes and the sunflowers of Ukraine are allowed to flower under those beautiful blue skies in the fertile soils of Ukraine in peace. Mr Speaker, *Slava Ukraini*.

[3.00 p.m.]

**Ms ARCHER** (Clark - Attorney-General) - Mr Speaker, I rise to speak on this very important motion today. I also acknowledge our visitors with us in the Chamber today. It is very much appreciated for you to come in person because we do not always get an opportunity to address not only such an important motion but also to have visitors present as well. It makes it very personal, so thank you.

It saddens me that 12 months have passed since Russia first violated Ukraine's sovereignty and that Ukraine is still subject to the unwanted and devastating invasion causing



death and destruction. I echo the comments from Olena Zelenska, first lady of Ukraine, who said:

Today we are not commemorating a year of war but we are celebrating a year of resistance to aggression. A year of courage. A year of mutual assistance and rescue of each other. A year of humanity. And a year of friendship.

I stand united with Ukraine and acknowledge its sovereignty and territorial integrity. I recognise its people's right to the peace, freedom and democratic rule that we are so fortunate to have in Tasmania and Australia. My heart goes out to everyone affected by the ongoing crisis, especially those in Tasmania with family or friends in Ukraine and the surrounding regions too, and those displaced from their homes by this very disturbing conflict.

All members know that war affects everyone and it affects deeply. It changes lives. Effects can be felt across generations. In particular, I acknowledge here in this place today those who have borne and continue to bear the burdens of war.

As members may be aware, Ukrainians were among the migrants who chose to settle in Tasmania, in Launceston, Devonport, Burnie and the majority here in Hobart after World War II. These original migrants, who themselves came here as people displaced by conflict, have made Tasmania their home, raised families and contributed their unique identity to our Tasmanian community. We now have third- and fourth-generation Ukrainian Australian families that continue to keep their culture and life, and benefit in our community where each identity is embraced.

I acknowledge the significant efforts of the Association of Ukrainians in Tasmania in supporting fundraising efforts for war-affected Ukrainians and continuing to raise awareness about the ongoing situation in Ukraine. The association has its base in my electorate of Clark, one which I have supported myself with donations whenever I can. It was founded by those original Ukrainian settlers and continues to provide opportunities for Ukrainians in Tasmania to connect with their heritage. While it deeply saddens me that anyone should have to leave their home, I am proud that Tasmania is an inclusive place that welcomes all people and embraces cultural diversity.

As I have said, war affects everyone. However, I would like to take a moment to speak about the women of Ukraine. In Ukraine, we have seen women left without livelihoods, without access to health care, reproductive services, survival services and other critical forms of support. Women are more likely to be displaced, with 90 per cent of those fleeing the fighting and, in turn, their homes, being women and children. It is difficult to imagine living in a world in which so much is taken away.

While it is true that war does horrible things to humans and to communities, equally, it also brings out the best in people. We have seen women overcome the challenges posed by this crisis and excel beyond imagination. Last year, Oleksandra Matviichuk and her team received the Nobel Peace Prize for their work advocating through Kyiv's Centre for Civil Liberties in documenting the atrocities of war. We have seen women leading not-for-profits, advocating for diplomacy on behalf of their country and spearheading change.

Women now make up 22 per cent of Ukraine's military, since fighting, so to speak, to be allowed in combat positions, which commenced in 2019. From across the world, I thank those

women and I stand with all the people of Ukraine in praying for an end to this unbearable conflict. They are in my personal prayers every day.

Over the past 12 months the conflict has inflicted untold suffering on the Ukrainian people, with thousands of lives claimed, millions of people displaced and homes and infrastructure lost forever. I have endless gratitude for the people and organisations working to provide aid, food, water, medical and other essential supplies, especially psychosocial support to those impacted.

Here, at home, I have been able to play a small part, as I said, in supporting the Friends of Ukraine group with fundraising for those affected by the ongoing conflict. I know other members have helped too.

It was a very special privilege to recently meet His Excellency, Vasyl Myroshnychenko, Ukrainian Ambassador to Australia, on his recent visit to Tasmania with his wife and young son. My husband and I found it truly humbling to hear the challenges these people are facing every single day. I was also uplifted by his continued commitment to maintaining their important relationship with Australia and for being so positive in the face of adversity. It was wonderful to meet him.

As I said, it is hard to fathom that one year has passed since the first strikes on Ukraine. I want to deliver this message in closing:

To the people of Ukraine, your strength and resilience is an inspiration to us all. The entire world is cheering you on. I hope that you feel the support of those who live so far away but believe in your same ideals of freedom and democracy, and hope the day comes very soon when you are free once again.

**Members** - Hear, hear.

[3.06 p.m.]

**Dr BROAD** (Braddon) - Mr Speaker, I stand today in support of this motion and with the people of Ukraine. I welcome the members of the Tasmanian Ukrainian community here with us today, and also members of the Ukrainian community around the state, including Anthony Mihal, the well-respected lawyer from Ulverstone, who I know quite well. Our children play together. I have known Anthony for quite a while and I know the impact it is having on him. He is of Ukrainian descent, with his parents and grandparents all from Ukraine. It really takes a toll on people like Anthony.

It is unbelievable that we stand here a year after what you have described as an international outrage, where Russia decided that they were going to extend their borders by force. This is not a war that has been going on for a year - it has been going on since 2014, when Russia created strife in areas of the Donbas and also annexed Crimea but the wider invasion is 12 months old.

In the buildup to that invasion, you can see now, as history is being written, as records are being taken, the steps that the international community, especially the Americans, did to try and prevent what was a building war. A very interesting article in a publication called *Politico* goes through the oral history of the buildup to war, the Americans spotting that what was happening on the borders of Ukraine was very unusual back in October, or even earlier,

the year before the invasion, and the efforts they went to to rally the international community to give Putin as many chances as he could to back down. That is why, as we saw, as we headed closer and closer to war, the change in the way that the information war was waged. The Americans called out the Russians before they had a chance to come up with false-flag operations. That more than likely delayed the time when the invasion actually started.

What also happened was the start of the process to rally the international community and to try and get the Ukrainians themselves prepared for what looked like a war without actually creating the war. There is that interesting dynamic when the Russians are building up on the border, that the Ukrainians and the Americans, and indeed, the international community had to be very careful to be seen as not provoking a Russian reaction. React they did. The Russians invaded anyway, despite all the attempts to prevent it happening. It is an outrage.

Since then, what we have learned is that you cannot subdue a population of nearly 40 million people who are used to living free. We know that the Russians have not really had a democracy but the Ukrainians have. They stood up to defend themselves. History is being written now and what is happening in Ukraine will be something that is reflected upon in coming generations.

What we have seen from the Russians, and continue to see, can only be considered atrocities. The Russians thought they could win this war in a couple of days, that they could topple the government, that the people of Ukraine did not support their government, that the ethnically Russian or Russian-speaking members of the Ukrainian community would welcome the Russian soldiers, but they did not, because the Ukrainian people believe in freedom and want to fight tyranny.

What we have seen from the Russians and what we are continually seeing can best be described as war crimes. The international community has to hold the Russians to account for what are war crimes - for sexual violence, for arbitrary executions, for those pictures of dead people in the street with their hands tied behind their backs, with cars blown up, with filtration camps established. The Russians were going to try to subdue Ukraine in a way that we have not seen since the World War II. We thought that sort of history and behaviour was behind us. It is not and the Ukrainian people are facing that every day.

We saw the devastation of towns like Bucha, we saw children being separated from their parents and taken to Russia; indeed, we saw whole populations in the occupied areas sent to the far reaches of Russia in an attempt to commit what can only be described as a genocide. It remains an outrage. On top of that, we saw what can only be described as terrorism of the Ukrainian people, throwing aside all the rules of war, long established with the Geneva Convention - the bombing of residential areas, the bombing of electrical infrastructure, the random attacks in different areas of Ukraine far from the front, simply to terrorise the local population.

We saw and continue to see the use of things like the Iranian Shahed drones that attack randomly different areas of Ukraine, simply to terrorise the entire people, but it has not worked. The Ukrainian people continue to resist. We see also that the Russians have failed because Europe has changed. Europe is weaning themselves off Russian resources. The sanctions on the Russian economy are biting; the Russian economy is shrinking day by day, but we need to do more.

The Russians have failed because Kyiv and Kharkiv held against the Russian aggression, and then we saw the pushback against the Russian people. We saw places like Izium liberated, we saw Kherson liberated, and hopefully in a spring offensive we will see further areas of Ukraine liberated. We are seeing now World War I-style fighting happening in places like Bakhmut and private organisations like the Wagner Group, who have for tens of years committed outrages across Africa and Syria in particular, laying waste to town after town. They are doing that in Ukraine.

The reports vary but we have seen over 200 000 Russian casualties. The Ukrainians claim that there have been 200 000 Russian deaths. That has not been independently verified but the international community says 200 000 Russian casualties, so that is dead and wounded. That is a huge number of people, but it dwarfs the impact it has had on the Ukrainian people.

We have seen from the Ukrainian people resilience, courage and sacrifice, and that is for us all. As other speakers have highlighted, this is not only protecting their own country, this is protecting us all and this affects us all, not just at the petrol pump, not just what we see on the TV - their stance against tyranny is protecting us all. The only reason there has not been an international force put together to push back the Russians is simply because they have that nuclear threat. Here we have a madman in charge of an army and private organisations of soldiers, but they have that nuclear deterrent. That is something that must frighten us all - a madman with his hands on a nuclear trigger, the literal ability to wipe out not only mankind, but the Earth as we know it. This has to end. Ukraine has to prevail.

Australia is doing our bit. I know today is a small symbol of our support, but it is important that we as a parliament also support our federal government in the training support they are providing the Ukrainian soldiers. We have recently seen the work they are doing in the United Kingdom to train Ukrainian soldiers, but also the supply of things like Bushmasters and I know we are supplying other things. The international community must continue to supply the weapons that Ukraine needs.

We know we cannot put together an international force to push the Russians out of Ukraine because of the nuclear deterrent, but we can continue to provide medipacks, artillery, especially anti-aircraft technology to protect those towns in Ukraine far from the front. We also must continue to give Ukraine the weapons they need: things like the HIMARS, the long-range artillery systems that the United States has provided that basically pushed the Russians back. They allowed the Ukrainians to destroy Russian artillery dumps where they accumulated as they prepared for pushes on the front and so on. HIMARS are a very good thing which has changed the face of the war. Now we see the Leopard tanks being exported to Ukraine, which are far superior to the Russian tanks. I really hope that that is the technological push that allows Ukraine to take back more of their land.

This could all end today if the Russian army simply left. All it takes is for the Russian army to simply leave. I spoke before about 200 000 casualties and untold numbers of Ukrainians who have died, but Ukrainians have risen up. Ukrainians from all walks of life have joined the armed forces and they are innovators as well. We see that with the way they are using drones, the way they are using technology, the way they are using intelligence and the way they are using weapons systems that really have not been used in a war like this, and they will prevail.

There have been 200 000 Russian casualties. To put that into perspective, Russian casualties in Afghanistan in the Afghan war which was between 1979 and 1989 totalled only around 15 000. That was roughly the number of Russian deaths in Afghanistan, yet we have seen more than 10 times that in Ukraine and they still push people forward. In areas like Bakhmut they are seeing former prisoners trying to win their freedom by fighting in the Wagner army, walking across open plains. The Ukrainian flag, for those who do not know, actually represents the open fields of Ukraine, with the yellow fields of grain and a blue sky above. Now we see Russian soldiers walking through these open fields, in what can best be described as a slaughterhouse. This demonstrates the way that Russians, and Putin in particular, show zero respect for their own soldiers in a World War I-like effort where they simply march out of the trenches only to be slaughtered, and yet they still come.

Ukraine will prevail, but at a terrible price. If we do not continue to support Ukraine with the arms they need, the toll will be bigger. I have no doubt that Ukraine will win this war, but the international community must stay strong and we all must continue to support Ukraine. *Slava Ukraini!*

[3.19 p.m.]

**Mr BARNETT** (Lyons - Minister for Energy and Renewables) - Mr Speaker, I stand with others in support of this motion in the House of Assembly. I thank the Premier for bringing it forward and concur with the remarks of other colleagues and also recognise the guests in the Chamber from Ukraine and the Ukrainian community here in Tasmania. I show respect and honour you and grieve with you and other members of the Ukrainian community in Tasmania. We stand with you, we support you.

The date, 24 February, marked one year since the Russian government commenced its invasion of Ukraine, setting off a devastating chain of events that has now cost tens of thousands of lives, led to millions of Ukrainians fleeing their homeland and has become the most significant military conflict in Europe since World War II. The Premier noted the Tasman Bridge being lit up on that day. That was a mark of respect to show the blue and yellow as has been referred to today. I am wearing the Ukrainian flag badge today in honour of this special occasion.

This action was not a special operation as it was referred to as by President Putin. It was and is an illegal and immoral full-scale invasion of a peaceful country. It is not only a military conflict. There is clear evidence that President Putin and his forces have deliberately targeted civilians, deliberately destroying apartment blocks and hospitals. It is expected by the international community that it will result in President Putin and the various collaborators being called before the International War Crimes Tribunal and be indicted for those war crimes.

In January this year, it was my great honour and a pleasure to meet with the Ukrainian ambassador, Vasyl Myroshnychenko. It was wonderful to know of his appreciation of Tasmania and the people of Tasmania for the Ukrainian community. I met him when he was here with his wife and family and to share some of the reflections and the support and honour that we wanted to message back to the people of Ukraine.

We talked about my reflections about this time last year when Nic Street and I met members of the Ukrainian community in Tasmania and heard of their pain, the suffering, grief, anxiety and stress as they tried to communicate and connect with their family members and loved ones in Ukraine as they were fleeing to train stations, to basements, to get away from the

bombing in Kyiv or elsewhere throughout Ukraine. The anguish and pain and the stress that we could understand and connect with was very severe.

As a government we tried to do what we could. We supported the federal government in its efforts to provide visas for resettlement. The premier indicated that of some 10 000 visas for resettlement, 5000 now have been issued and granted which is excellent. Tasmania is a very open and welcoming community for those being resettled. It reminds me of the warmth, care and love demonstrated by the Tasmanian community as a result of the Syrian civil war when I was supporting the former premier Will Hodgman when we welcomed into Tasmania hundreds of Syrians who were fleeing pain and suffering in the Syrian civil war.

In the same way, we thank the Migrant Resource Centre of Tasmania and the other support measures in our community that provide support for those seeking resettlement. We are reminded of the joint values that we care for and share with our Ukrainian community - the values of freedom, support for democracy, support for the rule of law and the fact that we love living in peace. We are reminded that the price of freedom demands eternal vigilance. We are reminded every day when we think of the veterans in Tasmania and elsewhere.

I am reminded and thank the former government and former prime minister Scott Morrison for the invitation for president Volodymyr Zelenskyy to speak to the Australian Parliament on 31 March last year. It was a wonderful occasion where all members of the Parliament of Australia listened carefully and diligently to President Zelenskyy as he shared his grief and his pain and also the connection and thanks to the Australian people and the Australian Government on behalf of the Australian people for the support that we provided to Ukraine. It received a standing ovation from all members of the Parliament on 31 March on behalf of all of us. It was a very special day.

We also acknowledge that the Russian people have been hit hard in terms of the impact on them - 60 000 to 70 000 soldiers have been killed from the reports that I have seen, with some 200 000 to 250 000 casualties across Russia. This is an act of aggression by President Putin on behalf of the government. We think of the people of Russia but it is the people of Ukraine we stand with today. We thank them for their solidarity, for their resilience, their bravery and courage that has been shared and demonstrated during this motion and marks of respect.

I pay a tribute to Red Cross. Red Cross are there providing the support and care during this difficult tragic time. The Red Cross Ukrainian crisis appeal supports the Ukrainian people directly with humanitarian assistance, health care, mental health support, cash and voucher assistance, water and sanitation services and food support. I am sure there are many other charities as well, but I am doing a shout out and thank you to Red Cross for what you are doing.

In conclusion, I stand with others here in support of Ukraine, in support of the people of Ukraine. In conclusion I stand with Ukraine. We stand with Ukraine.

[3.27 p.m.]

**Dr WOODRUFF** (Franklin) - Mr Speaker, I rise on behalf of the Greens, to share our heartache at the events that have unfolded in the past year. I acknowledge the members of the Ukrainian community diaspora who are here with us today. The last 361 days, every day would have been full of pain and suffering.

It was an invasion by Vladimir Putin that was with no right and no legality and utterly without provocation. The Ukraine sovereign country was and is peaceful at heart. It has, at its core, a desire to strengthen democracy. It is a sovereign nation.

Vladimir Putin is using the oldest of methods, the medieval law of force against a democracy and also against the international rule of law. That is the price the Ukrainian people are paying. The price of freedom is eternal vigilance, but it is also defence when it is called upon. It is so necessary today.

I will not forget, for the rest of my life, the moment when Volodymyr Zelenskyy chose to leave the safety of the presidential palace. He walked out into the public square and shot a video with three other people from his Cabinet. That moment was the turning point for everyone else on the planet. It gave us a sense of the strength and unity of the Ukrainian people. I can bet, and I think everyone else here would agree, that Putin in no way thought that Volodymyr Zelenskyy would stand and fight with his people. They were banking on him disappearing, running away and standing outside the country and trying to be president from afar but you cannot fight and unite people from outside the country. He took the brave stand. He was an inspiration.

The Ukrainian people have been the real inspiration. What they have endured over the last 361 days, and are still enduring, those of them who are living in the country. There are 14 million Ukrainians estimated to have had to flee their homes; five million of them are outside the country and 2.5 million have been forcibly removed, kidnapped, taken to Russia and other countries against their will, and who knows what has happened to those people? We have no idea.

This man is not mad, he is a sociopath. He is very clear about what he is doing. He is not insane, he is actually sane, and that is the problem. That calls on us to do everything we can to condemn him as the war criminal he is.

Human Rights Watch has been very clear in their recent assessment of what has happened with the invasion by Russia of Ukraine. They say that Russian forces have committed war crimes, they maintain they are crimes against humanity, horrific abuses, especially with an unconscionable disregard for civilians.

We have seen incredible horrors enacted on the civilian population. Women in particular have been singled out for all manner of sexual violence, and older women and girls are particularly the main victims and survivors. Prisoners of war have been killed and tortured and there has been indiscriminate bombing of cultural places and civic spaces, so that if Putin is able to do what he is hoping, if he cannot take the country, he will bomb it into oblivion. It makes an utter pretence of his argument that he is seeking to 'liberate' the Ukrainian people. He is doing everything he can to annihilate them.

There must be international justice and Putin and the perpetrators of this violence in the Russian forces have to be held to account for their crimes and we, along with the rest of the international community, will do everything we can to bring them to justice.

It is important to recognise that this has changed the political space forever around the world, obviously, but particularly it has brought a collectivism not just in Ukraine but in the EU and in NATO. Ukraine itself is in the process of joining NATO and Finland and Sweden,

who have never ever broken their stance of neutrality, recognise and support them in going through the process of becoming NATO members. They understand we must stand together against bullies and stand together against dictators who will stop at nothing. Were we to move away from our support of the defence of Ukraine, who would be next? When would it end? It will never end until Putin and the Russian forces are gone from all of Ukrainian soil. Not one centimetre is negotiable.

On behalf of the Greens, I can say how much the Ukrainian people are in our hearts. We do cheer them on when they have successes and we grieve with them because we see the bombing and the pain and every time we listen to a news report, it is with the relentless sound of guns and bombing. While we have been speaking here, who knows how many Ukrainians have died in defence of their country?

We will do everything we can. We encourage the Government to support more sanctions and put more resources in. We especially support all efforts to support Ukrainians and the Ukrainian community and to help them help their family and friends in Ukraine in the defence of their homeland.

[3.35 p.m.]

**Mr ELLIS** (Braddon - Minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Management) - Mr Speaker, I want to echo the acknowledgements of colleagues across the parliament of the Ukrainian community in Tasmania, the people of Ukraine and those who fight and die for their freedom. A one-year milestone has been reached and it is a dark and sombre milestone. A year ago we saw a horrific Russian attack on Ukraine, a sovereign and independent country. It was an illegal and immoral invasion, an attack that disregarded international law and the rules-based order that underpins collective peace and security across the world. This is a year of brutal assaults, particularly on innocent civilians.

This war is causing immeasurable human suffering and global insecurity. Russia's use of force has seen civilians and civilian infrastructure targeted. Russian tactics and strategy have weaponised the winter season within Ukraine, which means that many civilians have been deprived of heat and electricity during frigid temperatures. This aggression has resulted in needless loss of life and we mourn the losses Ukrainians have endured. The staggering toll of this war extends beyond Ukraine's borders and has caused food, fuel and energy prices to skyrocket and put millions of people around the world at risk of food insecurity. This causes global instability and insecurity.

We condemn here today the actions of Russia in waging war against a country that has a right to peace, to independence and to national security. Ukraine's courageous stance against the Russian war has united the world. Many countries have assisted in providing life-saving and humanitarian assistance to Ukraine and Ukrainian refugees. Know that you are not alone.

In my first words in this place I told the story of another European refugee, my grandpa Albert, who found safe haven here after the Iron Curtain descended on his homeland of Lithuania. I said at the time it is that spirit and independence that forms the basis of so much that is good in our world that animates the generations throughout time, that animated my grandfather's generation and my parents to brighter things and brighter days. Indeed, it was called the American War of Independence and although it was also a war for freedom it was not just that, and though it was a war for democracy, it was not just that either. It was, as it



says on the box, a war for independence, so that a free people would be able to choose their own destiny and their own future, for them and for generations to come.

In 1989 two million people held hands and formed a human chain across 675 kilometres through Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia and demanded of the evil empire that they be free, that they are independent nations, that they have a right to choose their own destiny and their own future. We know this basic human impulse well in Tasmania, that small independence that you would own the family home, have a decent job and still find time to catch a few flathead in the Mersey - or perhaps some pike in the Dnieper.

Mr Speaker, one year into Russia's illegal, unjustifiable and horrific war, we are proud to stand with Ukraine as it defends its sovereignty and its people. We stand with Ukraine in their fight for survival and we will do so for as long as it takes. We will be a safe haven when we are needed. We reject Russia's aggression. The only obstacle to achieving peace is Russia. We must all remember that this is about independence and the ability to live by your own lights in your own home. Ukrainians are entitled to live freely and peacefully within their country.

I want to acknowledge the Ukrainians who have lost their lives in this terrible war and those who are fighting hard to defend their country. They are heroic and resilient. We stand with the world in calling for Russia to withdraw its forces from Ukraine and end this terrible war.

**Mr SPEAKER** - I ask all members to signify their support in the Chamber by standing.

**Motion agreed to *nemine contradicente*.**

Motion by **Mr ROCKLIFF** agreed to -

That a copy of the foregoing resolution together with the transcript of the debate be forwarded to the Legislative Council, requesting its concurrence with the resolution.

## **MOTION**

### **Earthquakes in Türkiye and Syria**

[3.40 p.m.]

**Mr ROCKLIFF** (Braddon - Premier) - Mr Speaker, I move -

That the House of Assembly -

- (1) Mourn the lives lost and damage caused by the recent earthquakes in Türkiye and Syria.
- (2) Note that so far over 50 000 people have died and over an estimated 28 million people have been affected by the disaster across both countries.

- (3) Tender its deep respect for the numerous rescue workers and volunteers who are working tirelessly across both countries in the face of rising casualties.
- (4) Further note that Tasmania has a strong history of supporting national humanitarian efforts to global disasters, and will continue to work with the Australian Government in their response to the still-unfolding disaster in Türkiye and Syria.

Mr Speaker, on Monday 6 February, an earthquake with a 7.8 magnitude struck in the early morning near the Turkish city of Gaziantep. The earthquake also heavily impacted north-west Syria, where 4.1 million people were already dependent on humanitarian assistance. The majority are women and children.

Later that day, a second earthquake, also magnitude 7.8, occurred in Elbistan in Türkiye, around 80 kilometres north of the first earthquake. The earthquakes have been followed by more than 2000 aftershocks. The earthquakes have caused devastating losses of life, injury and destruction of buildings and infrastructure. Hundreds of thousands of people have been left homeless in the middle of the winter. Over a million people are in temporary shelters, with at least 900 000 people urgently needing food in both countries. The scale of the destruction caused by the earthquakes is enormous. Across the two countries, thousands of buildings have collapsed and many more have been partially destroyed.

Delivering relief efforts across such a huge scale is incredibly difficult, particularly when so much infrastructure, such as airports, roads and viaducts, has also been damaged. These circumstances are sadly compounded by the harsh challenges of winter, with many of those left homeless now braving the elements in freezing temperatures and snow.

I am speaking today to express our Government's and, indeed, the parliament's deepest sympathies and condolences to all those affected by the recent earthquakes that have struck Türkiye and Syria. The devastation and loss caused by these natural disasters have been truly heartbreaking.

I know I speak for all in this Chamber when I say that we have been watching heartbreaking scenes from Türkiye and Syria with horror. We have seen thousands of deaths and tens of thousands of injuries through this tragedy. Our thoughts are with those impacted and their families during this tragic time. Losing loved ones, homes and communities is devastating. The extent of their grief is unimaginable. We cannot begin to fathom the pain and suffering that people are going through.

I want you to know that you are not alone. The thoughts and prayers of myself and many others around the world are with you as you navigate this tragedy. Please know that Tasmanians stand in solidarity with you during this time of grief and hardship. We acknowledge the severity of the situation, the challenges facing communities, and offer our support in any way we can.

I want to acknowledge the many Tasmanians of Turkish and Syrian origins who contribute so much to our community and I remind Tasmanians that this time will be difficult for many in our community.

Beyond the many Tasmanians directly affected by this tragedy, there are many others with experience and trauma of disasters at home and abroad. I know Tasmanians will join me in extending empathy and support to these members of our community. We have all been affected by watching the rescue efforts and the impact on people. We have been touched by the sorrow, including natural disasters when Australians and Tasmanians have been tragically killed, people displaced and homes and possessions lost. In times like these, we must unite and show solidarity with those suffering. We must extend our hands of support to help rebuild their communities and restore their lives. We must remind ourselves that we are all part of a larger global family and we must take care of each other in times of need.

Let us offer our condolences to the victims' families and let them know that they are not alone in their grief. Let us also recognise the brave men and women working tirelessly to provide aid and support to those affected.

In Türkiye, the earthquake has impacted the region's 15 million people in 10 provinces, of whom 1.7 million are Syrian refugees living under temporary protection. Those caught up in the disaster include many thousands of refugees from Syria and the communities that have generously hosted them for nearly 12 years. There are 5.3 million people in Syria who require some form of shelter assistance. People who were already displaced by the conflict that has lasted for 12 long years have been forced to flee their homes again and some have lost homes for the first time. Among those affected in north-western Syria are families already displaced from their homes by the country's long-running crisis. Living in tents, shelters and partially destroyed buildings, the earthquake has come amid harsh winter weather.

Across the whole region, homes and public infrastructure have been severely damaged, and roads and telecommunications networks are affected. The needs are immense and those affected require urgent support.

The Tasmanian Government has contributed \$110 000 to support the humanitarian efforts in Türkiye and Syria. I had the opportunity to meet with representatives of UNICEF recently and speak about these matters, getting a true understanding of the humanitarian effort and work being done by UNICEF and others to support the many thousands of people. The support will be directed to relief efforts on the ground, where it is most needed.

I acknowledge the Australian Government's commitment to humanitarian aid to support those most affected. The Australian Government has committed some \$18 million in humanitarian assistance for those affected. This contribution includes:

- \$4 million to the Red Cross and Red Crescent partners for the delivery of food and items such as tents and blankets to support those injured and evacuated;
- \$2 million to Australian NGOs, through the Australian Humanitarian Partnership, to deliver urgent assistance with a focus on protection, which includes shelter, food, health and protection services;
- the deployment of a disaster assistance response team, who have been active on the ground to help save lives and return communities to some normality. These are urban search-and-rescue specialists trained to locate and deliver medical assistance to rescue victims trapped or impacted by structural collapse;

- in Syria, Australia has provided \$3 million through the UN Children's Fund to help meet immediate needs, including access to clean water and sanitation, with a focus on women and young girls; and
- \$3.5 million to the United Nations Population Fund to deliver maternal and child health services, and protect women and girls without safe housing.

The remaining funds will support ongoing search-and-rescue efforts and other needs emerging from this crisis.

I thank those many Tasmanians who have donated generously to charities and emergency relief efforts, and exemplify our reputation for a willingness to offer support for those in crisis.

Our Government remains committed to supporting those forced to flee their country due to natural disasters and conflict. Regardless of country of birth, language, culture, religion or time of arrival, all Tasmanians share common aspirations. We all want a safe place to live, access to affordable government services and employment opportunities, and to participate fully in our local communities.

In recent years, Australia and Türkiye have strengthened their special relationship through various initiatives. These include joint commemoration events, cultural exchange programs and educational initiatives that promote a deeper understanding of the Gallipoli campaign and its significance for both countries. These efforts have helped to build bridges between the two nations and to foster a spirit of mutual respect and cooperation. Amid this humanitarian crisis in Türkiye and Syria, this experience reminds us of the value of peace.

I acknowledge those search-and-rescue specialists who have assisted in Türkiye, including those involved in providing training support to Türkiye, members of the Tasmanian emergency services who assist beyond our state and our essential healthcare workers who have risen to the challenge in recent years. While this House's attention is usually focused on Tasmania and the needs of Tasmanians, which of course it should be, it is times like these that we are reminded that our Tasmanian community is part of a bigger national community, and in itself part of a much bigger global community. We are reminded of this when we work together to achieve better outcomes for all. We are reminded of it when such profound international events compel our attention and our concern. We are reminded of it when they affect our fellow Tasmanians and they reflect the values that are an essential part of our shared identity.

This tragedy is such an event. It has touched all of us and reminded us of our history and helping people elsewhere and welcoming them if needed. Our thoughts are with the people of Türkiye and Syria during this time of such humanitarian crisis, such tragedy and such sadness. Our thoughts are with them.

[3.51 p.m.]

**Ms WHITE** (Lyons - Leader of the Opposition) - Mr Speaker, I rise to speak in support of the motion before the parliament. Tasmanian Labor stands and shares in the anguish and sorrow of all who have been affected by the tragic earthquakes that devastated Türkiye and Syria last month. It is always confronting to see tragedy and destruction on such an enormous scale. From so far away on the other side of the world it can be difficult to comprehend. The sheer destruction alone speaks for itself, but the tens of thousands of people who have lost their

lives or been badly injured, along with the millions that have been displaced and the hundreds of thousands left homeless in the middle of winter is a level of tragedy we do not see in Australia.

It is difficult to not be moved by such enormous suffering. To make matters even worse, the earthquake hit Turkish provinces that were home to around 1.7 million Syrian refugees who had fled their country's civil war. Of those, at least 18 000 have made the unimaginable choice to return to their war-torn country. I cannot begin to imagine having to make a choice like that. Indeed, I do not suppose anyone here can begin to imagine having to make a choice like that.

To see so many lives torn apart is heartbreaking. Of course, amidst the devastation there have been extraordinary tales of miraculous rescues. Among them baby Aya, who was born under the rubble and rescued hours later. Even these stories, as heart-warming as they are, are tinged with sadness. Tragically, baby Aya lost her mother and four siblings in the quake, just one of the many thousands of children left to go on without those who care for them most.

The rescues that have taken place against the odds have been due to the courageous and tireless efforts of numerous rescue workers and volunteers, working against the clock in the face of rising casualties in both countries to bring as many people as possible safely home to their families, or to bring peace to the families who have not been so lucky. Working tirelessly amid ongoing aftershocks, more than 2000 so far, it is a dangerous, stressful and at times, soul-destroying job. These humanitarian workers are worthy of our highest respect and gratitude, demonstrating the very best of humanity as they risk their own lives to work side by side to help bring others to safety.

Tasmania and the rest of Australia has a strong history of supporting national humanitarian efforts for global disasters and this disaster is no exception. It never fails to inspire me when I see the best of people, when I see them coming together to help others, whether it is volunteering or donating money towards essentials such as food, tents or blankets, or towards ongoing search and rescue efforts. It represents the best of humanity and provides a light in the darkness for those who are suffering more than most of us can imagine.

I have said before how lucky we are to live in this beautiful and relatively safe part of the world. I am proud to be part of a state and a country that cares about others and wants to help, no matter where they live. We are part of a global community and there is much that we can do, even from a vast distance, to show we care and do what we can to help.

We mourn with the people of Türkiye and Syria and send them our deepest condolences on the incalculable losses over the past month of devastation. We send them our support as they seek shelter to keep their families safe and to provide for them in such dark days. As they start the enormous job of recovery and rebuilding, we offer our deep respect and gratitude to the rescue workers and volunteers who have contributed so much to the humanitarian response. Without them there would only be darkness.

We know Tasmania's strong history of supporting these national humanitarian efforts in response to global disasters and we will continue to work with the Australian Government in their response to this still unfolding disaster in Türkiye and Syria. I commend this motion to the House.

[3.55 p.m.]

**Ms O'CONNOR** (Clark - Leader of the Greens) - Mr Speaker, the earth broke open across Türkiye and Syria at dawn on 6 February this year. It was a 7.8 magnitude earthquake and people were sleeping and at their most vulnerable, which is part of the reason the human toll was so shocking. The earthquake struck south-east and central Türkiye and north and western Syria but was felt as far as Egypt, Israel, Palestine, Lebanon, Cyprus and the Black Sea coast of Türkiye. The first quake lasted just 80 seconds but the destruction it caused is mind-numbing and because we are a global society now deeply connected through social media and mainstream media, people all over the world could gain some understanding of what a powerful earthquake this was and the subsequent very powerful aftershocks.

Entire streets of high-density buildings were absolutely flattened. Entire towns were wiped out. Whole fields of olive trees were swallowed up by the earth. The scale of the devastation is unlike anything I have seen before on social media. The devastation spread across around 350 000 square kilometres and claimed at least 52 000 lives. To understand that in a local context, to try to wrap our heads around such huge human loss, that is the combined population of Burnie and Devonport gone in a matter of seconds. Around 28 million people have been affected by these quakes, just a little more than the entire population of Australia.

One of the aspects of this tragedy that many people around the world found hard to fathom was how different the rescue operations were in the two countries. In Türkiye it was a hugely difficult rescue operation, but the resources, the people and the equipment could move into those parts of Türkiye that were struck relatively quickly, but just across the border in Syria, a country that has been smashed by more than a decade of war, the rescue effort was much more patchy and there were fathers digging through the concrete and rubble of their former homes trying to find their families, their wives and their children, and they waited and waited for help.

There were some 60 000 rescuers who travelled from all over the world, particularly into Türkiye, but then the rescue operation reached into Syria and, amidst the horror that we witnessed, there were these moments of hope, as Ms White was talking about before, where children, babies, people who had been trapped under the rubble for three, four, five, eight days, were rescued, and it was extraordinarily uplifting to see those rescues.

One of the unsung heroes of the rescue efforts was the third rescuer. The role that sniffer dogs played in finding people cannot be overstated. Those loyal dogs worked tirelessly to rescue people. There were images of dogs with their feet cut, bleeding and bound still going into the rubble to try to save more lives.

There were between 50 000 and 60 000 buildings destroyed in the first two or three quakes and the after-shocks. We need to acknowledge the role that corruption has played in the suffering of the people of Türkiye and Syria where buildings were allowed to be built to a poor standard which led to a much higher loss of life. We also need to acknowledge the corruption of the Assad regime, which was holding up desperately needed aid for his people and trying to channel it through Damascus so the regime could take what it wanted from that aid effort.

There was a beautiful scene at a football game in Istanbul last week where thousands of people hurled toys from the stadium stands. There were two reasons they did that. One was

for those toys to go to children in the stricken areas but it was also an expression of white-hot anger at Erdoğan's autocratic regime that allowed corruption and very poor building practices.

It will be a long, slow, incredibly hard road to recovery for the people of south eastern Türkiye and northern Syria. When we stand and make contributions on a condolence motion like this, you feel a bit helpless because how do we adequately express our grief and how do we help? I encourage members to contribute towards the recovery efforts being led by UNICEF and Red Cross, and the outstanding work of the medical professionals on the ground from Médecins Sans Frontières.

As the Premier and the Leader of the Opposition have said, a tragedy at that scale that affects so many people, is a moving reminder of our shared humanity. We have seen in the rescue and recovery effort, countries, nations, people from all over the world, go to Türkiye and Syria to try to help to do what they can.

On behalf of the Greens, I express my great sadness over this tragedy and extend love, strength and support to people living in Tasmania from Türkiye and Syria. Know that this Parliament grieves with you, that this condolence motion is a genuine and heartfelt expression of the sadness that is beyond easy description.

[4.04 p.m.]

**Mrs ALEXANDER** (Bass) - Mr Speaker, I rise to speak on the devastating earthquake that occurred in February in southern Türkiye and Syria. The devastating earthquake of 7.8 magnitude on the Richter scale hit southern Türkiye in the early hours of 6 February at exactly 4.17 a.m. with its epicentre in the Gaziantep district.

Life for millions across Türkiye and Syria changed forever on that day as two consecutive earthquakes sent shockwaves across hundreds of miles, nine hours apart and with magnitudes of 7.8 and 7.5 on the Richter scale. The quakes rocked Türkiye and Syria and regions strongest in nearly a century. According to the official statement of the Disaster and Emergency Management Presidency (AFAD) since the first earthquake on 6 February 2023, the region experienced at least nine aftershocks.

Unfortunately, this was followed by another strong earthquake on the evening on 20 February 2023, a 6.4 magnitude with the epicentre in the Hatay district. Several damaged buildings in the province collapsed, adding to the death toll. On 27 February 2023, another after shock with 5.6 magnitude hit Malatya province and according to the official statement from AFAT, more people died.

Living through an earthquake of this magnitude is a terrifying experience. Seeing the aftermath of such events is a frightening and marking experience for survivors, especially for children. I do have a personal experience.

I lived through such a terrifying experience as a 10-year-old child and it is something I will never forget. The earthquake in Romania on 4 March 1977 was known as the Vrancea earthquake. It had a magnitude of 7.2 on the Richter scale and originated in the Vrancea Mountains, just slightly under the magnitude of the original earthquake in Türkiye. The earthquake lasted for 56 seconds, almost an entire minute. It was only at the depth of 94 kilometres, which made it even more devastating. It was at 9 p.m. on a Friday evening. I remember my mother grabbing me and literally flying down two sets of stairs, as we lived in

a block of apartments. They generally recommend against taking the stairs when you live in a block of apartments but such was the panic that she grabbed me in my pyjamas and ran outside down the stairs. I remember being thrown from side and side as she was trying to get us outside.

I remember weeks and months after as we went through the city the destruction, and the rubble - mountains and mountains of it - and the smell. There is always a specific smell in places of destruction.

The earthquake caused significant damage to the capital city of Bucharest and surrounding areas, with many deaths and injuries. The earthquake was felt across a large area of Eastern Europe, including Bulgaria, Hungary, Poland and the former Yugoslavia. It was one of the most powerful earthquakes to occur in Romania in the twentieth century and remains a significant event in the country's history. It was estimated the energy released by the 1977 earthquake was equivalent to that of 10 atomic bombs. With a Turkish-Syrian earthquake at 7.8 magnitude - I experienced and felt as a child a 7.2 magnitude - one can only imagine when we talk about this kind of comparison, the level of devastation in those two countries.

As I was writing these notes, I also reflected on another event closer to home: the 26 December 2004 Indian Ocean earthquake and tsunami and the death and devastation it brought with it - a 9.1 magnitude earthquake, followed by a tsunami, that caused one of the largest natural disasters in recorded history, killing at least 227 000 people across 14 countries, with Indonesia, Sri Lanka, India, Maldives and Thailand sustaining massive damage. Indonesian officials have estimated that the death toll there alone ultimately exceeded 200 000 people, particularly in Northern Sumatra/Aceh Province. Tens of thousands were reported dead or missing in Sri Lanka and India, a large number of them from the Indian Andaman and Nicobar Islands territory. The low-lying islands country of Maldives reported more than 100 casualties and immense economic damage. Twenty-six Australians lost their lives and among them a six-month old baby who was swept away from her father's arms.

As at the end of February, a total of 5951 people were killed across Syria, while Türkiye recorded 44 364 deaths after the 6 February 2023 earthquake. In total, over 50 000 lost their lives to date and 2.2 million people have left the disaster zone, which means they are displaced.

The relief efforts and support have been gathering as people from across the world have been moved by the tragedy that has occurred. For the relief efforts, access to Türkiye has been easier - as easy as it can be under the tragic circumstances which, as we know, is not easy. Unfortunately, with sanctions against Syria in place, and also the geopolitical situation in Syria at the time when the earthquake occurred, it took a while until the necessary aid reached people on the ground in that country, which also has been under conflict for 12 years and currently records more than 50 million people who have been assessed to require humanitarian assistance as at 2023.

This comes when Syrian communities have also been simultaneously hit with an ongoing cholera outbreak. As at 24 February, there are more than 50 000 suspected cholera cases, with 44 per cent of these cases being children aged four years or younger. For the poor people on the ground, this has been misery on top of misery: women and children caught up in a tragic chain of events. To date, Syria has received only 43 per cent of the US\$397.6 million funding that is required, less than half of what is estimated to be required to help the people in need.



As both Türkiye and Syria are coming to grips with what has occurred, many of the displaced are staying with host communities or going back to their inhabitable homes, making it very difficult to estimate the total number of displaced. Three UN agencies are currently supporting structural damage assessments of affected buildings in affected areas to help facilitate families returning to homes that are deemed safe. Longer-term shelter operations are also being identified for families that cannot return to their homes due to damage.

The earthquake has further stretched the health system in Syria, which has been significantly affected with at least 55 health facilities in north-west Syria reported partially or fully damaged.

According to a survey conducted after the earthquake by the World Food Program, the nominal prices of essential commodities in the food basket for people in the region, which are bread, lentils, vegetable oil, sugar and rice, increased in almost all of the heavily-hit regions, which unfortunately is an opportunistic situation but also the fact that the supply chain was broken.

Words can never describe or make things better or different at times of such loss and devastation. My deepest sympathy to the Turkish and Syrian communities that call Tasmania and Australia home who have been impacted by this tragedy, as a lot of them have extensive families and relatives who are currently back there suffering.

Tasmania has contributed \$110 000 to humanitarian efforts in Türkiye and Syria. Our community has watched in disbelief the apocalyptic pictures from across the world and has sent thoughts and prayers to the survivors, as well as monetary contributions.

To those who have lost loved ones and have suffered physical and mental trauma, our thoughts go out to them. My heart goes out to the people of Türkiye and Syria and also to the families and relatives of Australians who have lost their lives in that earthquake. We feel your loss and your suffering.

**Mr SPEAKER** - If there are no other speakers, I ask members to signify their support for the motion by standing.

**Motion agreed to *nemine contradicente*.**

Motion by **Mr Rockliff** agreed to -

That a copy of the foregoing resolution together with the transcript of the debate be forwarded to the Legislative Council.

## **MOTION**

### **Leave to Suspend Standing Orders - Negatived**

[4.14 p.m.]

**Mr WINTER** (Franklin) - Mr Speaker, I seek leave to move -

That so much of Standing Orders be suspended to debate the following motion.

That the House has no confidence in the Minister for Racing, the Honorable Madeleine Ogilvie MP, for the following reasons -

- (1) The minister breached section 9.6 of the Code of Conduct for Ministers by issuing a false statement that the CEO of Tasracing had moved to Sydney to spend more time with his family. The real reason he left the role was that he had been sacked.
- (2) The minister breached section 9.7 of the Code of Conduct for Ministers by not correcting the record as soon as practicable. When her misleading statement was identified during GBE scrutiny, she failed to correct her false statement.
- (3) The minister should have already resigned under 9.8 of the Code of Conduct for Ministers. Having intentionally misled the parliament and the public, she is obliged to offer her resignation to the Premier.

Mr Speaker, this is a very serious matter, as it was yesterday and the day before. We now have all of the evidence before us that shows that this minister misled the public and the parliament. I will repeat the minister's answers yesterday. She said:

As minister, I was advised on 1 July by the Tasracing chair of the decision to terminate Mr Eriksson's contract. On 4 July, the former CEO was advised by the Tasracing board that his contract would be terminated. On 6 July, I subsequently issued a media release that the Tasracing CEO departed the business on 8 July.

The minister has admitted that she knew full well the CEO of Tasracing had had his contract terminated when she issued a statement that said he had left for family reasons. This is about a cover-up. We are seeking leave today to debate a motion of no confidence in this minister because we cannot have confidence in her honesty and integrity as Minister for Racing. We cannot possibly have confidence in her because we know she misled seriously and failed to correct the record over and over again.

Over the summer period there was no parliament, but the fourth estate was still at work. We have heard time and time again journalists ask her the same question: was she aware that the CEO of Tasracing had been terminated from his role when she issued that statement? Every single time she refused to answer directly and referred to earlier statements. Those earlier statements were false.

Mr Deputy Speaker, it gets worse. During GBE hearings late last year, we had Mr Phair, the chairman of Tasracing, actually tell the truth. He said that the CEO of Tasracing had been terminated from his role. Later in those hearings, minister Ogilvie was asked about her responses earlier and she said:

I am advised that on 6 July 2022 Tasracing issued a statement which included comments from the departing CEO Mr Paul Eriksson, that 'The past two years during COVID-19, given the lockdowns and restrictions, had been significantly personally challenging'.

It went on, and she said:

My release went out on the same day, that is a reflection of what I was advised.

We now know what she was advised was that the CEO had actually been sacked. He had not left for personal reasons, family reasons, or because of COVID-19. He left because the board told him his time was up. None of the things in the statement that day from the minister were true. Actually, what she has done is throw her own chairman under the bus because she has told that committee that the advice she received was that he had left for family reasons, because of COVID-19 and lockdowns. That was not the advice at all. We now know that the advice she received was that he had had his contract terminated. This is a minister who has misled. There are worse words, as I said yesterday, that I cannot say.

I am flabbergasted that this has been allowed to go on now for three days. The minister has an obligation under the Code of Conduct for Ministers to actually resign. Under 9.8 of the Code of Conduct, she should have already resigned. That section says:

Ministers who intentionally mislead or who are dishonest to parliament or the public will be expected to offer their resignation to the Premier.

That is what she should have done. If this Premier was strong enough, he would have asked for that resignation or he would have sacked her. How can we have any faith in this minister, and how can he have faith in this minister, in her honesty and integrity, if he is allowing her to simply put out statements which are false and which are quite serious and integral to the industry she is supposed to support and represent and fight for? This minister is not up to the job. Her integrity is so severely lacking that she cannot be allowed to limp on and continue.

Mr Deputy Speaker, we are seeking leave to debate this very serious matter. As I said yesterday, this is black and white. We have all the evidence in front of us. I hope the Government will at least allow us to have this debate. If they do not, I hope they will at least attempt to defend this minister. I do not know how they will because everyone can see she misled the parliament and the public. We still have not heard her make a substantial contribution on this, apart from to answer a simple question which allowed us to be 100 per cent sure that she misled us. What we learnt this week is that it is now completely open and shut, black and white: this minister misled the parliament and misled Tasmanians.

Is that the standard this Premier is prepared to accept - the Premier who said he wanted to be a premier who led with honesty and integrity? He cannot lead with either of those things if he has ministers who are so clearly against those things. This minister has failed. She has failed to uphold the standards of this place. She has failed to uphold the Code of Conduct for Ministers, which she signed up to as a minister.

If the Government has any integrity, it must allow us to debate this motion today. We do not bring this here lightly. It is very serious and I hope that at the very least, the minister will stand up and defend herself.

**Time expired.**

[4.21 p.m.]

**Mr ROCKLIFF** (Braddon - Premier) - Mr Speaker, I rise to speak on the seeking of leave. Of course, we will not be supporting it. This is another stunt by an Opposition that has run out of ideas. This matter has been canvassed. I have spoken on this matter. The minister has spoken on this matter as well and, as the minister has said, the departure of Mr Eriksson is an employment matter for the Tasracing board, not the minister.

Tasracing released a media statement in which the former CEO himself noted, among other things, that he was leaving and would be returning to Sydney to be with his family. The minister in her subsequent media release simply repeated those comments. Neither the Tasracing media release nor the minister's media release specified whether his departure was due to a resignation or termination, and it would be unusual and inappropriate to do so. Tasracing's operational decisions, including employment matters, are appropriately an issue for the board, not the minister. Matters of performance are a matter for the board, which has responsibility for the performance of the organisation. Employment details must be handled sensitively and in accordance with contract obligations.

Also, having regard to personal information protection principles, the PIP Act is underpinned by principles that maintain appropriate use of people's personal information and restricts the ability to share personal information, including an employee's information, to protect the interests of individuals.

The case has not been made by those opposite. They have muckraked all week. What this is about is the competition between Labor and the Greens. Who can be the nastiest part of the opposition? Who can get into the gutter the most? You are going to have to go to extraordinary lengths to match Ms O'Connor's performance this morning and yesterday but, nonetheless, you are trying. You are trying to get in the gutter as low as you possibly can. This is at a time when Tasmanians want their members of parliament to step up, to represent them, to acknowledge the concerns of the day, the challenges we are facing as a nation, as a state, the challenges around cost of living, around increasing demand in health care, the need for innovation in our healthcare system, which we are doing, the challenges when it comes to maintaining and growing a strong economy, which we will continue to do as a majority Liberal Government. We have clearly outlined that this week in the state of the state Address, which we could be debating now, where we could have discussion about ideas you may want to put forward.

Yesterday we had no new ideas from the Leader of the Opposition. It was just a diatribe and a whinge-fest for 30 minutes, offering no inspiration or aspirations for the people of Tasmania. None whatsoever.

What we are about as a team is supporting 20 000 more Tasmanians into jobs over the next five years. That is what our focus is. We are in there helping businesses that have been doing it tough as a result of increased energy prices. We are supporting households and small businesses doing it tough by providing more than \$33 million to support the National Energy Bill Relief program. We acknowledge the demands on our health system. One of our announcements this week was ensuring that 97 additional temporary Ambulance Tasmania positions are made permanent. There is \$38 million over four years to fund an additional 22 000 endoscopies and purchase new equipment. Key investments in health care -

**Mr WINTER** - Point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker, Standing Order 151, continued irrelevance and tedious repetition. I am seeking leave on a lack of confidence in the Minister for Racing. The last word I heard was 'endoscopy'. I ask you to bring the Premier back to the topic at hand.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** - Mr Winter, that is not a point of order, as you know.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - The topics the Tasmanian people want to talk about are the topics that they care about, like housing; our \$4 million support for vulnerable young people into work while building affordable homes through the Build Up Tassie program, run by Centacare and St Josephs Affordable Homes; implement the National Phonics Check in year 1. What we are focusing on this week is growing an economy, an extra 20 000 jobs over the next five years, investments in schools, health care and housing, putting downward pressure on the cost-of-living increases for Tasmanians.

We are not interested in what you have to say when it comes to personal attacks. You have come in here, like you did last year, full of personal attacks and no substance. You have not made a case. We are not going to support the seeking of leave. What we want to do is continue to get on with the job, debate the challenges we are facing in Tasmania but also embrace the opportunities, of which there are many here in Tasmania, a state that we can be enormously proud of.

I have every faith in my team and the diligence with which they are going around Tasmania doing their jobs, representing their communities. What you have failed to do this week is represent a single Tasmanian. You have come in here with all your personal attacks. You have not made one single contribution to the welfare of Tasmanian people. What we are about is getting on with the job and getting things done.

[4.28 p.m.]

**Ms WHITE** (Lyons - Leader of the Opposition) - Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to support the seeking of leave to move a no-confidence motion in the minister, Madeleine Ogilvie. It is a clear black-and-white case of somebody repeatedly misleading the parliament and a premier who flees the Chamber because he does not want to hear the argument. He gets up in here and pretends to make a defence of the minister but he was pretty pathetic.

I wonder how the Premier can look at himself in the mirror, having to defend the incompetence of a minister like Madeleine Ogilvie, when there is a clear case of a breach of the parliamentary standards, a lack of integrity, misleading the parliament and the public, and no accountability, no integrity, will not even withstand scrutiny. They said they will not even debate the motion of a want of confidence in the minister, which is the most serious motion that can come before a parliament concerning a minister.

What is the lowest level ministers can stoop to under the Premier, Jeremy Rockliff, because right now we seem to be scraping the bottom of the barrel. Even then, it is okay. Ministers can mislead the parliament but the Premier will defend them, try to mount an argument for why his incompetent ministry is able to limp along but, at the end of the day, the Tasmanian community can see through that.

Tasmanians deserve a government that acts with integrity, with honesty, and with accountability. Under this Government they are not getting that. Under this Liberal

Government, integrity is dead. The Premier did a pretty woeful job of protecting his minister and defending her actions, because they are indefensible. We have seen that over the course of the last couple of days, he barely even uttered a reference in his remarks to the Minister for Racing. He knows it, we all know it. The minister misled this House and misled the public. We do not have confidence that she can execute her functions as a minister in a way that is going to be truthful, honest and really deserving of a spot in the Cabinet.

I hope that the minister gets up and explains herself. There will be an opportunity to explain why she deserves to remain as a minister and explain to the people of Tasmania how she can justify the comments that she made yesterday that clearly showed once and for all that she was informed on 1 July last year that the former CEO of Tasracing had his contract terminated. He was sacked and then five days later a press release was issued that says otherwise. It really does not address the issue at all.

If the minister had to put a press statement out, as she obviously felt like she had to say something, she could have said that she wished him well, looks forward to the work of Tasracing continuing under another CEO once the proper process is developed and congratulates the board for the work they are doing as they progress the important review and implementation of the culture peace that is a big issue within TasRacing.

Instead she said what she did. She did not only say it then. She said it again, both in the parliament through the scrutiny committee hearing and to the media and not once corrected the record. We have seen other ministers correct the record. Nic Street, minister, came into this place and said the advice that he had relied on meant that he gave an inaccurate statement and he corrected the record at the earliest opportunity. That is how it is done. Here you go, here is an example to the rest of you.

Under Jeremy Rockliff's leadership as the Premier of this state, integrity seems to be an optional extra when it comes to his ministers and how they execute their duties. Despite saying that he would lead a government with integrity, we see again today, shutting down of debate to examine this as an issue, a serious issue, a want of confidence issue - a cover up, protection racket so that the minister is not held to account by this parliament. If there is nothing to worry about, let us have the debate.

The Premier's problem is that he sees the problem that we all see is that the minister misled this House, misled the parliament and misled the public.

**Mr Ferguson** - Make the case.

**Ms WHITE** - The case is in black and white.

**Members** interjecting.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** - Order.

**Ms WHITE** - The case has been made by the minister herself over the course of the past nine months. She has made it herself. Her failure to be honest, her failure to give accurate statements, the failure of the Premier to have his ministers uphold the ministerial Code of Conduct and the Code of Conduct of this place is the reason we are having this debate now -

the failure of the Premier to require his ministers to act with honesty, accountability and integrity.

This is a matter that could have been resolved quite a long time ago but there is a casual disdain for the truth from the Liberal Party. It is not something that they consider important anymore. Apparently, it does not matter if you do not tell the truth if you are a Cabinet minister in Jeremy Rockliff's Government.

Tasmanians deserve and expect better. This is an incredibly serious matter. Under our Westminster traditions of Parliament, the option available to us is exactly what is happening right now which is to seek to move a no confidence motion in the minister. The Government has said they will not allow the debate to happen. They probably do not trust what she is going to say. They will not trust her to get up and speak next as a part of this debate. There is ample time but they do not trust her. We do not trust her. We do not have confidence in her.

**Time expired.**

[4.35 p.m.]

**Ms O'CONNOR** (Clark - Leader of the Greens) - I was waiting for the minister to get to her feet but, anyway, the minister has not.

Mr Deputy Speaker, of course the Greens support the seeking of leave. Of course we want to see a matter that questions the integrity of the minister debated and resolved by way of vote on the floor of this House but I cannot remember the last time the Liberals in government had the courage to let a censure or no-confidence debate proceed past the seeking of leave.

It seems pretty clear that Ms Ogilvie was informed by the Tasracing chair on 1 July of the decision to terminate Mr Eriksson's contract. She told the parliament that on 4 July the former CEO was advised by the Tasracing board that his contract would be terminated. On 6 July, a subsequently issued media release that the TasRacing CEO departed the business on 8 July. When the chairman told GBE hearings that the CEO had in fact been sacked, minister Ogilvie told the Estimates Committee that she was simply relying on the advice she had at the time. She said:

I am advised on 6 July 2022 TasRacing issued a statement which included comments from the departing CEO, Mr Paul Eriksson, and I quote -

The past two years during COVID-19, given the lockdowns and restrictions had been significantly personally challenging and that he was returning to Sydney to spend time with his family before looking for a new role. My release went out the same day, that is a reflection of what I was advised.

Well, no, what Ms Ogilvie was advised on 1 July is that the Tasracing former CEO had had his contract terminated. We have flip-flopping with the facts and parliament should be allowed to hear from the minister.

In fact, the Premier and the Deputy Premier should allow this minister to get to her feet and give a full account of the circumstances here. The media release of 6 July says:

On behalf of the Tasmanian Government, I'd like to thank Mr Paul Eriksson for his service as Chief Executive Officer of Tasracing. Mr Eriksson will be returning to Sydney to spend more time with his family.

That is not a truthful representation of the circumstances of Mr Eriksson's departure.

If there was a reason that the minister felt it was not possible or appropriate to say that the CEOs contract had been terminated, she should say that. If there was a feeling on the part of the minister or the Government that it would be better to protect Mr Eriksson's reputation so not detail the circumstances of his departure in a public statement from the minister, the minister should be open about that. This is the forum for it.

If minister Ogilvie decided it was necessary to mislead Tasmania's people who work for Tasracing and people who work in the industry that Mr Eriksson was simply off to spend more time with his family in Sydney, she needs to explain why a decision was made not to be honest. It is pretty straight forward.

Unfortunately, because the culture in this Government - and it is not just with this Premier, it goes to the previous premier and the premier before that - is that being slippery with the truth is not only okay, it is encouraged. We have had three Liberal premiers who basically say to their Cabinet members, whether it is by a nod and a wink or just simply it is the culture, that it is okay not to be honest. You have a deep integrity problem in the Government. It did not just start with this Premier. Let us hear from the minister. I am happy to give my last two-and-a-half minutes on this contribution over to the minister to give her an opportunity to get up in this place and tell us why that media release on 6 July last year was so blatantly dishonest.

[4.40 p.m.]

**Mr FERGUSON** (Bass - Deputy Premier) - If this bullying of Ms Ogilvie were to continue in any other workplace, you would be out on your ear. Ms Ogilvie is perfectly able to, should she choose. She has chosen not to continue with your stunt with a further contribution and you are trying to put words -

**Dr Woodruff** - She has been told not to open her mouth. You never know what she would say.

**Mr FERGUSON** - You are very rude people. Ms Ogilvie has been asked a question in this House and gave a full account -

**Dr Woodruff** - No, she did not. This is why we are here now.

**Mr FERGUSON** - I do not believe this is appropriate. I should be able to speak.

Mr Speaker, she has given a full account of herself -

**Ms O'Connor** - So precious.

**Mr FERGUSON** - You are the precious one. You have the thinnest skin in this place, Ms O'Connor. You can chuck the rocks but you cannot listen to anyone else.



**Ms O'Connor** - I let you call me a massive bully this morning and just sat here.

**Mr SPEAKER** - Ms O'Connor, you were heard in silence. Can the minister please be heard in silence.

**Mr FERGUSON** - If this behaviour happened in any other workplace in Tasmania, you would be out on your ear. The simple fact of the matter is that Ms Ogilvie has given a full and proper account of herself in relation to this matter.

It is very hard not to assess that Labor-Greens, Mr O'Byrne and Ms Johnston consistently vote together to create as much chaos in this House as they can. They have wasted hours this week, delaying, preventing the proper debate of the Premier's address, where it is the competition of ideas and let us see what the best vision is for Tasmania.

I made it clear yesterday that it surprised me that no one from the Labor Party is prepared to pull out and read from the very statement from Tasracing on 6 July. Plenty of people reading from Ms Ogilvie's but not the board's statement, which said:

After more than three years in the role, Tasracing CEO Paul Eriksson is leaving the business and will return to Sydney.

That is what the board had to say about the matter. I read a lot more into it and the minister backed it in at the time. The minister has answered the questions.

The Labor Party is a toxic party, a toxic brand and it has been taken over by its federal masters in relation to its own internal civil war. That they continue to bring this messy, toxic, nasty politics into the House of Assembly, being led by the nose by the Greens - the behaviour of the Labor Party is appalling. You can dish it but you cannot take it. The fact is, this has been an excellent minister working with her stakeholders -

**Ms Finlay** - So, you have confidence in the minister?

**Mr FERGUSON** - Ms Finlay, you have no contribution to make in this House. I am surprised that you continue to rant and rave from your seat over there but you never rise yourself. The fact is, Ms Ogilvie has been performing. If there has been a consistent objective across the racing industry by this minister it has been to increase stakes money, to encourage investment in breeding and racing animals here in our state. That is what Ms Ogilvie has delivered.

During the course of this debate, this afternoon I received a message from a very well-respected racing identity who said to me:

It must be very hard to welcome these two people, Mr Winter and Ms White, to our events. I cannot bring myself to talk, particularly, to RW after her shocking attacks on precious racing minister, Jane Howlett, who was so admired by the bulk of racing participants.

History will never forget what this Labor Party is prepared to do and the depths it is prepared to sink to, to destroy a person's character and to hurt their loved ones.

**Ms Dow** - She has done it herself on the record.

**Mr FERGUSON** - That is the record of you, Ms Dow, and that is the record of you, Ms White. It is appalling that you are prepared to do it. What you did today to the Speaker I find appalling as well. There is a consistent trend here. You will do anything to destroy the reputation of this House by going after your political opponents in such a nasty and personal way. What you are trying to suggest, which I believe is false and wrong, is that when a person comes to a termination arrangement with their employer, that their boss should tell the world they have been sacked.

**Opposition members** interjecting.

**Mr FERGUSON** - That is precisely what you are saying. It was fascinating, I think it was on Tuesday, when Ms O'Connor totally cut the legs out from under Mr Winter when she said it was because of 'an omission'. Ms White was offered the opportunity to say what she meant when she alleged that the minister had misled this House and she comprehensively avoided the subject.

This has been thoroughly looked at by the Legislative Council committee. I also notice, by the way, that in the scrutiny committee in the Legislative Council, there was also a very nasty question from the Labor Party about claims of sexual assault, and the allegation that the board had received that. I noticed that the Tasracing Chair said: 'That is completely incorrect. I don't know what you are talking about.' It again just makes the point that Labor will throw anything to try to bring down a minister. Whatever the case may be, Mr Phair was very clear and did not know what was being talked about.

We will stand by this minister because she has done nothing wrong. The mud that is being thrown by the Labor Party is disgraceful. It should cease. You will try to destroy anybody's reputation just because they are in the Liberal Government. Just have a think and have a care about the damage you are creating.

[4.48 p.m.]

**Ms JOHNSON** (Clark) - Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to support the seeking of leave. It is an urgent matter because we will not be back in this place for another two weeks and that gives two weeks for the minister to continue with this deception of the public.

I admit I initially thought that I ought to give the minister the benefit of the doubt and that perhaps she did not know the real reasons for Mr Eriksson's departure when this matter came to light. After all, she does not seem to know what is happening in the racing industry at all, and she has shown little interest in inquiring into matters in relation to racing, in particular animal welfare matters.

However, through her own admissions in this place this week, it is clear that on this occasion she did know the true reasons for Mr Eriksson's departure. I can only speculate as to why the minister was not complete in her disclosure of the reasons for Mr Eriksson's departure. Perhaps it reflects on the secrecy and the cover-ups that happen in this industry, and the lack of transparency. Perhaps the minister is just reflecting what is occurring there.

The fact remains that she misled the parliament and the public. She has not been complete with all the facts as to Mr Eriksson's departure. If we do not deal with this matter

today, I have no confidence that the minister will honestly and accurately answer any questions I may put to her in the future, particularly in regards to animal welfare, which I know my constituents are very concerned about. I have no confidence in this minister when it comes to her oversight of this industry and her honesty in answering questions in this place. I will be supporting the seeking of leave as an urgent matter.

**Mr SPEAKER** - The question is that leave be granted.

**The House divided -**

**AYES 12**

Dr Broad  
Ms Butler  
Ms Dow  
Ms Finlay  
Ms Haddad  
Ms Johnston  
Mr O'Byrne  
Ms O'Byrne  
Ms O'Connor  
Ms White  
Mr Winter (Teller)  
Dr Woodruff

**NOES 12**

Mrs Alexander  
Ms Archer  
Mr Barnett  
Mr Ellis  
Mr Ferguson  
Mr Jaensch  
Ms Ogilvie  
Mr Rockliff  
Mr Street  
Mr Tucker  
Mr Wood  
Mr Young (Teller)

**Mr SPEAKER** - The result of the division being Ayes 12, Noes 12, in accordance with Standing Order 167 I cast my vote with the Noes.

**Motion negatived.**

**MATTER OF PUBLIC IMPORTANCE**

**Conflicts of Interest**

[4.54 p.m.]

**Ms O'CONNOR** (Clark - Leader of the Greens) - Mr Deputy Speaker, I move -

That the House take note of the following matter: conflicts of interest.

We thought it would be timely for the House to debate a matter of public importance on conflicts of interest. What strikes me is that the raggedy, manky old chickens are coming home to roost for the Liberals in government. This problem with integrity goes back to Will Hodgman, and then after Will Hodgman, Peter Gutwein, and then Jeremy Rockliff, who I genuinely and mistakenly thought would be different.

I remember, going back to 2014, that first Estimates table and listening to minister after minister be fudgy and slippery with the facts. We have a long, sorry history over the last nine years, of government members and ministers unable to manage conflicts of interest or breaches of the ministerial code or standards of ethical conduct that we all sign up to as elected members.

If we go to the Local Communities Facilities Fund, which was a massive \$15 million slush fund set up to try to buy votes in a 2021 state election, we have story after story of benefits flowing to organisations who happen to be fortunate enough to have a Liberal candidate associated with them somehow.

The minister, who was a subject of the previous seeking of leave, Ms Ogilvie, was the new, newly minted Liberal candidate for Clark. What a great thing for the Sandy Bay rowing club that Ms Ogilvie's daughter was a member of that club. That club received a \$150 000 in taxpayers' money through the Local Communities Facilities Fund. There was a \$156 000 grant awarded to St Vincent de Paul, the workplace of the then candidate for Bass, Lara Alexander, for new vans. Mrs Alexander also signed off on the receipt of one \$75 000 grant as president of the Rotary Club of South Launceston. I stop at this point. I have no doubt that these organisations had a fair case for a bit of public funding.

The issue here is that the process was unfair. It was decided by whether an organisation had a connection to a Liberal Party candidate in a seat that they wanted to win. Then, there was the \$45 000 awarded to the Bracknell Football Club, the notorious town of Bracknell today, with, as we know, Mr Shelton the member for Lyons, his family members have served on the Bracknell Football Club's committee in positions such as treasurer, kiosk manager and groundsmen. The club was given the money from the \$15 million Local Communities Facilities Fund for the purchase of nets for behind the goal posts. There is also the \$400 000 awarded to the Bracknell Hall redevelopment that was given outside any proper merits-based process or any transparent budgetary process. The Tasmanian Echidnas Volleyball Club, with their Vice President, the candidate for Franklin, Mr Dean Young MP, procured a \$100 000 grant as a result of Mr Young's connection to that organisation.

Again, I really feel for these organisations that have been singled out and dragged through the muck because of this Local Communities Facilities Fund. It is not fair on them that they were targeted in a cynical vote-buying exercise.

If we go back to the notorious Adam Brooks, former member for Braddon, who wilfully failed to comply with the protocol established by the then premier to address Mr Brooks' conflict of interest issues between his ministerial role and his private business Maintenance Systems Solutions. Mr Brooks had failed to accurately inform the Premier about the true nature of his involvement in the industry, in his company.

We have former Liberal member for Denison, Matthew Groom whose mate, Adrian Bold, was a campaign contributor and also the advocate for the cable car, which Mr Groom put a lot of energy and effort - and the resources of the department that he was administering at the time - into progressing. Then, there was the changing of the management plan of the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area in a manner that manifestly benefited Mr Groom's brother who was part-owner of the Bernacchi Lodge, which got a special carve out in the newly re-written 2016 TWWHA World Heritage Management Plan.

Just today, we saw the Pharmacy Guild of Tasmania, whose five donations worth \$22 100 to the Liberal Party in the last disclosure round, paid off with the Premier announcing pharmacies can now dole out behind-the-counter medications without current repeat scripts. This is after nine years of Liberal governments driving the Health system into the ground. Another example from the recent disclosures, the Australian Forest Products Association - three donations totalling \$19 150 and surprise, surprise, the Liberals' unconstitutional protest

laws specifically targeting forest protesters, climate activists were pushed through the parliament. Minister Ellis belled the cat on their plans to go into the future potential production forests or reserves. Then, there is the \$4000 per ticket dinner with the Premier and other ministers which was attended by a representative from the Brazilian butchers, JBS and Cooke, companies that bought Tassal and Huon Aquaculture. At that dinner, the Premier effectively said - and I am paraphrasing but I know it is true:

'We know it will be unpopular, we are committed to our 10-year salmon expansion plan', which as we know, would see fish pens in inshore waters right around this beautiful island, something that is fiercely resisted by coastal communities who recognise the damage it does to the marine environment.

Then we have ministers who own short-stay accommodation properties, like the Premier and the Deputy Premier. I understand the Deputy Premier's short stay was priced at about \$2000 a week over summer. We have a massive problem with short-stay accommodation. It is unregulated and out of control and we have the Treasurer who owns a short-stay accommodation, ruling out any action to rein in short stay accommodation, so more Tasmanians can have homes.

What we know here is that the Liberals have a huge problem in understanding what a conflict of interest is and it goes back almost a decade.

### **Time expired.**

[5.01 p.m.]

**Ms DOW** (Braddon - Deputy Leader of the Opposition) - What a terrible week this Government has had. It has been a terrible week of their own making, as they have continued to block debate, block the opportunity for those that have been embroiled in the scandals of this week that have been ongoing now for some time, they have made it worse. They have blocked the opportunity for the Speaker to defend himself. There was a very reasonable motion where we sought to seek leave to discuss a really important motion that would have enabled the speaker to outline and give his feedback and defend his position on all the questions that have been asked about the way in which he has conducted himself in the allocating and administration of community grants.

I have been involved in public life for a long time, having been involved in local government as well. A piece of advice that I have taken with me as I have gone along is that when it comes to a conflict of interest, when in doubt get out. What we have seen over the last couple of days in this place, is this Government's inability to really understand the significance of conflict of interest. It does not matter whether it is perceived, whether it is actual or whether it is potential, the damage is the same. You only had to watch last night's news coverage to see how the events of the last few days in this parliament, have not only damaged us as parliamentarians, but also damaged this Government. It did not have to be this way.

When the Premier came to office, I, like Ms O'Connor, thought that he might be different. I thought when he came to office and said that he would lead a Government with integrity that we would see a change in this Government, but we just get the same old tired Government. A government that has been in office for nearly a decade and like a leopard, it never changes its spots.

I take offence to the like of the Deputy Premier, coming in here, saying that we are insulting and providing personal attacks. This is not about personal attacks, it is about parliamentary standards. It is about the expectations that the community hold upon us as elected representatives who are here to represent them and our communities.

What has transpired over the last couple of days, has damaged our community, those hard-working community groups and volunteers who work tirelessly across our community, who we are out working with every day. We meet with them and understand their needs. Many of them are telling me that this Government has let them down when it comes to maintaining their facilities, but that is another issue that we have talked about through the state of the state responses, over the last couple of days. By this Government avoiding, debating, discussing, being open, transparent and abiding by the Code of Conduct and declaring a conflict of interest, where required, has brought all of us into disrepute.

You only have to look back to local government. Ms Johnston spoke about this this morning, about the standards there. You would always leave the Chamber if you had a conflict of interest, you would always declare it at the commencement of a meeting or a workshop. If you are a local government elected representative and you are involved in the allocation of community grants program, you have to declare your conflict of interest and you are not able to be involved in those discussions.

Far too often, I hear this Government criticise local government. There are too many councils, the actions of councils were unjustified or were the wrong thing to do, yet local government conducts itself, in many instances, in a lot better way than what we have seen in this parliament over the last couple of days.

We have the Minister for Local Government who is refusing to rule out compulsory amalgamations of councils with the stroke of a pen. We are yet to hear from him what his true intentions are. We will have a lot more to say about that.

Back to the topic of the MPI and the importance of conflict of interest. By raising these matters in the parliament over the last couple of days, our intention has never been to draw unnecessary attention to the Speaker and his family. It is unfortunate that this is about personal connections, but that is the nature of a conflict of interest, whether it is perceived or actual.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** - Ms Dow, I will tell you again, that allegations about members must be done by way of substantive motion. This is a matter of public importance, thank you.

**Ms DOW** - Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker. I am merely trying to put on the record some of my thoughts about how things have played out over the last couple of days. What has been conveyed by this Government, by the Premier, saying that we are not out talking to our community, that we should be talking to our community and that what has happened is all above board with his Government. The point I am trying to make is that this is not about personalities. It is not about people, it is about conduct and it is about process. It is about the processes or lack of processes adhered to by this Government and about the standard that this Government sets.

We have seen that also through other deliberations here today when it comes to integrity. Despite what the Premier says, people care about integrity. They want their elected

representatives to be honest, to be open, to be transparent and to declare a conflict of interest when they think that they have one. They want the ability for us to stand here and have open and frank debate about issues that are across our communities and they do not expect anything less.

Some of the behaviour across this Chamber over the last few days has been appalling. We are doing our job. Our job is to hold this Government to account and to highlight its failings.

**Time expired.**

[5.08 p.m.]

**Mr BARNETT** (Lyons - Minister for Energy and Renewables) - Mr Deputy Speaker, I am very pleased to speak on this matter of conflict of interest in terms of being a matter of public importance.

The cat was belled yesterday in the discussion and debate in and around Standing Order 170 which says that 'there needs to be a direct pecuniary interest'. We had that debate. It was put by the Greens and supported by Labor, proving yet again that they are tied at the hip. They supported something that they know is not true. The cat was belled then and it has been going on for a number of days. The contemptible, scurrilous gutter politics we have seen in the past 48 hours or so, sadly, has affected people's reputation. That is a great shame. I have seen a lot of politics and parliamentary procedures in my time in the federal parliament in the Senate and likewise in this parliament since 2014. This is right down there with regard to gutter politics. It is awful.

We have come to expect it from the Greens but to see Labor continue their joint efforts to besmirch the reputation of good, fine members of parliament, it is very sad indeed. It is personality politics. It is cancel culture at its worst. They have identified a particular person and have attempted to besmirch their reputation and to damage their credibility.

**Ms O'Connor** - Are you the best they can do?

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** - Order. You were heard in silence, Ms O'Connor.

**Mr BARNETT** - Let me just say one thing about the member for Lyons, Mr Shelton, and I know you know this to be true. He is an honourable man. He works hard. He cares for his community. His wife, likewise, is an honourable woman. They are a wonderful family who support and care for their local community, and they have been doing this for generations.

The member for Clark, Leader of the Greens, in getting up this afternoon on this particular topic made mention of that 'notorious town of Bracknell'. Of course it has become notorious, thanks to the Leader of the Greens and the Labor Party. It is consistent with their anti-rural and regional culture. It is consistent with their anti-productive industries, whether it is forestry, mining, agriculture, salmon, whatever.

As a government we want to focus on the things that matter, whether it be health, housing, or education or, importantly, growing our economy and creating more jobs. The state of the state Address set out that vision to create another 20 000 jobs over the next five years. The Premier has done that this week. He has set the vision.

The other side, particularly Labor, has no plans, no policies. They are bereft of ideas, part of a toxic culture where a former member of the Legislative Council got out of state Labor because it is a toxic culture. They were put into administration by their federal counterparts because they know that they are bereft of policies and plans and bereft of unity amongst them. They are split down the middle in terms of being an opposition. They are not fit to govern themselves. That is why they are in administration - it is a form of bankruptcy - and the management has been stood aside.

In terms of state Labor, it is such a shame that they would get down into the gutter with the Greens to progress their agendas and besmirch people's good reputation, in this case, the reputation of Mark Shelton. I have known Mark Shelton for decades. I worked with Mark Shelton when he was Mayor of the Meander Valley Council and I was a senator standing up for his local community.

**Dr Woodruff** - You should have a chat to him about it, and see if you can persuade him to actually declare his conflict of interest.

**Mr SPEAKER** - Order, Dr Woodruff.

**Mr BARNETT** - In this case, it was the Meander Dam and having it built in a timely manner. Of course, that was problematic under the state Labor government at the time.

We will have none of it. A member of parliament should be entitled to work for and fight for their local communities. That is what good members of parliament do. The Premier has encouraged all of us, again this week, yesterday and today, and I am sure he will in the future, to get out there, listen to and work for our local communities. They do not care how much you know unless they know that you actually care. The slurs that have been thrown around today and yesterday is a great shame. Likewise, with respect to minister Ogilvie, the same is true.

As a government, we are committed to acting honestly, professionally, and with accountability and performance for our duties. We have a strong future for our state. When we came in as a government, we certainly wanted to improve standards around accountability and transparency and we have done that. In this place members of parliament sign a code of conduct. We have been following that. They were updated in 2018, and again in 2021. We have signed those codes.

I am not going to go through all the details regarding this matter that the Greens have been throwing out, now tied at the hips with Labor to besmirch the reputation of good members of parliament. It is a great shame. Conflicts of interest will be managed honestly and well by our Government.

**Time expired.**

[5.15 p.m.]

**Dr WOODRUFF** (Franklin) - Mr Deputy Speaker, this has been an enlightening week of the worst sort. We have seen that the Liberal Party in Tasmania has sunk to a point where they do not understand the merit-based process, in which case none of them are fit to hold public office. If it is not clear what a conflict of interest is when it is written as explicitly as it has been by the Integrity Commission in our own members' code of conduct, if that cannot be



understood, the black-and-white obvious example of which the Speaker, the member for Lyons, Mark Shelton -

**Mr SPEAKER** - I will remind you, Dr Woodruff, that allegations against members must be by way of a substantive motion. We are on a Matter of Public Importance.

**Dr WOODRUFF** - It is a matter of public record that the ABC published -

**Mr SPEAKER** - I am talking about allegations.

**Dr WOODRUFF** - I am not making the allegation. I am reporting the observation that has been made that there was blatant conflict of interest operating in the matter of Bracknell Hall and the actions of Mr Shelton.

**Mr SPEAKER** - Be very careful.

**Dr WOODRUFF** - The member for Lyons is a matter of national media comment. The fact that it is not clear, and it is such an extreme example, is very concerning. It is about a matter that benefits a member of this place and his immediate family.

I believe the Liberals understand that very well, which is why there have been endless attempts at subterfuge to try to hide what is an obscene misuse of public money: not only the \$400 000 that went in a totally untransparent manner, never listed in the budget papers, as asserted it was, and never described or detailed in the supplementary budget, as it has falsely been claimed that it was. Numerous times we have had to force that particular matter to be corrected when ministers have tried to gaslight us and Tasmanians to pretend that it was part of the formal budget process. It definitely was not. There is no doubt about that.

There has been a deliberate attempt at cover-up, which shows me, the Greens and any Tasmanians who are watching, that the Liberals know that there should be merit-based processes for the dispersal of public funds, and ministers especially should declare conflicts of interest. Any member should declare a conflict of interest. It is obscene that members of a sitting government in the Westminster system in 2023 do not understand that and do not understand that this is a serious matter to the social fabric, confidence and trust of Tasmanians, not just in the member, or even the Government, but in the whole operation of government.

That is exactly the problem. When conflicts of interest are not declared, when there are corrupt practices, when self-interest occurs, when there is influence brought to bear to garner outcomes that are not fair, not open for all and not transparent, it raises a question over every single decision made by elected officials, by members, or by staff of agencies. It is not fair on them. That is what happens in people's minds. We have a sacred trust in this place to tell the truth and to step aside from conflicts that will benefit us directly or indirectly, or any family members directly or indirectly.

The Leader of the Greens has detailed the history of the Liberals in government, but only a tiny part. I want to run through the Auditor-General's report in 2017 of the 2015-16 year. In that year alone the Auditor-General identified conflicts of interests in appointments in the State Service - eight senior public service appointments, three of whom had conflict-of-interest situations. They were not declared and they were not properly managed. Three out of eight in that year.

Since then, we have had a look and there is a whole raft of mates who have been given special jobs. Not small amounts of money. We are not talking \$50 000 or \$60 000, which is not to be sniffed at - we are talking pay of \$300 000 to \$400 000. These are special jobs for ex-Liberal staffers. People like Will Hodgman's chief-of-staff, Tim Baker, who became DPIPWE's secretary straight away. What a sweet job. Peter Gutwein's chief-of-staff, Andrew Finch, is now heading up the Major Stadiums Authority, whatever that is. It was cooked up to give him a job. I guess he would probably get an equivalent salary - \$300 000? Something like that. Just guessing. These did not go through a merit-based process. There was no tender.

Justin Helmich, the Office of Racing Integrity, worked for Roger Jaensch. Vanessa Pinto, Business Services, ENRAT, worked for Guy Barnett. Leanne McLean, Commissioner for Children, worked for Jeremy Rockliff. Jenny Gale, Education secretary, also worked for Jeremy Rockliff. I could go on. I am running out of time. The point is, the public is sick of this and they want their Government to stand for something -

**Mr BARNETT** - Point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker -

**Dr WOODRUFF** - This has been going on since Will Hodgman, Peter Gutwein and Jeremy Rockliff -

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** - Dr Woodruff, we have a point of order.

**Mr BARNETT** - I draw the attention of the Chamber to the offensive remarks made by the member for Franklin with respect to a whole range of public servants. I draw that not to just your attention but to the member's attention and ask her to reconsider her dreadful offensive remarks.

**Dr WOODRUFF** - They are questions to be asked.

**Mr Barnett** - Naming people.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** - It is not a point of order, thanks, minister.

[5.23 p.m.]

**Mr WINTER** (Franklin) - Mr Deputy Speaker, the Government is not putting up a second speaker on integrity or conflict of interest?

**Dr Woodruff** - No, they have a few other things to manage.

**Mr WINTER** - I was not planning to speak. It is about conflicts of interest and the Government has put up one speaker so far. Am I on the right track?

**Ms O'Connor** - Yes.

**Mr WINTER** - And no one has jumped.

**Ms O'Connor** - No. Let the *Hansard* record show that there are only two members in here on the Government benches.

**Dr Woodruff** - They are too busy out there trying to manage the conflict of interest.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** - Order, Dr Woodruff.

**Mr WINTER** - We have an MPI from the Greens about conflicts of interest. We have spoken all week about conflicts of interest. We have had a failure from the Government to defend itself over and over during these motions. Then we get to the MPI to wrap the week up and they cannot even be bothered to put up a second speaker on an MPI.

How serious is this Government when they will not even speak about conflicts of interest? I caught some of Mr Barnett's contribution. He did not even defend some of the behaviours that we have seen this week. We have Matters of Public Importance about integrity, a topic that is really important to Tasmanians and important to Labor and, apparently the crossbench, the Greens, but not to the Government. It is shameful.

This is about the integrity of the parliament. It is also about the way that this Government is able to organise itself. The Government now has three members in the Chamber but are unable to speak on a topic that should be pretty simple to speak about.

Conflicts of interest in any organisation or within governments are important to manage but this Government does not seem to be able to manage it. I am from local government originally and I have seen how conflicts of interest are managed. When conflicts of interest arise, elected members in local government remove themselves from the position. They either declare they have a conflict of interest - that is the first thing, but this government has failed to do that on many occasions - and if it is pecuniary, they leave the room. In this parliament and with this Government, conflicts of interest do not seem to matter.

If conflicts of interest do not matter, then integrity does not matter and we have a government that is without integrity. We have ministers who we cannot possibly have confidence in. This is basic governance but this Government does not seem to understand. Basics of governing Tasmania that this Government is unable to do.

You have local government that is acting on issues like this every day but this Government is unable to even get the basics right of running grant schemes and managing conflicts of interest, of having votes and ensuring that members have declared conflicts of interest and if they have a direct pecuniary interest that they are not present for the vote. That is where this Government has got to.

We have seen example after example where this Government has acted without integrity. We have seen it with Madeleine Ogilvie this week, who cannot even stand up and defend herself. There have been ample opportunities for ministers and members who have come under scrutiny this week to stand up and defend themselves. Every time that happens, this Government cannot defend them and the member will not defend themselves. There is nothing worse than watching the Minister for Racing earlier today, sitting silently and not even being prepared to -

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** - Mr Winter, I will give you a warning that allegations about members must be done by way of substantive motion.

**Mr WINTER** - Quite right, Mr Deputy Speaker. There is nothing worse than watching ministers, instead of standing up and addressing issues, sitting back and allowing it to happen

without even defending themselves. These matters of integrity are critical to the way this state is run, but this Government has given up on integrity.

Integrity is dead with this Government. The only conclusion you can come to at the end of this week is that they do not care about it and they are prepared to let their members mislead and they do not care. They are prepared to let ministers breach the code of conduct in black and white, and they do not care. Integrity is dead with this Government. That is the only conclusion you can come to. They will not even defend themselves and put up a second speaker on an important topic like conflicts of interest. It speaks to this entire Government's integrity and the Premier's integrity.

What on earth is going on when the best thing that this Premier has included is minister Ogilvie as Racing minister when we have all seen how she has performed this week. We have seen the answer to the question that she received yesterday. It was about as poor as it gets. We have seen serious allegations about animal welfare go to the minister again today. I have to say I am not convinced by the answer she gave. She said she has confidence in the Office of Racing Integrity and that is a statement she will live to regret.

That organisation has been under her watch now for a year and has not been operating effectively for quite some time. In fact, under the Monteith Report it is scheduled to be abolished but her response has been so slow that we are still sitting there with trainers who tell me that they have to tell stewards how to check a horse before the horse runs, with allegations of animal welfare that we have heard today. Whether they are true or not, allegations like that impact on the integrity of racing and people's confidence in it. I love racing and I want to make sure that it continues to grow and prosper but I am concerned about the industry that I love under this minister's watch.

The Premier, Jeremy Rockliff, loves racing. I have seen him at race meets and I know he enjoys it. I do not understand why he is compromising his health with this minister and compromising the industry that he loves and enjoys with this minister. Why is he exposing this industry to this minister? It is only a matter of time before she gets herself in more trouble.

Conflicts of interest are important. This Government's defence of them this afternoon has been abysmal.

**Matter noted.**

## **PREMIER'S ADDRESS**

### **Motion to Note**

**Continued from 1 March 2023 (page 105).**

[5.30 p.m.]

**Mr WINTER** (Franklin) - Mr Deputy Speaker, I have spoken a lot in my contribution about Energy and Finance. Unfortunately, I have not got very far into Economic Development and am running out of time. For the four and a half minutes I have left, I want to speak a little more about racing, the positive impact that the industry can have on this state, the work that

Tasracing has been doing and the very dedicated staff within Tasracing who have done an outstanding job this year.

As I said on adjournment the other day, track staff in particular had an outstanding summer. The tracks for thoroughbred meetings were in spectacular order and they were praised by none other than Blake Shinn in Mowbray, and Chris Hayes' work at Elwick has been exemplary.

This does not happen by accident. The culture within organisations is absolutely critical. The flashpoint that has caused the controversy around the departure of Paul Eriksson, the former CEO, and the minister's misleading of parliament, comes from the staff survey summer report from Tasracing which was uncovered under RTI by Chris Rowbottom from the ABC late last year.

I want to read some extracts from it so people get an understanding of why what we were talking about this week was so important. Here are some of the answers from the staff at Tasracing:

I feel respected at Tasracing. 2.8/10

I feel like Tasracing has my back: 2.7/10

Tasracing staff are appropriately managed in situations of underperformance: 2.3

Within the organisation there is a good understanding of my role and the work I do: 2.8/10

Tasracing values are reflected in the behaviours of the organisations: 2.6/10

The senior leadership team leads the organisation well and leads by example: 2.6/10

The senior leadership team helps create a positive, constructive workplace culture: 2.6/10

The executive team helps create a positive, constructive workplace culture: 2.1/10

Policies and procedures are modelled by the senior leadership team and executive: 2.6/10

That is what we were talking about. We were talking about an organisation that was sick. The board made the right decision to remove that CEO from that role. They made the wrong decision to reappoint him a few months earlier. Absolutely it was their call. It was not the minister's call, but the minister should not have covered it up. That is what she did and that is what the debate this week has been all about: a minister who covered up.

Tasracing is the critical body when it comes to delivering racing in Tasmania and, culturally, this report shows that it was sick. The CEO at the time had to be removed, he should have been removed, but it should not have been covered up. Yes, there is not commentary about the reasons why people leave, but every time we find out how they have left through redundancies within annual reports. The least you can do is not tell mistruths and that is what happened in this case. We had a statement come out and say that he left for personal and family reasons and in fact, that was not true. Just do not say why. If you do not want to say and you cannot say, just do not say why.

Unfortunately, that was the situation then, but things have turned around under the new leadership at Tasracing. Things are going much better. The track team in particular had a stunning season. They did an outstanding job in presenting the tracks to the clubs, as they always do, and they did an amazing job.

There are still questions around the Office of Racing Integrity and its actions. It is almost a year since the Monteith Review since it was released in June 2022. We have seen no changes as a result of it. We have seen the Government response, which did not come out until, wait for it, GBE hearings. They released the response at the start, as it opened, so that nobody could actually scrutinise it. That is this Government's approach to integrity.

This stuff is really important and this minister is not getting the portfolio right. I am concerned about it. I know we have great people, particularly in Tasracing, who are doing their best to ensure racing continues to be strong.

**Time expired.**

[5.35 p.m.]

**Mr BARNETT** (Lyons - Minister for Energy and Renewables) - Mr Deputy Speaker, I am very pleased and proud to rise to respond to the Premier's state of the state Address, first, to congratulate Premier Jeremy Rockcliff for his leadership. It has been full of opportunity and full of challenge, particularly in the last 12 months, and Mr Rockcliff has stood tall. He has focused on the things that matter to Tasmanians. He has focused on growing our economy, supporting a vibrant and well-resourced health system, record funding for education and supported big time our record funding for building more homes faster.

We know on this side of the House that a growing economy is required to spend money in those essential services, whether it is health, education, police, public safety or housing for those vulnerable Tasmanians who need it. We need a growing economy. In contrast, when Labor and the Greens were in government 10 000 jobs were lost and we went into recession. They closed schools, they closed hospital beds and the state was in paralysis. It was a story of contrast.

I am so pleased and proud to be part of a majority Liberal Government and to have this opportunity to take stock of where we have come from, where we are now and the opportunities for the future. It is my view that our best years are ahead of us, for not just the state but for the people of Tasmania. Thank you for that confidence and that message of support from the member for Bass because I know he believes that. He has a small business background. We understand the need to support families and the importance of providing opportunities for young people, going forward. It is a great honour as Minister for State Development, Construction and Housing, Energy and Renewables, and Veterans' Affairs, to be part of this Government. As the Premier said in his state of the state Address, Tasmania today is a very different place from when this Government was first elected in 2014.

This is on the back of several days of gutter politics from the Greens and Labor, tied at the hips to besmirch people's reputations, to attack the credibility of those doing their jobs on this side of the House. The public is interested in what is important, whether it is cost-of-living matters, health, housing or education. That is what we are focused on and we will remain so.

One thing that has astonished me was my shadow for energy, Mr Winter's response today, together with the Leader of the Opposition. When the question was asked, 'Do you support Marinus Link, the biggest infrastructure by a long way in Tasmania's history?', there was a deathly silence. We were astonished. Unfortunately, silence is not picked up on *Hansard* but there was no answer. It was a simple yes or no answer. So the question for state Labor is, do they support Marinus Link? Marinus Link is the biggest infrastructure project in Tasmania's history and the biggest renewable energy project in Australia, in terms of that investment with the federal Labor Government and the state Liberal Government that will unleash a whole range of economic development opportunities - \$7 billion of renewable energy developments, in fact. Thousands of jobs, downward pressure on prices, improved energy security and, of course, a cleaner world, which all of us in this Chamber want.

The question for state Labor, the Leader of the Opposition and my counterpart is: do you support Marinus Link? It is a simple question, yes or no? Get on board and answer that question.

The incessant criticism and relentless negativity over the summer, and here we are back in parliament and it has just been constantly talking down the Tasmanian economy, undermining confidence, particularly in the energy space. When you cannot answer a question as simple as 'Do you support Marinus Link?', that undermines the confidence the business community and community have in the growth of our economy. We have had incessant criticism; relentless negativity and it is very disappointing. It is from state Labor who are totally divided, coming from a toxic culture. They have been put into administration by federal Labor. It is a form of bankruptcy. They have removed the management in Tasmania and that will continue through to 2025.

In terms of Tasmania today compared to what it was, unemployment has gone down from 7.4 per cent to a record low of 4 per cent. That is what we have delivered since being in government, since we had a Labor-Greens government. We have created 54 000 jobs. The Premier has outlined a vision for another 20 000 jobs over the next five years. We are proud of that.

As the minister for population, I am pleased and proud to have achieved that population target of 650 000 Tasmanians by the year 2050 well ahead of that goal. Of course, state Labor was saying at the same time that we are having a population recession, that people were fleeing Tasmania. In fact, the exact opposite was happening. We have now had nearly an extra 50 000 through to 570 000, which is our population now. We will get to that 2050 target of 650 000 by 2032-33. That is a sign of confidence in our economy. It is a sign of confidence in Tasmania as the best place in the world to live, work, invest and raise a family. That is why I am so proud to be part of a majority government that delivers for Tasmania. The opportunities are huge and the time we have ahead is exciting.

It was disappointing when the Opposition leader put out a media release saying 'nearly a decade and nothing to show for it'. Nobody believes that. As the Premier said earlier today, it is simply irrelevant. Let us focus on the growth in the economy, the population boom. Of course, that puts strain on infrastructure and resources. That is why I am delighted to be the Minister for State Development, Construction and Housing because we can and will deliver. We have a very big agenda, in fact, the biggest agenda in Tasmanian history in terms of putting a roof over someone's head. That is what we are doing in our Government. We are caring for community to provide safe and affordable housing. We established Homes Tasmania on

1 December 2022. This is something the Opposition sadly criticised and opposed but we are taking action. It is now up and running. We are taking action to build more homes faster. That is our aim and we are delivering.

The Premier announced support for the Build Up Tasmania campaign -

**Quorum formed.**

**Mr BARNETT** - As I was saying, the Build Up Tassie program to support vulnerable young people into employment and secure their futures and build more homes is so exciting. I know the Premier and the Minister for Skills and Training is likewise excited. I spoke to Ben Wilson, from Centacare Evolve and St Joseph's Housing just recently and he was very pleased. We seek federal government support to match our dollar for dollar to help make that happen. We will certainly be pressing that case as strongly as possible.

We need to deliver more social and affordable homes fast. We are prioritising housing developments. We will leave no stone unturned to get the job done and get those houses out of the ground as quickly as possible. We have committed, as I say, the \$1.5 billion over the next 10 years to build 10 000 homes for social and affordable homes. We have a whole range of initiatives. We are taking action to provide that safe, secure and affordable housing.

For having Homes Tasmania set up, I thank Michelle Adair, Chair, and the board for their work, and Eleri Morgan-Thomas, who will be starting next week as chief executive, and the team. I was out there with them today, with Royce and Thea Fairbrother providing support for those with a disability and those with a mental illness. The 14 units at Claremont are underway. I thank the Fairbrother Foundation for their support to help make that happen. We have advisory committees providing support to the board, likewise the Ministerial Housing Reference Group. I thank all those on the reference group.

We have lots of opportunity and lots of challenges to talk about. The Premier announced that Homes Tasmania will work closely with the reference group and others to ensure that in just a couple of months we will have their advice on how better to deal with the opportunities to build more homes faster. I look forward to that advice and then acting on it in consultation with my colleagues in this majority Liberal Government. That is how we get things done. Having a minority Labor-Greens government is how not to get things done.

We have a dedicated focus. There is a market-wide view of the housing challenges and opportunities. A key priority for me is to help Tasmanians get into a home. The My Home: Shared equity program is one such initiative. Since July last year we have had 107 Tasmanian households purchase their own home. Isn't that wonderful? I remember the launch with Emma who was the first. It was a wonderful opportunity to be with her in Launceston to celebrate that, with just two per cent equity to get into your own home. Tasmania has one of the proudest and highest rates of home ownership in Australia at around 70 per cent. It is certainly above the national average. We are pleased with that. We support that ambition. We want Tasmanians to fulfil their dreams, to be the best that they can be, especially to get into an affordable home.

Interestingly, in the population trends and the research that has been done, a good number of those 50 000 who have come to Tasmania in the last five years were in the age bracket of



26 to 39. These are aspirational young Tasmanians: they want to achieve, they want to get on, and they have families. It is fantastic. We are very pleased about that.

I want to acknowledge the challenges that we have. Rental affordability is one of those. Frankly, I would like the Commonwealth to have more to play in this space. They have a Commonwealth rent assistance program and, seriously, it is not enough. They need to do more.

In terms of housing affordability, it is a priority for the Australian Government as well. I have talked to Julie Collins and I would like to think that they could meet those commitments to roll out 30 000 new homes across Australia. We want our fair share in Tasmania and I have made that very clear in the various housing ministers' meetings and other meetings. We want to ensure that other members of the federal parliament are lobbying for that as well. I call on Tasmanian Labor to lobby their federal colleagues to ensure vulnerable Tasmanians are getting the support they need to reduce that rental affordability challenge.

We are increasing supply. We have innovative solutions and we are working with the private sector, like today, with Royce Fairbrother and the Fairbrother Foundation and we are working with the community housing providers in every nook and cranny. That is brilliant.

There was a reference to criticism from the other side about maintenance backlog. When we came to government we inherited a maintenance backlog of \$90 million. There were 268 social houses being untenable in 2013 and yet we have had criticism in recent weeks because of the maintenance. It is ongoing. It is less than 1 per cent of our housing stock. I mean, seriously. This is a plan that we are implementing. It is a good plan and we have a very big agenda. We have our 20-year housing strategy that will be out shortly after midyear, looking at the types of housing that we need for whom as well as how and where those new homes will be built. That will be available. We are doing a lot of work on that at the moment and thanks to all those working behind the scenes to help make that happen.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I would now like to share a few comments on energy and as I say, does state Labor support Marinus Link? We have heard a deafening silence yet again today. That is undermining confidence in the business community and elsewhere. We do not want Labor to keep talking Tasmania down with their relentless negativity. We are about a once in a life time opportunity to grow our renewable energy credentials. We have plans to go from 100 per cent to 150 per cent by 2030 and 200 per cent by 2040. This is very exciting but let us make it very clear: we need more electricity to grow our economy. We cannot grow our economy unless we have that electricity. There is a fine balance there.

We have plans to grow that. We have world class water and wind resources. We have natural deepwater ports, we have skilled and knowledgeable renewable energy workforce and we need to more. The Premier said more about that in the state of the state Address. We have comparative advantages and we are going to make the most of it. Tomorrow the Premier and I will be launching the renewable energy campaign in your home city, Mr Deputy Speaker, in Launceston and I am really looking forward to that.

We are on track in terms of the plans for Marinus Link - Battery of the Nation, green hydrogen. As I say, Marinus Link is progressing through the design and approval phase through to financial investment decision by the end of next year. There is a lot of work that is going on. We are pleased with the commitment from the federal Labor Government to Marinus Link - the \$20 billion rewiring the nation plan. That is all about growing our economy, putting

downward pressure on prices, improved energy security, a cleaner world and that is happening. As I say, there is that claim from state Labor that they support renewable energy but they cannot say whether they support Marinus Link.

We have a transformation in place. That is why we have responded to the needs of both residential and small business and larger commercial industrial customers. We have \$33 million in the Budget Estimates report only a couple of weeks ago and that is for negotiating with the federal government, dollar for dollar, to ensure that those residential that need it in regard to small business, we can provide that support as a result of the volatility in the national electricity market.

We are responding in a targeted, thoughtful and measured way. We are not putting up dodgy price capped bills that are fatally flawed, that are costly and untargeted and would send energy retailers broke. We will not be doing that. We are not terrifying Tasmanians like the Opposition is with made up scenarios of black-outs and outages. It is like Chicken Little: the sky is falling in. Guess what? The sky is not falling in. We have a plan and we are following through on that plan.

We have the additional state-based hardship payment of up to \$20 000 for commercial industrial businesses and we announced that this week. Regarding concessions in Tasmania, we have the most generous concessions in all of Australia. That is something to be proud of: \$50 million in electricity concessions alone in this year's budget, \$19.2 million in council rate remissions and \$9.4 million in water and sewerage concessions. We certainly have a package of targeted support: the \$180 bill buster payment, the \$50 million energy saver loan scheme, the hardship relief and we have made Aurora+ available for free.

We are negotiating with the federal government through the treasurers, through the heads of government and that will go on. We have the extra \$50 million loan scheme for commercial industrial electricity customers to invest in energy efficiency measures as well, with the loan scheme, with the offer of no-interest loans of up to \$10 000 and with an option to apply for a further low-interest loan of up to \$50 000 for three years.

There is a lot more that we are doing. I will outline a couple of those areas in the time available. One of those areas is with respect to the Antarctic. As the minister for the Antarctic at the state level, Hobart is the gateway to the Antarctic. It is worth \$160 million a year to our economy each and every year. It is about 950 heading up towards 1000 jobs in this space. It is important and as a government we are backing it. I note that the Premier has announced today he will be off to Korea and Japan with a delegation of business and other representatives. That will be a key part of those discussions: to deepen and expand our existing Antarctic relationships with both the Republic of Korea and Japan. We have released the five-year action plan. I have appointed an Antarctic advocate, Karen Rees and I am proud of her accepting that role. She has also been to Chile in recent weeks to advocate for Tasmania.

In our electorate of Lyons, Elphinstone Engineering has those giant transport sleds outside their factory on the Tasman Highway. They are part of the Antarctic gateway and that work and those jobs are spread around Tasmania.

Did you know that Hobart has the largest number of scientists per capita than any other city in Australia because of the Antarctic and Southern Ocean research that is being undertaken

here in this city? There are seven significant Antarctic and Southern Ocean organisations located in Hobart. There is a lot happening -

Ms O'Connor - Hear, hear.

**Mr BARNETT** - I take the 'hear, hear' from the member for Clark who is a strong supporter of the minister for Science and many other things. We are backing it.

**Debate adjourned.**

**The House adjourned at 6.00 p.m.**