



PARLIAMENT OF TASMANIA

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

REPORT OF DEBATES

Tuesday 26 September 2023

REVISED EDITION

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Tuesday 26 September 2023

The Speaker, **Mr Shelton**, took the Chair at 9.30 a.m., acknowledged the Traditional People, and read Prayers.

QUESTIONS

Commission of Inquiry into the Tasmanian Government's Responses to Child Sexual Abuse in Institutional Settings - Access to Therapeutic Support Services

Ms WHITE question to PREMIER, Mr ROCKLIFF

[9.31 a.m.]

The public release today of the commission of inquiry's final report will be a significant moment in Tasmania's history and it would not have been possible without the bravery of victims/survivors who have found the strength to speak about atrocities perpetrated against children who were meant to be kept safe.

Commissioner Benjamin in his closing statement made an important point about support for victims/survivors. He said:

We learnt from experts that while the impact of child sexual abuse is often severe, it can be treated and managed with the help of trained professionals and support services.

He went on to say:

Victims/survivors must have the right support to recover from abuse. They deserve to live a life that is not defined by the abuse inflicted upon them. More therapeutic services are needed to ensure that victims/survivors have timely access to those supports.

This alone is a substantial challenge. If we are serious about rectifying past wrongs, timely access to support for victims/survivors must be right near the top of the priority list. What assurances can you provide that your Government is serious about the urgent need to substantially improve access to therapeutic support services?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I thank the member for her question. I agree with you that without the courage and bravery of victims/survivors the commission would not have been able to do its very thorough and necessary work over the last 23 years since 2000.

We recognise that the release of the report of the Commission of Inquiry into the Tasmanian Government's Responses to Child Sexual Abuse in Institutional Settings may, and I am sure will, evoke very strong emotions, questions and concerns from many members of the community and of course victims/survivors themselves. In many respects, while today will be a significant day for the safety of our children and young people, it will be retraumatising for many thousands of Tasmanians. When the report is released, counsellors from

Lifeline Tasmania, the Sexual Assault Support Service, Laurel House and Relationships Australia Tasmania will be here at Parliament House to provide that support. We have also ensured a range of supports more broadly available to the Tasmanian community.

Additional resources have been provided to local support services over the course of the commission of inquiry and we have invested an additional \$1.5 million in these services ahead of the tabling and public release of the report. Financial assistance is also available to help victims/survivors, their families and support people to attend Parliament House for the tabling of the report today.

Ongoing support and services will be crucial as the enormously confronting findings of the commission of inquiry report will be read, I know, by many thousands of Tasmanians but, most notably, the victims/survivors themselves, those who have had the courage to come forward and provide evidence of their lived experience, horrific as that is and retraumatising, and many others, friends and loved ones of victims/survivors as well. We will be providing support to victims and survivors moving forward.

Commission of Inquiry into the Tasmanian Government's Responses to Child Sexual Abuse in Institutional Settings - Redactions and Removals from the Report

Ms WHITE question to PREMIER, Mr ROCKLIFF

[9.35 a.m.]

In her closing address to the commission of inquiry, President Marcia Neave said:

As Commissioners, we have carefully considered whether parts of the Report should not be published, including because they could affect the right of a person to a fair trial. We will advise the Governor and the Tasmanian Government about the parts of the report which should not be published for that reason.

Except for admitting the parts of the Report which affect a person's right to a fair trial, the Commissioners hope and expect that the rest of the Report will be published in full as soon as possible, so that the Tasmanian community can consider all of the information in it.

Will there be any redactions or removals in the report you are tabling today beyond those recommended by the commissioners? If so, can you outline why and what the process was that was followed to make the redactions or removals?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I thank the member for her question. I well appreciate and understand the anxiety many are feeling regarding the tabling of the report.

My last ministerial statement on this matter, if my memory serves me correctly, was very open about the process around omissions and redactions. I understand the cause for concern. I will detail further regarding the omissions when I give my ministerial statement commencing

at 11.30 a.m. today. I can say that there have been no omissions other than that which the commission has recommended.

Commission of Inquiry into the Tasmanian Government's Responses to Child Sexual Abuse in Institutional Settings - Parliamentary Scrutiny

Dr WOODRUFF question to PREMIER, Mr ROCKLIFF

[9.38 a.m.]

Victims/survivors have waited years for this day and have huge anxiety about the report that is about to be tabled. Most deeply, the anxieties they have expressed to me have been regarding the quality of the Government's response and the urgency with which you treat that response and the resourcing. This means they want and demand that your response is comprehensively assessed.

To allow proper parliamentary scrutiny of the Government's response to the commission of inquiry, will you bring forward the date of the response that you have set for 4 December to allow at least a full week of parliamentary scrutiny before the end of the year, or will you commit to returning for another week of parliament after 4 December so this does not sink over the Christmas period?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I thank Dr Woodruff for her question. I will be outlining many things in my ministerial statement including some additional investments we are making above the \$30 million allocation in this year's Budget for the 2023-24 financial year. There will be further investments required in the out-years in terms of the forward Estimates. The time line we have set out for today's initial response, and bearing in mind all agencies and ministers have only had the opportunity to thoroughly examine the report since 31 August this year, it is important that we get this right, that it is not rushed, and that we are all held accountable.

I reiterate the very important matter of collective responsibility across this parliament. I do not know who is going to be in government over the next number of years. The people of Tasmania will decide that. We all need to take responsibility as individual members of parliament and, through our collective responsibility, to ensure that one, we implement the recommendations, and two, that they are effectively resourced.

The time frame of December 4 was set because we believe it will give the agencies, departments, and those responsible the time for a very considered response to the report's recommendations and findings. Prior to that, we will be in parliament for a supplementary appropriation bill to ensure we have the resources over the course of this specialist financial year as well. I make those points, and further detail additional investments above the original allocation of \$30 million in this year's Budget for the rest of the financial year.

Commission of Inquiry into the Tasmanian Government's Responses to Child Sexual Abuse in Institutional Settings - Closure of Ashley Youth Detention Centre

Ms WHITE question to PREMIER, Mr ROCKLIFF

[9.42 a.m.]

Two of the commissioners in their closing remarks to the inquiry expressed concern about the delays in the closure of the Ashley Youth Detention Centre. Are you able to provide an update on when the centre will be closed?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I thank the member for Lyons for her question. First, we are committed to the closure of the Ashley Youth Detention Centre. That was a key finding and recommendation of the commission of inquiry. We understand the calls for closing the Ashley Youth Detention Centre sooner and we all want the same thing. If I could I would close it tomorrow. However, we need to ensure the safety of young people, and indeed the community, when it comes to an appropriate setting. We need to ensure that while Ashley remains open, young people are safe and well in custody.

We have looked more broadly than the initial announcement to close Ashley, to reform of the whole youth justice system, which includes raising the minimum age of detention to 14 years. We want to progress our plan to close Ashley and, at the same time, transition to new contemporary therapeutic facilities and models of care.

This will ensure we have fewer young people in detention and more young people catered for through a range of facilities and services that meet their needs. This also means we are investing in people and models of care to ensure the young people we have in detention right now are safe, and that the detention centre is working for them.

Since the Government first announced the closure of the Ashley Youth Detention Centre, a comprehensive reform of the youth justice system and three key priorities have been under way. The first has been a range of actions to ensure the safety and wellbeing of young people in custody at Ashley. The second has been the development of our overarching blueprint for the entire youth justice system, which will set the strategic directions over the next 10 years. The third key priority has been the development of our new approach to youth justice facilities that will replace the Ashley Youth Detention Centre.

We are proposing that the youth justice facilities model will comprise one detention and remand centre located in the south; two assisted bail facilities - one in the north or north-west, and one in the south; and two supported residential facilities, one in the north or north-west, and one in the south. Members will be well aware of the \$50 million commitment in the 2022-23 and 2023-24 Budgets to support the delivery of new facilities under our Youth Justice Reform program.

Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy

Mr YOUNG question to PREMIER, Mr ROCKLIFF

[9.45 a.m.]

Can you please update the House on the Government's Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy and the positive ways in which the initiatives under the strategy are now helping children, young people and their families right across the state?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, our vision is for Tasmania to be a place where everyone feels valued, supported, encouraged and included to be the best they can be. This starts right from the beginning. The first 1000 days, the period from pregnancy through to two years of age, is a critical stage in a child's life that can have lasting impacts. Our Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy was launched in 2021. Its first four-year action plan was directly come up with by the voices of Tasmanian children, young people and their families. The initiatives under the strategy are already making a real difference. For example, we are providing access to community-based multi-service paediatric services for vulnerable children through our Kids Care Clinics. From March until August this year 1671 patients have been seen at the clinics. We have supported Families Tasmania to develop and launch a series of online videos and parenting sessions. All sessions to date have been fully subscribed, with upcoming sessions booked out. This highlights the appetite for information delivered in innovative ways for busy families.

We are supporting young parents and expecting teens. Currently, 59 young parents are enrolled or engaged with mentors in the north-west regions through a partnership with the Brave Foundation. We introduced the basics program in Lady Gowrie Tasmania childcare facilities to raise awareness for parents and carers on how to provide happy, healthy lives and support healthy brain development for children aged zero to three.

We are supporting Playgroup Tasmania to establish innovative volunteer-led baby village playgroups around the state. Three have been established so far at New Town, Howrah and Dodges Ferry with almost 500 family attendances. Villages are soon to be established in Coles Bay and Kingston. The Bringing Baby Home initiative has supported 24 families. The second round of the popular Premier's fund for Children and Young People is now under way. We are investing a total of \$2 million to increase access to recreational and social programs in local communities around the state.

Other areas of reforms under way to further prioritise wellbeing and refocus the Government to be a truly child-centred government include five communities across Tasmania trialling early learning services for three-year-olds in 2024, a first step in the provision of universal access to preschool for all Tasmanian children in the year before kindergarten and providing holistic support for children and young people at the right place at the right time by changing how we deliver child and adolescent mental health services.

The Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy is part of our ongoing commitment to lead with heart, to listen to Tasmanians and to ensure Tasmania's priorities are our priorities as well.

Commission of Inquiry into the Tasmanian Government's Responses to Child Sexual Abuse in Institutional Settings - Out-of-Home Care - Challenges

Ms WHITE question to PREMIER, Mr ROCKLIFF

[9.49 a.m.]

The commissioners in their closing remarks made the observation that the treatment of children in out-of-home care and youth detention is of particular concern, and improving safety for them should be a priority. Commissioner Neave has noted that:

Out-of-home care was the only institution we looked into for which there were no significant investments or reforms announced in response to our inquiry.

The Commissioner of Children and Young People is sufficiently concerned about your Government's changes to out-of-home care, which has seen hundreds of children in out-of-home care without a dedicated child safety officer, with communication managed through a generic phone number and email address, that she has launched an own-motion investigation into the model. How substantial is the challenge with out-of-home care? Do you remain committed to this model?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, of course we are committed to investment and changes. The commission of inquiry's report highlights many matters across out-of-home care, youth detention and within our schools and our health system as well. We recognise the critical role played by Child Safety staff to meet the needs of some of the most vulnerable members of our community but we do not underestimate the enormity of the challenge involved in responding to families who need help and children and young people who are at risk.

To meet these challenges, we are working to ensure that Child Safety Services is appropriately resourced and supported. In 2014 we increased Child Safety Services staffing by around 40 per cent. As part of the 2022-23 Budget we committed a further \$5.4 million of investment for an additional 10 full-time equivalents to be added to the Child Safety Services workforce. Importantly, the 2023-24 Budget continues funding for these positions across the out-years and additional child safety officer positions have also been funded in response to the commission of inquiry.

While we have an establishment in Child Safety Services that is resourced, we know that recruitment and retention remain a real challenge. Vacancies are impacted by a range of factors, including the significant market demand across sectors for allied health professionals both in Tasmania and nationally.

In addition to increasing child safety officer positions, the department is progressing a number of initiatives to continue the support and investment in this critical area of service, including the number of out-of-home care placements to ensure that children and young people under guardianship and custody have safe and suitable care arrangements where they are loved, safe, well and learning; reviewing and then implementing an improved after-hours service model to manage the after-hours service requirements; funding additional positions to focus on child advocacy for children in out-of-home care and to support the newly established statutory

Guardianship Committee; and delivering a new intensive restoration service which will continue to build on the Pathways Home program with increased intensive assertive support to families that have been assessed by Child Safety Services.

We know there is always more to do. We will continue to consult with our highly valued staff, who work under very challenging conditions, and their unions. What they need to be able to do is very difficult but important work in keeping Tasmanian children and young people safe.

Commission of Inquiry into the Tasmanian Government's Responses to Child Sexual Abuse in Institutional Settings - Parliamentary Scrutiny

Dr WOODRUFF question to PREMIER, Mr ROCKLIFF

[9.53 a.m.]

On behalf of victims/survivors, I am very concerned about your response to my question regarding the need for parliamentary scrutiny of your Government's response to the report. The commission of inquiry is one of the most important things that has ever happened in Tasmania and one of the most momentous matters that will ever face this parliament.

Individual members are not responsible for resourcing the recommendations or drafting the laws that are required; it is you and your Government who are. I remind you that there are no parliamentary sittings scheduled after 4 December. What follows is a long summer break. Adding one extra week of parliament should not be too much to ask so that parliament can scrutinise your Government's response to this report in the manner that victims/survivors demand we do.

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, my ministerial statement today will outline a number of areas that we need to be proactive on. We will have a supplementary appropriation bill later on in October and our departments are working now on a very comprehensive response for 4 December all about the victims/survivors and the safety of our children and young people. We have to get this right and we need the time to ensure that we do get this right.

This is going to be some journey for all of us. That is why it is important, notwithstanding the vital aspect of accountability and scrutiny of the government of the day, but also the collective responsibility we all have, given the commissioners' report covers the last 23 years, during which we have had governments of all colours, so we all need to take that responsibility.

Commission of Inquiry into the Tasmanian Government's Responses to Child Sexual Abuse in Institutional Settings - Child Safety Services - Resourcing

Ms WHITE question to PREMIER, Mr ROCKLIFF

[9.56 a.m.]

I welcome that a necessary outcome of the commission of inquiry will be an increase in reporting to Child Safety Services. Workers in the advice and referral line service, and Child

Safety Services more broadly, have long raised concerns about their unmanageable workloads and the level of unmet need in the community. On top of that, the tabling of the inquiry's report is likely to be highly distressing for workers in these areas. What resourcing is being provided to support existing staff to ensure the likely increase in reporting can be managed and children are kept safe?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I thank the member for the question. I very much appreciate that the safety and wellbeing of our children and young people is the number-one priority for us all within this place.

The Strong Families, Safe Kids advice and referral line (ARL) contributes to better outcomes for at-risk Tasmanian children, young people and their families by providing early and targeted support. If a child is at immediate risk, the first port of call should always be Tasmania Police. Throughout the year there have been predictable peaks in demand for the service and it is not unusual for the advice and referral line to receive an increase in calls the week prior to school holidays. During higher demand periods, callers may experience wait times and are given the opportunity to leave a voicemail message should they wish to, or submit an online report via a website. All voicemail messages are allocated to staff in our electronic system and calls returned as soon as possible.

To address increased wait times during high-demand periods, business process improvements are put in place which are regularly reviewed monthly to ensure call volume is appropriately managed and strategies for those higher-demand periods include having one dedicated team to deal with online reports only. From time to time, staff are invited to elect to work overtime for short periods, which has successfully reduced waiting allocation periods. Staff have also been relocated to phone roster shifts during periods of high demand and whilst on shift, staff monitor wait and hold times and raise them with practice leaders to appropriately respond.

Continued calls to the ARL show that Tasmanians understand the importance of identifying issues and are asking for help to ensure the wellbeing and safety of children and young people. To support the growing demand for the service, the Department for Education, Children and Young People has allocated resources to support the recruitment of an additional 23 full-time equivalent positions, increasing the number of ARL teams by three. The current national shortage of allied health workers is complex and challenging and we are not immune to this issue. The ARL's Mission Australia and Baptcare teams are fully staffed. There are currently 10 child safety and wellbeing worker vacancies in government teams, I am advised, and recruitment is already underway, with completion scheduled this month.

Child Safety - Legislative Reform

Mr WOOD question to MINISTER for JUSTICE, Ms ARCHER

[9.59 a.m.]

Can you update the House on how the Rockliff Liberal Government is progressing legislative reform to help keep our children and young people safe?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I thank the member for Bass for his question and his ongoing interest in this critically important issue today, and every day. As the Attorney-General and Minister for Justice, I am deeply committed to ensuring that our Government does everything we possibly can to make sure all Tasmanians - and Tasmania's children and young people, in particular - are safe, equal, respected and protected.

Following the commencement of the Child and Youth Safe Organisations Act 2023 on 1 July this year, work has commenced to establish the Child and Youth Safe Organisations framework for Tasmania. This framework will impose clear, legally mandated standards for organisations that work with children. It also imposes a reportable conduct scheme, which places a statutory duty on the leaders of organisations to report allegations or convictions relating to child abuse. An independent regulator will oversee the Child and Youth Safe framework, and I look forward to announcing the appointment of the independent regulator before the end of the year.

The framework will strengthen our child safeguarding system as a whole, by complementing other significant reforms I have undertaken to strengthen our laws and frameworks to prevent child sexual abuse.

These reforms include, but are not limited to, creating new offences of failing to protect a child or a young person; a new offence of sexual abuse of a child or a young person by a person in authority; and other reforms, such as removing limitation periods for child sexual abuse, which have made a real difference to the lives of many.

Legislative improvements are under way to further strengthen protections for children, including amendments to the Registration to Work with Vulnerable People Act 2013.

As the Attorney-General and Minister for Justice, I am acutely aware of the impact that civil and criminal justice processes can have on people who have been affected by child sexual abuse. As a result, I directed a review of this structure and processes across civil litigation to ensure our approach is trauma-informed, and that all our legal practitioners recognise evidence-based understandings of the nature and impact of child sexual abuse.

Following that review, I determined that the management and conduct of the state's entire civil litigation should be conducted by a new separate office. Work to establish this new separate state litigation office is well underway, to be led by Mark Rapley, who will commence as State Litigator on 9 October 2023. I look forward to welcoming Mark as he embarks on this incredibly important work.

Along with new crimes aimed at addressing child sexual abuse, I - and all my colleagues - remain deeply committed to making real improvements to the management of criminal cases and to the supports available to those who are participating in criminal proceedings.

Mr Speaker, I will do everything I can to drive and support the process of change, and this Government will do the same to make Tasmania a safer place for our children and young people.

Housing Connect 2.0 Tender - Concerns of Colony 47

**Ms HADDAD question to MINISTER for HOUSING and CONSTRUCTION,
Mr STREET**

[10.03 a.m.]

Colony 47 has been working in homelessness and youth support for over 50 years in Tasmania. For the past decade, they have operated the southern Front Door for Housing Connect on behalf of your Government. Colony 47 has announced they cannot support the new Housing Connect 2.0 tender, stating in a letter to the Premier that it is their firm view that the new model and proposed funding will fail to meet current and forecast levels of demand, create unmanageable caseloads and place staff at unacceptable risk.

When a trusted and universally respected community organisation sounds the alarm that your new model will make things worse for vulnerable Tasmanians, do you not have an obligation to listen? In light of their feedback, will you pause the tender process for 12 months to give yourself the chance to get this right?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I thank the member for Clark for her question, acknowledging that part of her question when she said, are we not obliged to listen. We are absolutely obliged to listen.

I have met with Colony 47 on a number of occasions since becoming minister. First, I thank our current Housing Connect providers for the important work they do and the services they provide every day, supporting Tasmanians in need. Housing Connect provides people with housing solutions and personalised supports that help vulnerable people into safe and secure homes, and ensure they retain their tenancy.

A key outcome of the Government's Affordable Housing Action Plan is to review and reform the Housing Connect model. I am limited in what I am able to say about the Housing Connect reform request for grant proposals because the process is currently in the active procurement stage. I can say that I have been assured that during the reform process, Homes Tasmania has undertaken extensive consultation and collaboration with the current providers, with key industry stakeholders and, most importantly, with people with lived experience.

This includes engaging a respected independent chair to oversee the Housing Connect reform steering committee. The independent chair, Ms Tracy Matthews, has said the following about the reforms:

The new service system will be an improvement and has been designed in close partnership with service providers. The Housing Connect partners and Homes Tasmania have a clear vision and plan to improve service delivery. Tasmanians will find it easier to get the support they need when the new service system commences mid next year.

Mr Speaker, I have taken the concerns raised by one participant in the process very seriously. It is not correct to say that they have been ignored. I have personally met with them and listened to their concerns, and have sought further briefings and advice from Homes

Tasmania. At the same time, I have also listened to other participants in the process who do not share the same concerns.

Homes Tasmania is conducting a robust process, which needs to be allowed to take its course. That process is currently in the active procurement stage and, as minister, I need to restrict my comments.

The Rockliff Liberal Government has a strong long-term housing plan and we will continue to deliver on that plan, especially ensuring that those who need our support get it.

Bass Island Line - Freight Services Pricing

Mr YOUNG question to TREASURER, Mr FERGUSON

[10.07 a.m.]

Can you update the House on the finding from the inquiry by the independent Tasmanian Economic Regulator into the pricing of freight services by Bass Island Line, a subsidiary company of TasPorts?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question. The Tasmanian Government acknowledges ongoing concern expressed by King Island residents regarding the high retail prices of goods on the island compared to mainland Tasmania. Last year, as Treasurer, I commissioned an independent inquiry into matters relating to Bass Island Line's pricing policies under the Economic Regulator Act 2009.

Bass Island Line has been operating in a competitive commercial market for more than five years. It was therefore timely that a prescribed body inquiry is held into Bass Island Line's pricing policies to ensure they are tested in an independent and objective manner. An independent inquiry allows prices and costs to be examined at total arm's length from Bass Island Line - as well as its parent company, TasPorts, and indeed the Government.

The regulator has now provided his findings to me. In the interests of transparency, I requested that the regulator provide me with a summary version of the report that removes any information provided in confidence. I am pleased to release the summary report, to provide the community with confidence in the pricing and operations of Bass Island Line. That report is publicly available on the website of the Tasmanian Economic Regulator.

The regulator's inquiry assessed whether the prices charged by Bass Island Line for the supply of freight services to King Island reflect the efficient costs of providing those services and are consistent with competitive neutrality principles. The review also considered whether Bass Island Line's pricing behaviour is in line with relevant industry rules and practices, and whether its behaviour impacts on its competitors and other supply-chain participants.

There has been a range of opinions on Bass Island Line, extending from operating at a loss, or setting prices to exclude competition from the market, to the opposite view that its prices are too high and unfairly take advantage of its market position. Bass Island Line's costs were found by the regulator to be similar to one of its competitors, lower than another of its

competitors, and at the lower end of prices in comparable markets in Australia and overseas. The regulator found Bass Island Line's pricing behaviours were within the range of behaviours exhibited by its direct competitors and shipping companies serving comparable markets.

The regulator found that, notwithstanding stakeholder concerns that Bass Island Line's participation in the market had the potential to discourage other players from entering the market, a third player has announced its intention to enter the King Island sea freight market.

The findings of the independent Tasmanian Economic Regulator should be read in the context of three important facts. First, the service is still not financially sustainable despite making important efficiency improvements under its new service model that began in March of last year. Second, unlike its competitor, Bass Island Line Service operates a dedicated weekly service rather than the option of sailing only when supported by profitable freight volumes. Third, in 2018-19, TasPorts led a process with the support of the Department of State Growth to gauge market interest in the provision of a commercial shipping service. No market participants were shortlisted because there were no proposals that demonstrated they were able to achieve an improved service outcome for the community without substantial ongoing subsidies.

As the regulator's report notes, the Government's intention is to ensure a service is provided for as long as necessary until such time that a sustainable alternative solution emerges. The regulator made two recommendations: that there is some merit in Bass Island Line publishing its price schedule, and that it conducts a review of the suitability of the *John Duigan* to consider whether the asset base should be optimised.

As minister with portfolio responsibility for the parent company, TasPorts, I will consider these recommendations and will be discussing them with the board and executives.

Housing Connect 2.0 Model - Worker Caseloads

**Ms HADDAD question to MINISTER for HOUSING and CONSTRUCTION,
Mr STREET**

[10.11 a.m.]

Homes Tasmania has promised that:

Under the Housing Connect 2.0 model, Tasmanians will get better access to housing assistance and help to develop strong connections to family and community and build their capabilities for independent living.

How can that statement be true when it is understood that the new model will result in caseloads of 200 highly vulnerable people per case worker? Can you confirm that the flexible funding pool that has been provided in the past for purchasing emergency overnight accommodation or the payment of a large and unexpected bill will, in the new model, amount to just \$39 per client, per year?

The CEO of Colony 47 said in her letter to the Premier:

We are not prepared to compromise on the quality of our services or subject our employees to unsustainable workloads and strongly believe it would be unethical to do so.

Do you share her concerns or do you believe the worker caseloads and funding levels provided under the new model will be sufficient to ensure vulnerable Tasmanians receive the support and assistance they need?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I have met with Colony 47 on a number of occasions. They have expressed their concerns. As I said in a previous answer, I want to limit my comments on the procurement process and the process that is going on at the minute and respect that process. Along with the concerns of one particular participant, we have been contacted by other providers in the sector who have said that they do not share those concerns.

The Government obviously wants Housing Connect to be well funded to provide the services that it needs to provide. We do not want to see workers overloaded with cases. We want people to be able to get the one-on-one assistance they need. That is why Housing Connect exists in the first place. Members of this place would know that when they write to me about particular housing matters, one of the first things I encourage is for people to get in touch with Housing Connect to access that service, to help them through the system. That is what we want it to do. I ask that we respect the process that is in place and allow it to play out now that it is in the procurement stage.

I am more than happy to sit down with any member of parliament or any other community stakeholder who has been part of the process or will be part of the process. If they have concerns, they can raise them with me so that we can talk through them, while respecting the process that we have in place at the minute.

Teachers and Staff - Suspensions for Allegations of Sexual Misconduct

Mrs ALEXANDER question to MINISTER for EDUCATION, CHILDREN and YOUTH, Mr JAENSCH

[10.14 a.m.]

Can you please update the House on how many teachers and staff are currently suspended while under investigation for allegations of sexual misconduct? Can you also please confirm for the House that any teachers who are currently subject to such investigation are not actually moved around to other schools and that this particular practice will be placed under significant scrutiny by your department?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, we all agree that there is no more important task than to ensure the safety and wellbeing of children. We are committed to making a difference for our children's future

safety. I offer my deepest heartfelt apologies to all victims of past abuse that have occurred in relation to state government agencies.

Our Government implemented routine disclosure of the suspension of state servants in March 2021. All allegations of child sexual abuse in the State Service are immediately referred to Tasmania Police for notification and assessment and dealt with following their normal investigative processes.

At the same time, the relevant heads of agency commence an assessment of whether there may have been breaches of the State Service Code of Conduct. An employee who is the subject of an investigation by a head of agency is removed from the workplace straight away, in every case. The appropriate legal and regulatory bodies are also advised, for example working with vulnerable people, so that if appropriate, their registration can be removed. This means a person cannot work in any other situation where a working with vulnerable people check is required.

To keep the Tasmanian community informed, the routine disclosure is updated when an employee is suspended from duty. The routine disclosure demonstrates that our Government is committed to being as transparent as possible to keep Tasmanian children safe.

Homelessness - Government Services and Support

Mr WOOD question to MINISTER for HOUSING and CONSTRUCTION, Mr STREET

[10.17 a.m.]

Can you please update the House on how the Rockliff Liberal Government is providing services and support to vulnerable Tasmanians who are at risk of homelessness and how Tasmanians who are most in need can receive support right now?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, every Tasmanian deserves a roof over their head. We know we must do better. As minister, I have one very clear and concise aim: I want to help more Tasmanians. We are investing over \$38 million annually on specialist homelessness services that provide our most vulnerable a safe place to stay and much needed wraparound services.

We currently have 19 homeless shelters and three safe spaces operating around the state. These valued facilities are supporting Tasmanians every day. We are providing services and support to vulnerable Tasmanians who are at risk of homelessness. Tasmanians who are most in need can receive support right now.

We recognise that women, in particular, may experience greater barriers and challenges in accessing safe and secure housing. We are taking action on crisis and transitional accommodation available specifically for women, including 17 additional units at the Hobart Women's Shelter, 15 additional units at the Launceston Women's Shelter, more than doubling that shelter's capacity, eight additional units at CatholicCare women's shelter, two additional units at Jireh House and six additional units at McCombe House in partnership with the Salvation Army. We also offer the family violence rapid rehousing program, which provides

people affected by family violence with transitional accommodation in the private rental market at subsidised rent.

The Government is providing support to Tasmanians in need right now, thanks to our safe space initiative. It is uniquely Tasmanian, making a real difference every day to addressing homelessness. Safe space services have core functions of a daytime drop-in, a night-time sleepover service, and an assertive outreach service for those not ready or able to attend safe space sites. Each safe space operates as a supervised base for essential services, including the provision of meals, showers, laundry, lockers, charging stations and network access. In addition, wraparound services such as healthcare, alcohol and drug support and mental health support are also available.

I am especially proud of our Youth2Independence program, which is an innovative response to supporting young Tasmanians who may be at risk of or are experiencing homelessness. I recently visited the Youth2Independence cluster home site located in my electorate of Franklin and recognised these facilities provide invaluable stability and support for young Tasmanians.

Not only is the Youth2Independence program providing young people with a safe home, it is also supporting them to build their skills to become independent young adults by having 24/7 support staffing for residents with outreach support also available. Our Hobart and Burnie Youth2Independence facilities will be completed later this year.

Not only is our Government focusing on supporting our most vulnerable, this is also a focus at a national level. An action from the national Housing ministers' meeting is to share more data on housing and homelessness and I am pleased that officials from Tasmania are playing their part in this national project. All jurisdictions are working together on a new project over the next 12 months to better understand the rent burden currently impacting many Australians and utilising that information to examine what other mechanisms could be put in place to help.

Mr Speaker, let me be clear: we are committed to providing safe housing options for our most vulnerable Tasmanians and we are delivering increased support for homeless accommodation to those who need it most. We have a long-term plan to address these challenges and we are getting on with the job of delivering it.

Commission of Inquiry into the Tasmanian Government's Responses to Child Sexual Abuse in Institutional Settings - Community Sector Organisations - Resourcing

Ms JOHNSTON question to PREMIER, Mr ROCKLIFF

[10.20 a.m.]

Community sector organisations are the frontline services that support individuals who have been subjected to abuse. No doubt, with the release of the commission of inquiry report, their caseloads will increase yet again. They are there supporting those most vulnerable with a variety of services. We know that government funding to the community sector has failed to keep up with CPI. Will you provide the community sector with an additional and appropriate increase in funding to ensure they can support those affected by the commission of inquiry report, as they no doubt will be doing anyway?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I thank the member for Clark for her question and her advocacy for the organisations that do so much to support vulnerable Tasmanians. We will always work alongside those organisations. You would be aware through the last budget of an increase in funding for the financial year of over \$2 million and an increase this year of around 4 per cent. We recognise the organisations that support all vulnerable Tasmanians but more particularly, your question focused on the delivery of support and services for victims/survivors as a result of the commission of inquiry report, and they will also need to be resourced to provide for what we expect to be an increase in demand.

I will detail a number of matters with respect to resources over the course of the next 12 months in the ministerial statement but I will take the opportunity to advise victims/survivors, friends, families and loved ones who need support that there are a number of services which are free and confidential. Support is also available by phone and face-to-face as well through Lifeline Tasmania, the statewide Sexual Assault Support Line and the Sexual Assault Support Service, Laurel House and Relationships Australia Tasmania. For more information about the release of the report today, supports are in place for individuals to attend the tabling of the report and we will ensure that all attendees have an information pack which details the supports and assistance in place for individuals attending today.

I recognise the member's question and advocacy to support the organisations further to support vulnerable Tasmanians, in this case particularly Tasmanian victims/survivors of child sexual assault.

Teachers and Staff - Suspensions for Allegations of Sexual Misconduct

Mr TUCKER question to MINISTER for EDUCATION, CHILDREN and YOUTH, Mr JAENSCH

[10.24 a.m.]

Can you please update the House on how many teachers and staff are currently suspended or under investigation for allegations of sexual misconduct? Can you please confirm that teachers who have been the subject of such investigations are not moved around to other schools and that this practice will be placed under significant review by your department?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I thank the member his question and note its similarity to a previous question I was asked. I do not have a figure with me regarding numbers of staff at this point in time. I will take further advice to see what information I can provide to you.

The most important thing - and I included this in my previous answer - is that any employee who is the subject of an investigation by a head of agency is removed from the workplace straight away. We also advise the appropriate legal and regulatory bodies, for example working with vulnerable people, so that their registration can be suspended or removed. This means that that person cannot work in the system where working with vulnerable people registration is required; that is the safeguard in place.

Any allegation is taken seriously. Heads of agency and relevant regulators are involved in investigating and the staff member in question is removed from the workplace straight away pending the outcome of those investigations. That is underscored, where appropriate, by removal of working with vulnerable people registration so they cannot work while those investigations are under way.

We are aware of the concerns of the public in general, the interests of victims/survivors and those who support them and their families, to ensure that some of the practices of the past that have been uncovered through the commission of inquiry process cannot happen again. We believe that we have a rigorous approach to ensuring that all allegations are taken seriously, acted on immediately and that, as a first step, employees who are the subject of such investigations are removed from their workplace straight away and prevented from returning through measures like suspension of their working with vulnerable people registration. Thank you for your concern and your question.

Mr SPEAKER - That is the conclusion of the allocation. I can suspend question time a couple of minutes early at this point if there are no further questions. Question time is now concluded.

Before I leave the Chair, I wish to advise members that when the commission of inquiry report is tabled today, due to its size, copies will not be distributed in the Chamber. Following the adjournment of the House today, hard copies of the report will be available for members in Committee Room 1.

Sitting suspended from 10.28 a.m. to 11.30 a.m.

ATTENDANCE OF MEMBERS OF THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

Commission of Inquiry - Tabling of Report

Mr SPEAKER - Honourable members, in accordance with the resolution passed by the House on 14 September 2023, I now invite members of the Legislative Council to enter the Chamber for the tabling of the commission of inquiry report and the ministerial statement.

I welcome the President and members of the Legislative Council, and I also welcome the people in the Gallery.

TABLED PAPER

Commission of Inquiry into the Tasmanian Government's Response to Child Sexual Abuse in Institutional Settings

Mr SPEAKER - I now call the Clerk of the House to table the report of the commission of inquiry.

CLERK - Mr Speaker, I table the final report of the Commission of Inquiry into the Tasmanian's Government's Response to Child Sexual Abuse in Institutional Settings.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Commission of Inquiry into the Tasmanian Government's Response to Child Sexual Abuse in Institutional Settings

[11.32 a.m.]

Mr ROCKLIFF (Braddon - Premier) - Mr Speaker, institutional child sexual abuse has caused enormous harm to many, many Tasmanians. To all survivors of child abuse who shared their personal experiences through the commission of inquiry, and to all those who spoke out on behalf of others to ensure that their voices were heard, we thank you. We thank you for your strength and courage. Our state is deeply indebted to you and your bravery in coming forward in speaking to the commission in the hope that the abuse and injustice that you have suffered never happens again.

I also wish to acknowledge the courage of all past and current staff who have come forward to the commission of inquiry to talk about their experiences. Victims/survivors have been abused by the very people who are supposed to care for them and they were failed by the system that is meant to protect them. It is time for change, time to reflect on some of our most painful moments in Tasmania's history and to build a culture in our institutions that will ensure it is never repeated.

The commission calls upon us to deal with the deep failings in our systems and institutions which have persisted over many decades. It calls upon us to confront the many instances where our institutions were entrusted with the task of caring for our children and young people and failed in that responsibility. It calls upon our Tasmanian community to actively engage in compassionate listening and learning with profound empathy and genuine care. Most importantly, it calls upon all of us to take responsibility for tackling the deep and insidious causes of child sexual abuse in our community and for safeguarding the innocence and wellbeing of our children for generations to come. The safety of children and young people is not an aspiration, it is a fundamental human right.

I want to reiterate the apology this parliament gave on 8 November 2022 to victims/survivors of child sexual abuse in Tasmanian government institutions. We are deeply sorry to all those who have suffered abuse in Tasmanian institutions, and to your families and loved ones, we failed you. We are all accountable and we are sorry, but we know that words are not enough.

Today I reaffirm our Government's commitment to implement every one of the commission's 191 recommendations. As a parliament we must share that commitment to work together to make the changes to protect children in the state that endure for all time. Our actions must give meaning to this report and they must reflect the hope that I have, even on this dark day, for a better future for Tasmania's children and a better future for our state.

Our Government established the commission to find, examine and expose the failings that have caused and contributed to the appalling abuse of children in our institutions. The commission in its final report examined the period 2000 to 2020 in particular. I want to once again thank members of the commission, commissioners Neave, Benjamin and Bromfield and their staff, for their dedicated work over the course of almost two and a half years. You have shown us how the voices of children and young people were routinely ignored. You have demonstrated how a culture of silence and silos have allowed child sexual abuse to persist and

to pervade. You have made it clear that the efforts of successive governments, our laws and our funding simply were not good enough. The truth is powerful. Now we know where we have failed and what we must do.

Over the course of the inquiry the commission conducted 37 days of public hearings and held more than 120 sessions with commissioners, 165 witnesses were examined and over 260 statements were received. The commission received over 95 000 documents from the Government and agencies during the hearings and considered issues across four types of institution - schools, out-of-home care, youth detention and health settings.

Today I confirm the only omissions made to the commission's final report are those requested by the commission. In its closing hearing on 30 August 2023, the commission of inquiry made two restricted publication orders under the Commission of Inquiry Act 1995. One of those orders recommends the omission of certain material from the final report before it was published. On 25 September 2023, her Excellency as Governor-in-Council omitted part of the final report consistent with the commission's recommendations. The commission's recommended omissions related to volume 6, Children in Health Services, chapter 14, case study 1. The full final report will be published once the relevant criminal proceedings, including any appeal, are finally determined or disposed of.

The commission of inquiry referred over 100 people to authorities during its inquiry and the report outlines allegations of abuse perpetrated by 34 individuals. The scope of these allegations extends from serious criminal allegations to allegations relating to disciplinary matters such as alleged breaches of the State Service Code of Conduct. For legal and privacy reasons, we are not able to release detailed information at this stage but I want to assure the public that our law enforcement, regulatory and other agencies are aware of each and every one of these persons who have been identified to date.

Tasmania Police has checked the identified alleged perpetrators to determine whether matters have been reported by various means for investigation, court proceedings or other outcomes.

Registration to Work with Vulnerable People have reviewed and matched (where relevant) alleged perpetrators against current and past applicants and registrants under the RWVP Scheme. The Department for Education, Children and Young People has checked the child protection information system to determine if the alleged perpetrators are recorded and flagged in the system as a person believed responsible for causing harm to a child or a young person.

The Department of Education, Children and Young People (DECYP) has also checked identified perpetrators who are alleged to have perpetrated abuse against children or young people in schools, out-of-home care and youth detention to determine their current employment status.

In relation to criminal allegations, I note that a number of the persons referred to in the report have already been charged and convicted. Ten matters have been brought before the courts throughout the time of the commission, and other criminal allegations are known to police. Heads of agencies are also in the process of considering the information in the report.

If there are matters that may constitute a breach of the State Service Code of Conduct, the relevant head of agency will consider the available information, and where appropriate commence an investigation. Those assessments are under way.

The report answers four core questions in relation to the Tasmanian Government's responses to institutional child sexual abuse.

First, it finds that Tasmanian government institutions are generally safe for children and young people. Overwhelmingly, the people who work with children and young people do so with their best interests first. The commission also found that more could be done to improve the safety of children in our schools and hospitals and the safety of children in out-of-home care and of Aboriginal children in our institutions. This work should be a priority.

Second, the commission also found that the response to allegations and incidents of child sexual abuse in Tasmanian institutions have been too often inadequate. Too often, institutions did not effectively manage active risks to children and young people or extend adequate care where they disclosed abuse.

Third, the commission found that not often enough are our systems effective to address the risks and respond to child sexual abuse in institutions into the future.

Fourth, the commission found there is not always a culture that encourages feedback, reporting, monitoring and reflection when responding to incidents of child sexual abuse or that empowers children and young people to have a voice.

Now that we have the commission's recommendations we will use these to strengthen the protective framework to safeguard our children into the future. We will approach this task with commitment and with compassion. We will need to undertake this change together, through a child-safe approach where all children and young people have bright lives and positive futures because they are known, safe, well and learning.

Our Government is absolutely committed to undertaking this change in a manner that involves and empowers children, young people and adults who have experienced child sexual abuse to truly influence the decisions that affect them.

I am here as Premier, as I know we all are, for our children, for the generations of Tasmanians to come. Collectively, we must be bold and brave as we implement much-needed change. To tick a box against the recommendations is not enough. I want Tasmania to be nation-leading when it comes to keeping children and young people safe.

The report makes it clear that the Tasmanian Child and Youth Safe Organisations Framework will be a key part of our protective architecture. The commission said the establishment of the framework would be the most important strategy to prevent abuse within organisations and improve responses to complaints when made. The Tasmanian Child and Youth Safe Organisations Framework will apply to organisations that work with children, including government agencies, religious institutions, schools, out-of-home care and justice and detention services. The framework will require organisations to take specific steps to keep children safe and respond effectively if incidents of harm occur.

Our Government passed legislation to implement this framework in May 2023. The framework will come into effect next year. The commission has recommended that the monitoring and oversight functions of the independent regulator should form part of a broader commission tasked with ensuring that the rights, safety and wellbeing of children and young people are promoted and protected.

To build a child-safe future for our state, we must empower children and young people to influence our systems. We must continue to hear the voices of those who have suffered abuse in our systems and our institutions. In line with the commission's recommendations, we will refine and strengthen our existing governance arrangements to ensure children and young people and adults who have experienced child sexual abuse can have a voice and are a part of changing a system designed to benefit them. Our governance structures will be revised to include new advisory councils to enable representatives of key groups to speak directly to our state's leaders as we develop a child-safe future.

One matter the commission identified is that children and young people are too often undervalued, dismissed and disrespected in our society. This has contributed to disclosures of abuse being brushed off or not believed. To the children of Tasmania, who are the future of this state, this report must strengthen the resolve of us all in this parliament to consider your needs and listen to your voices as we work hard to build a positive future. More generally, we will empower our children and young people by implementing the best practice child sexual abuse prevention curriculum in schools, not only to educate children and enable them to identify abusive behaviours, including grooming, but to ensure that they have the confidence to tell someone when they do not feel safe.

We must also remove barriers to sharing information that have made it easier for evil to hide in the shadows. The commission said it found too many examples of poor coordination and information sharing across agencies. Sometimes these issues were caused by legislative barriers. In other cases, individuals did not share information because of cultural or perceived barriers. We cannot effectively prevent risks to children unless we can piece information together to form a complete picture.

While there are practicalities and issues to work through, our overriding priority must be the protection of children. In line with the commission's recommendations, we will review our laws to remove barriers to sharing information. We will develop clear guidelines and make changes to culture and to practice so that our agencies can share and respond to the information they receive.

We remain steadfast in our commitment to keep Tasmanian children and young people safe. We are deeply aware of the significant responsibility we have to the Tasmanian community and to those who have experienced trauma and abuse, who are seeking justice, healing and lasting change that would prevent the recurrence of such profoundly distressing events. Responding to the recommendations of the commission will require widespread and fundamental change across Tasmanian government agencies and systems.

There are actions that we can take now to address urgent issues. I will speak about those actions in a moment. I also want to make it clear that the process of transforming our institutions, our systems and most importantly our culture will take time. If these changes are to be effective and to endure, we need to get this right. The commission said, 'While we agree there is little time to waste, we also consider it is important that the Tasmanian Government be

strategic and coordinated about its reformed agenda, to make sure it leads the transformational change needed'.

We need to get this right. In December this year, our Government will outline our detailed plan for implementing the commission's recommendations. The implementation plan will provide clarity and certainty for the Tasmanian community, and those who have been affected by child sexual abuse, on the actions and time frames for responding to the commission's recommendations.

We are committed to being open, transparent and accountable as we move forward with these changes.

To keep the community informed about the Government's response to the commission of inquiry's report, we have established a Keeping Children Safe website. This website contains information including supports available to people impacted by abuse, the processes and time lines of the report's release, how to report if you believe a child is at risk of harm, and actions already under way to improve how we protect children in our care. On the Keeping Children Safe website, the Government will also provide details of its plan for implementing all of the commission's 191 recommendations.

Responding to child sexual abuse in our institutions will remain a whole-of-government priority, and we will work further to define clear lines of accountability for enacting change.

The commission has recommended that the Secretary of the Department of Premier and Cabinet be responsible for endorsing, overseeing, coordinating and reporting on a child sexual abuse reform strategy and action plan, and all secretaries will be responsible for implementing reforms according to their portfolio responsibilities. These responsibilities will be reflected in the performance agreements for heads of agencies, and statements of duties for relevant executive and departmental staff.

A number of strategic governance committees will drive reforms, provide oversight and decision-making, and be accountable and responsible for outcomes and actions. The new Children and Young People Reform Unit in the Department of Premier and Cabinet will lead and coordinate the whole-of-government monitoring and implementation.

The commission has made a range of recommendations for legislative reform to make children safer, and to improve processes for future commissions of inquiries by reviewing the Commissions of Inquiry Act. Responsibility for different legislation is spread across agencies.

The Child and Youth Wellbeing subcommittee of the secretary's board has been tasked with developing a whole-of-government legislative reform agenda, to enable agencies to work together to streamline reform processes. This will enable our agencies to work together, and with their stakeholders, children and young people, to coordinate legislative development and policy work to ensure it has the most impact.

The weighty legislative agenda will require the support of all of us within the parliament to ensure we are working together to deliver the changes the commission has recommended.

While I expect there to be due and appropriate scrutiny on the reforms that come forward, all members of parliament have an active role to play in delivering the changes the commission

has recommended quickly and efficiently. It will also be important that we, as a parliament, work together across party lines to make sure the legislative changes endure over time.

An independent Child Sexual Abuse Implementation Monitor will be appointed to hold our Government to account. The independent monitor will report on the Government's progress in implementing the commission's recommendations, as well as the recommendations of the national Royal Commission and the independent education inquiry. The monitor will strengthen our measures to safeguard children in our care by providing independent oversight and evaluation of the effectiveness of measures taken in response to this report, and enabling the assessment of change over time. The monitor will ensure our commitment to adopting the commission's recommendations is actively assessed and evaluated. It is our Government's intention that the legislation to implement the independent monitor will be introduced in the first week of the 2024 parliamentary year.

The report also recommends the establishment of a new Commission for Children and Young People, with expanded functions to oversee and regulate child safety in Tasmania, monitored by a joint standing committee of the Tasmanian parliament.

We will also strengthen arrangements for other integrity agencies in relation to child safety, including by clarifying the role of the Integrity Commission and Ombudsman in relation to handling complaints about child sexual abuse, and strengthening the role of the Registrar of Tasmania's Registration to Work with Vulnerable People scheme. Together, these changes are intended to improve safety for children and young people, and build trust and confidence in the processes for handling complaints and concerns about the safety of children.

The report evidenced several case studies that identified systemic problems at the Ashley Youth Detention Centre. These case studies informed many of the commission's recommendations to shift Tasmania's youth justice system to a therapeutic model that offers hope and healing to children and young people. We acknowledge the commission's call to close the Ashley Youth Detention Centre as soon as possible.

We all want the same thing. If there was any capacity to close it now, we would. I would not hesitate. There is no greater priority than child safety, but these young people need to be somewhere that keeps both them and the community safe, and where they can access learning and therapeutic supports. If there were immediate alternatives to Ashley available today, we would be taking them.

In the absence of an immediate alternative, it is our commitment that we will do all we can to ensure the safety and wellbeing of the children and young people in the centre, while we simultaneously plan for the transition out of Ashley.

In line with the recommendations the commission has made to improve safety for children and young people at the centre, electronic access controls for residents will be in operation by October. This meets the need to balance residents' safety, security, privacy and dignity, along with achieving concurrent protection for staff. Work is under way to install additional CCTV cameras to cover black spots, and a body-worn camera trial will commence in November. We will use the commission's recommendations to inform our work as we continue to progress our plans to close the centre, and transition to new contemporary therapeutic facilities and a model of care for young people who commit the most serious of crimes.

After a statewide assessment of possible sites for the new facility, today I announce that our Government has identified Pontville, in the state's south, as the preferred site for the new youth detention centre. The new facility will deliver a therapeutic and trauma-informed service model that focuses on improving outcomes for young people in terms of safety, wellbeing and learning. We are also progressing work on supported residential centres and assisted-bail facilities, our Youth Justice Blueprint and therapeutic model of care, which will be informed by the commission's final report. Now that a preferred site has been identified, we will undertake site-based assessments including geotechnical surveys, planning and design processes, which will also inform costings and time frames for the new facility.

In 2023-24, our Government will provide an additional \$5 million for the Ashley Youth Detention Centre, to ensure the safety and wellbeing of the children in the centre continues to be prioritised. This is in addition to the \$50 million already allocated to progress the delivery of new youth justice facilities, and the \$11.2 million that has been provided through the Government's Commission of Inquiry Fund to improve youth justice outcomes.

The commission has recommended a range of actions and improvements that can be made across the Tasmanian out-of-home care system, to ensure children and young people are known, safe and well, and that we have the right supports in place for carers. Immediate actions include introduction of a new care team and care planning approach to ensure children and young people are supported with a contemporary model of practice.

A review of a financial model of support for family-based carers is currently under way and aims to ensure carers are provided with the resources they need to keep children in their care safe.

Work is also being done to expand the range of care types and number of available foster carers, as well as increasing the supply of available frontline workforce within Children and Families.

Defined standards of practice that are clear, concise, fit for purpose and aligned with contemporary best practice are also being developed. The commission has recommended that all out-of-home care be outsourced to the non-government sector, allowing the Department for Education, Children and Young People to focus on monitoring and leading the development of a whole-of-sector strategic plan and policy framework. To achieve this, we will build on the long-term partnerships we have with our highly valued out-of-home care providers and carers to ensure we keep the safety, stability and wellbeing of children and young people at the forefront of all decisions we make.

New care arrangements will be carefully designed, taking into account all other recommendations made by the commission, including that all care should be trauma informed and that the Aboriginal community must be engaged in co-designing and delivering arrangements to ensure the cultural needs of their children are met. The transition from current to new arrangements will be staged and implemented in ways that maximise continuity and stability for children and young people in care and ensures they are involved in decision-making that affects their lives. Carers are integral to the system and we will not make changes to that system without their involvement and input at every stage.

There are other actions that our Government will take immediately in response to this report. Today I announce that we will provide \$7.8 million to address the immediate pressures

on our Tasmanian government services and contracted services that will be most impacted as they work to provide support to our community over coming months. This includes additional funding for the advice and referral line, statewide mental health services, a child and mental health service and community sector organisation services that support people who have experienced abuse and trauma. The funding will be used to increase the capacity of services to respond to increased demand and to ensure Tasmanians have access to the support and the information that they need.

We will immediately begin work to enhance our State Service culture and leadership by funding a whole-of-government improvement program. We will provide \$4.5 million to ensure that we have the right frameworks to ensure our State Service culture encourages feedback, reporting, action and review to enable our State Service to respond to child sexual abuse. This will help us build and develop the workforce we need now and into the future.

One of the commission's core recommendations is the creation of a whole-of-government strategy for preventing, identifying and responding to child sexual abuse, including child sexual abuse in institutions and harmful sexual behaviours. We will move immediately to implement the commission's recommendation to develop a child sexual abuse strategy and action plan to bring together reforms to our state, our services, initiatives, policies and procedures into a coordinated reform agenda. We will provide funding of \$2.5 million to implement this recommendation.

Our Government has previously funded the establishment of two Arch centres, one in the south and one in the north, as a two-year pilot. Today I am announcing \$5 million to establish a third centre on the north-west coast. These centres provide trauma-informed support services and police responses for child abuse and sexual assault victims. This multi-service response to people who have experienced abuse and trauma ensures they are able to access all services in one centre and are not required to retell their story. The centres also provide an environment for greater information-sharing across government and non-government sectors.

We will invest a total of \$5 million to implement new human resource administration management systems across our State Service agencies. This investment will bring on additional modules in the health system and will expand the system across a whole-of-government basis. This system will improve the management of information about current or ex-employees who may pose a risk to children and young people. This will lead to a common foundation for all agencies that will help address concerns about employee conduct slipping through the cracks.

The Department of Justice will receive \$1 million to commence work on the implementation of the commission of inquiry legislative agenda. The Department of Health will receive \$891 000 to establish a child safety and wellbeing panel and service to oversee, monitor and investigate child safeguarding concerns and \$450 000 for engagement activities to enable Tasmanian children and young children to provide input into policies, delivery of services and decision-making.

This is in addition to the initial \$30 million in funding that has already been budgeted this financial year for priority reforms to keep children safer and the 15 interim actions our agencies have completed in response to issues raised during the hearings of the commission of inquiry. This would bring total funding allocated in 2023-24 for the commission of inquiry

response to around \$53 million. While there is still much work to do, the reforms we have made are already making Tasmania a safer place for our children and young people.

Mr Speaker, Aboriginal children are overrepresented in our youth detention and out-of-home care systems. Strategies underpinned by Aboriginal self-determination are urgently needed to divert Aboriginal children and young people from the youth justice system and to reduce their overrepresentation in youth detention. We will work with Aboriginal communities, not just in words, but actions. Our commitment is to make sure that Aboriginal-controlled organisations lead the way in this work.

I want to acknowledge that the release of the report of the commission of inquiry may, and no doubt will, evoke strong emotions for many people in our community. You are not alone. We recognise the critical importance of ensuring that people who have experienced abuse, State Service employees and members of the Tasmanian community are supported, safe and able to report concerns following the release of the final report. The Government has ensured a range of support services are available to the Tasmanian community and that individuals impacted can access trauma informed and meaningful support.

Resources were provided to local support services over the course of the commission of inquiry and an additional \$1.5 million in funding has since been allocated to ensure support can continue for the tabling and public release of the report and beyond. We have also continued support for anyone who experienced abuse in institutional settings and witnesses of the commission of inquiry by contracting the commission of inquiry's engagement consultants to continue in their roles until the end of the year.

We have been working with agencies in public sector unions to ensure Tasmanian State Service employees have consistent, appropriate and timely supports in place. Agencies have established a range of supports and referral pathways for different cohorts of impacted employees. This includes employee assistant programs, access to independent psychological support, individual case management, individual safety planning, group sessions for managers, focused debriefings as required and referral to community organisations or specialist organisations such as Lifeline, Sexual Assault Support Service and Laurel House.

Mr Speaker, every Tasmanian child is entitled to the best start in life. Every Tasmanian child has an inherent right to feel safe, be well and to engage in learning. We must be bold in envisioning a brighter future, and steadfast in our commitment to do the hard work to make that future possible. Too often in Tasmania's history, our small size and geographic isolation have been seen as barriers to the attainment of our deepest aspirations. Indeed, at times the report found that these factors have contributed to boundaries and divisions that have prevented change. However the report also found that there is potential to harness these factors - the strong bonds across our communities, our propensity for looking after each other, our ingenuity, creativity and genuine care for one another - to build a better future.

I want all Tasmanians to know that this Government and indeed this parliament is acting and listening. We will leave no stone unturned to ensure our children and young people are safe and protected now and into the future. Our children are not just our most precious assets, they are the future of Tasmania.

Our promise is that as a parliament, a community and a public service, we ensure every child and young person is known, is heard and included, safe in all environments, well and

thriving and learning more every single day. Together, let us make that promise and commence our journey to fulfilling it.

[12.11 p.m.]

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

That the ministerial statement be noted.

The tabling of this commission of inquiry report today is an historic, important and emotional moment. It is, to quote the Commissioner for Children and Young People, Leanne McLean:

A watershed moment for the realisation of the rights of children and young people to be protected from harm and abuse.

There is nothing more important than the safety and wellbeing of our children. We know just how badly our children have been let down by the shocking failures in our government institutions, our schools, our hospitals, our out-of-home care system and our youth justice system.

Every child deserves to be loved, to be cared for and protected from harm, which is why the extent of the abuse suffered by so many children in government institutions is so distressing. It is hard to imagine a greater betrayal than entrusting your child to a hospital or a school, where care and protection should be the highest priority, only to have your child preyed upon by a monster, their innocence stolen, their trust and the trust of their families betrayed, their childhoods lost to a lifetime of trauma, hurt, anger and pain. All of this made so much worse because, in some cases, the people who could have protected them, should have protected them, instead chose to look the other way, to dismiss their complaints and to believe their abusers over vulnerable children; even dismissing the concerns of their peers who did care and had the courage to speak up.

Despite their ongoing trauma, the survivors of these horrors were somehow able to reach deep within themselves and find the strength to speak up, to give testimony to the commission of inquiry, to shine a light on these atrocities, to speak their truth and work tirelessly for justice - not only for themselves but for those victims and survivors unable to speak for themselves and to bring about the changes needed to stop what happened to them from happening to others.

I want to pay tribute to all of them today - some of them are here with us - to the children who had to grow up with their pain, fighting every step of the way to find a path through their trauma, anger and feelings of betrayal, to the whistleblowers who risked their reputations and their careers to make sure that children were protected, and to the advocates who have stood shoulder to shoulder and held the hands of those people who spoke, all the while fighting for justice for the children of today and the children of tomorrow.

Their personal stories are not easily forgotten and nor should they be. We owe it to all victims and survivors to remember their stories because, as difficult as they are for us to hear, for the people who live them, the children who live them, I cannot imagine that there is any greater pain. If we are to ensure this never happens again - and we must - we do not just need to listen and remember, we need to act. We need to put into place the structures and the

procedures to stop this from ever happening again and to bring to justice those who committed the most heinous crimes.

I know some of these brave survivors are here today, while others are looking on and listening from elsewhere, all of you reliving your trauma again as you continue the long road to recovery. I say, as the Premier said to you, thank you. This parliament would not be receiving this report today if it were not for you, for your extraordinary courage, your strength, your resilience, your compassion and care for others, your determination to fight for justice and your dedication to protecting others, your ability to overcome your devastating experiences and shine a light on them so that others do not have to go through what you have been through.

I also want to pay tribute to the survivors who remain silent: some not yet able to talk in public, if at all, but whose experiences have been no less traumatic. To those whose pain was too overwhelming for them to overcome and who are no longer with us as a result, and to their parents, families and loved ones, while nothing can bring back your beautiful children, I hope there is some comfort in the efforts of survivors and those working with them and with you to bring about justice and to do all that we can to stop this from happening to anyone else's children. As a mother and as a human being, it breaks my heart to think of the helplessness the victims and survivors must have felt when they were at their most innocent and vulnerable. The fear, the guilt, the shame, the confusion, the anger and the sorrow, all emotions that no child should ever have to endure.

I know from meeting and speaking with so many victims/survivors and their families, that these emotions are still with you; that they colour your everyday lives and experiences. The trust that all parents should have when they send their kids to school is replaced with fear and suspicion and wariness. The faith that all parents should have in the medical profession when their children are sick or hurt, replaced with fear, suspicion and wariness.

It is not just our schools and our hospitals. Our young people caught up in the youth justice system also need our protection. When we have children who could be as young as 10 held in solitary confinement at the Ashley Youth Detention Centre, sometimes up to 23 hours a day, it is obvious there needs to be change. We support the closure of the Ashley Youth Detention Centre as soon as possible. These are vulnerable children and we have failed them. Make no mistake, they deserve protection just as much as any other child. They deserve care, they deserve love and therapeutic support.

That is why we need to act now and implement the commission of inquiry's recommendations in full at the earliest opportunity, so the systemic failings that allowed this to go on for so long can be fixed; so those who allowed these atrocities to continue can be held to account; so we can have trust in our public institutions again by making sure that those who work in them are supported and resourced, and so we can know our children are safe and protected so this never happens again.

That is why each of us in this place must commit ourselves to do that as a matter of priority. The brave people who have carried the burden and the weight of these stories to bring us to this point need a rest. They need to heal.

I want to acknowledge the crucial work done by the commissioners and everyone involved in the commission of inquiry. Theirs has been a difficult and harrowing but incredibly important job. Their commitment to finding a better way for our children is now here before

us. The best way to show our gratitude is to take their findings seriously, to act on every one of their recommendations, to make sure those responsible are held to account and to put the systems and processes in place to protect our children.

I opened with a quote from Tasmania's Commissioner for Children and Young People and I believe it is fitting to end with another. Leanne McLean said:

The delivery of the final report marks a new beginning and not the end to this process. Now we need our Government to listen and to respond with bravery and determination. That is the very least our children and young people can expect.

We fully support the commission's recommendations and will work with the Government to achieve their full implementation.

Our children are our future, and it is up to us to protect them and to keep them safe, and to ensure that this never happens again.

[12.20 p.m.]

Dr WOODRUFF (Franklin - Leader of the Greens) - Mr Speaker, I want to acknowledge the victims/survivors and their families who are present today and watching online.

I realise that many of you live with the lifelong trauma from the abuse you suffered as children in Tasmanian institutions. You were vulnerable; you should have been protected. This is one day among many days in your life. We hear the pain from those of you who called for help and who were ignored. We understand and acknowledge your anger at people in government institutions who refused to believe you when you spoke out.

We respect your strength and courage for speaking up, and we also recognise the whistleblowers who tried to get action about the abuse they saw, but were shut down and dismissed. Many of you lost your reputation and your jobs for trying to protect children.

We acknowledge the victims/survivors who gave evidence to the inquiry, and your incredible bravery and strength in sharing the harms that you experienced. This was not the life that you chose, but through your stories, your courage, you have earned the greatest debt of gratitude from all Tasmanians for what you have achieved.

We recognise, also, the many others who were grossly violated as children, but were not able to voice what happened to them to the inquiry process.

This report that is tabled today is about your story, too. I hope it brings some healing through the recording and the recognition of what was done to you, and the changes that we all now bear responsibility for working to make happen.

We recognise victims/survivors have felt enormous anxiety leading up to the tabling of this report, concerned that it must not fail to unflinchingly tell the whole truth of what was done to them. It must identify the perpetrators, the cultural systems, and the individuals who enabled perpetrators to continue to abuse, even after complaints were made.

We thank the commissioners and their staff. They have completed the most important commission of inquiry ever undertaken in Tasmania. They have given two years of their life in dedicated service, seeking truth and justice for victims/survivors, working to shore up the safety of children in Tasmanian institutions into the future. We recognise that the commission of inquiry's process, with its lengthy public and private hearings, was conducted with integrity, respect, compassion, kindness, great expertise and intelligence.

The result before us is an enormous body of work and extensive recommendations for change. The community of Tasmania should have confidence that it represents an independent and forensic assessment of the cultural conditions within Tasmanian government institutions that failed - along with the people in them - over decades, to protect vulnerable children in care from unspeakable sexual abuse.

Accountability is less about justice and more about prevention. No court can restore the childhood a person has lost when abused at a young age but if there are no consequences for adults who are wilfully blind to evidence of abuse occurring in their workplace, then the abuse will continue. Child sex abuse is an evil fuelled by the indifference of those who are meant to care but refuse to act.

This parliament can show we care by demanding that public servants with evidence of deliberate failure to protect children are sanctioned to the fullest extent possible.

Today's tabling of this report effectively closes the door on the commission's work, and opens the door to the journey of change that will last our parliamentary careers and beyond. Victims/survivors are calling on each member of parliament to ensure this once-in-a-generation chance to stamp out child sexual abuse in our schools, hospitals, foster homes and detention centres is not wasted.

The Government's response to the commission of inquiry is arguably as important as the inquiry's report itself. While the decades-long institutional failures and harms the commission investigated have occurred under multiple governments and all parties involved bear responsibility, it is this Government that bears the first responsibility to respond. It must do so with the urgency and proportion the commission's recommendations demand.

The Premier must deliver a program of actions and investment that will fix broken systems and laws and create child-safe organisations. His Government must provide justice and compensation for victims/survivors. This Government must fulsomely and appropriately allocate the funding and urgently draft the new laws.

As non-government members of parliament, our job on behalf of the Tasmanians we represent, especially the victims/survivors, their families and whistleblowers, is to fully scrutinise the Government's response. The Government's investment in staffing and training, its timelines and tracking mechanisms are how change will be made to what the commission identified on its final day of hearings are still unsafe institutions for children in some places. Their adequacy of this response demands our most intense examination.

We are concerned that the Premier's proposed date for this Government's formal response is 4 December, at the end of the parliamentary year, just before Christmas and a summer break of several months. If the Premier is serious about his implementation plan providing clarity and certainty to those affected, he must allow the proper parliamentary scrutiny of his

Government's response to the commission of inquiry. We call on the Premier to schedule another week of parliament after 4 December so all members of parliament can examine his plan and funding in detail. Another week of our time, of work, is the least members of parliament can contribute, given the efforts of victims/survivors and the whole commission of inquiry to get us to this point.

The Greens commit to working with this Government and future ones to make sure the inquiry's recommendations are implemented completely, with integrity, transparency and accountability about the progress of change. We will work in good faith to make sure that current and future generations of Tasmanian children will be safe from sexual abuse in every public institution forevermore.

Mr SPEAKER - With no more speakers, the question is that the ministerial statement be noted.

Statement noted.

The House adjourned at 12.29 p.m.